Kids or Kitchen: An Examination of Marital Satisfaction of Employed Parents in Pakistan's Banking Sector

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Abstract

The focus of this study is to examine variations in marital satisfaction across genders (working fathers and mothers) and traditional vs. career couples in bankers in Pakistan. Data has been collected from 352 male bankers (working fathers) and 188 female bankers (working mothers) through a closed-ended questionnaire. Measures included demographic information and the marital satisfaction scale. These study findings show a significant difference in reports of marital satisfaction. Working fathers reported more marital satisfaction than working mothers. Dual-career households experienced lesser satisfaction with marriage than traditional career households.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Working Fathers, Working Mothers, Banking in Pakistan.

Introduction

Marriage as a ritual and a socio-religious sacred institute is "deeply rooted in every Muslim society" (Asamarai et al., 2008). Pakistan, being a Muslim country with a family-oriented collectivist culture, is no exception. Ayub (2000) referred to marriage as a "life-long commitment." "A positive marital relationship provides fuel to engage in sensitive parenting" (Cowan & Cowan, 1995; Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984) and has been referred to as a viable component of family life by Glenn (1990).

In the light of Islamic law, Abudabbeh (1996) referred to marriage as "a contract that legalizes sexual intercourse and the procreation of children." According to Qadir, de Silva, and Murad (2005), a good marriage is regarded as "one which offers love, care, and respect from the husband and his family and some level of egalitarianism within the family" by Pakistani Muslim women. A good marriage is characterized by spouses epitomizing cognition of family demands and acts of balancing work and family.

I have viewed marriage in the last two decades as a personal achievement, a couple's monetary soundness, understanding, and personal maturity in Western societies (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Collectivist cultures deem marriage necessary for the continuity of family name (Riley, 1994).

Literature Review

People tend to differ in their work-centered or family-centered identities; likewise, the countries and cultures also recalibrate the importance of work and family (Burke, 2009; Hofstede, 2001). Burke and Singh (2014) and Zhang et al. (2011) argued that most people's family and work roles are central.

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An increased social status and life satisfaction, accompanied by more responsibilities and enhanced socialization (Suhail & Chaudhry, 2004), are regarded as a few benefits of marriage in Muslim society. Understanding and respecting cultural heritage significantly impacted marital satisfaction (Moghadam, 2004).

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is "the subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a spouse when considering all current aspects of his/her marriage" (Hawkins, 1968, p. 647). Marital satisfaction was defined as "an attitude of greater or lesser favourability toward one's marital relationship" (Symonds & Horvath, 2004).

Spanier and Cole (1974) state that "marital satisfaction reflects an individual's perception and beliefs about spouse, marriage and the marital relationship." Marital satisfaction offers a mutually fulfilling, rewarding, and enriching experience.

"Marital satisfaction is an individual's affective appraisal of the overall quality of the marital relationship, whereas marital risk reflects the perception that a marriage is in trouble and may end as well as high levels of marital conflict" (Voydanoff, 2005).

Marital satisfaction epitomizes various positive spill-overs towards sensitive parenting and attending to childcare needs. It encompasses the more significant role of in-laws and dependent care of extended family, which holds for Pakistan's collectivist and social culture.

Literature Gap

According to Qadir et al. (2005), examining marital satisfaction in Muslim settings has largely remained understudied. The argument to address marital satisfaction in Pakistan has been based on eclectic local findings. The 2010 Gallup Pakistan survey reported a rise in divorce rates in the last decade. These findings remain consistent with Rao (2011), who found that the increase in divorce/separation rates is higher in career-oriented working women than in homemakers in Pakistan. Similarly, Abreu et al. (2021) established that increasing divorce rates correlate to low marital satisfaction levels.

In the same line of reasoning, while marriage promises "growth and stability of society" (Asamarai et al., 2008), the author is alarmed to review two pieces of literature primarily focusing on marital interaction, quality of marital life, and marital satisfaction in Muslim and Pakistani settings. On the one hand, "…Islamic regulations that deem marriage a highly religious and sacred institution..." Asamarai et al. (2008), the other study revealed marital and relationship conflicts as one of the major causes of suicidal tendency in young married Pakistani women (Zakiullah et al., 2008).

Zakiullah et al. (2008) regarded arranged marriages and compromise with in-laws as a few of the primary reasons for increased suicidal tendencies. In a study on "Deliberate Self Harm (D.S.H.)" and suicidal tendencies in Pakistan, Zakiullah et al. (2008) found that the majority of cases were of married women, in contrast to findings in European and North American contexts, where the suicidal tendency is found more in single women (Hawton & Fagg, 1992).

The findings of Zakiullah et al. (2008) are consistent with previous literature Milnes et al. (2002) that self-harm patients believed that their interpersonal and relationship problems could not be resolved, leading to suicide attempts. In the same national context, it is further revealing that the findings of Zakiullah et al. (2008) and Ahmed and Zuberi (1981) are consistent despite a lapse of almost three decades.

These findings can thus be certified as accurate reflections of oppressions, expectations, and deprivations of the Pakistani social setup, with women pressed to unlimited compromises in case of conflict with a family member, especially with the spouse. On the other hand, men attributed unemployment, poverty, and financial stress as precipitating causes of Deliberate Self Harm (Zakiullah et al., 2008).

Much literature suggests a tremendous increase in divorce rates in past decades, for example, Safdar (2009) in the U.A.E. and Chung (2014) in South Korea. According to Gottman and Levenson (2000), divorce can be predicted through marital satisfaction and is known to affect the "physical and emotional well-being of children and partners." Thus, the need for the present study is substantiated by the very reality of its absence, which is tarnishing the local family-sensitive fabric of Muslim society.

Given the literature above on marriages and an emerging trend of suicidal tendencies, with evident differences in men and women regarding such heinous acts of self-harm, it partially makes the prologue of the present study. Across genders, examining potential differences in marital satisfaction is warranted in local settings, and relevant research questions are posed.

Employed Parent's Perspective

Al-Darmaki et al. (2016) reported more marital satisfaction in men than women in Emirati subjects. This is consistent with previous findings (e.g., Al-Othman, 2012; Alqashan, 2008; Asamarai et al., 2008; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2007). In a similar vein, Byrant et al. (2008) reported that women experienced lower marital satisfaction than men. These findings are consistent with earlier findings documented by Wu and Hart (2002) and Blackman et al. (2005).

In contrast, however, men and women reported experiencing similar levels of both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

Another study by Darcy and McCarthy (2007) did not segregate male and female parents for separate analysis in their research of employed parents with young and grown-up children and suggested the like to be addressed in future research.

The studies above provide evidence for inconsistent findings in the literature, which suggests that future research should examine the possible gender issues inherent herein. The authors intend to broaden the debate further and examine patterns of marital satisfaction concerning working parents and the nature of household type. This line of inquiry is further extended in the present study, and the following research question is posed.

RQ1: Does the experience of marital satisfaction differ for working fathers and working mothers?

Traditional Career Couples vs Dual Career Couples

"The impact of a wife's labor force participation on the division of labor in the home" and marital happiness (Crosby, 1984) have also primarily been questioned in the western context. According to Andreassi et al. (2014), the globalization of the corporate world has not kept pace with the acknowledgment of cultural variation and their impact on workers. The dissonance creeps in when the patriarchal social norms of men as breadwinners come up front with women's refusal to withdraw from their careers and become primary caretakers, making the situation grim.

Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) found that "job pressure was negatively related to marital satisfaction." Whereas "work-to-family conflict to be associated with lower marital satisfaction (Judge et al., 2006; Matthews et al., 1996)". Cui et al. (2009) addressed marital conflict "as an antecedent of marital satisfaction from a theoretical point of view, consistent with Kluwer and

Johnson's (2007) assumption that conflict is more likely to be a determinant rather than a pure consequence of relationship quality".

According to Asamarai et al. (2008), Islamic religious traditions conjectured with the cultural values cast difference in examining the marital satisfaction in Muslim settings and cognizance of these religious-cultural settings embedded in today's married workforce is crucial not only for societal fabric but also for more meaningful and delivering working relationships in work settings. As per the literature above, the following research question is proposed.

RQ2: Does experience of marital satisfaction differ for traditional career couples vs. dual career couples?

Methodology
Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria
The opening page ensured anonymity and confidentiality. The present study deploys a self-reported Marital Satisfaction Scale (M.S.S.). The sample items include, "I will describe our marriage as happy, I am delighted with my marriage," to measure marital satisfaction in couples. The Cronbach alpha (α) is found to be 0.71, which, according to Yong et al. (2007), Nunnally and Berstein (1994) and Nunnally (1978), falls in the acceptable and satisfactory internal consistency reliability range.

Findings and Analysis
An overview of the sample profile is provided in table 1.

Table 1: Sample demographic profile

S. No	Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	352	65
		Female	188	35
2.	Age	20-35 Years	296	55
		36-50 Years	212	39
		> 50 Years	32	6
3.	Nature of household	Single Earner	356	66
		Dual Earner	184	34

Factor analysis is performed on the items of marital satisfaction scale and the factor loadings are provided as under.

Table 2: Principal component analysis of marital satisfaction

No.	Description	Component Loadings
1	"I will describe our marriage as happy".	0.88
2	"I am completely satisfied with my marriage".	0.94
3	"I often regret about being getting married".	0.77

The descriptive statistics of the data collected is shown as under in table 3. The normality of the distribution is established before parametric testing is applied.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of study constructs

Study Variables	Min.	Max	Mean	St. Dev	Skewness [b]	Kurtosis [c]
Marital Satisfaction	2.00	5.00	4.05	0.89	-0.48	-0.98

Note: N=540, [b]= Standard Error of Skewness =.105, [c]= Standard Error of Kurtosis = .210

In the following t-test is run to validate the findings for research questions. The results are presented in table 4. An independent sample t-test was run to determine if working fathers and working mothers' reports of marital satisfaction differed statistically significantly. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p=.48). The mean marital satisfaction score for working fathers (4.40±0.77) was higher than working mothers (3.40 ± .743), a statistically significant difference of .993 (95% CI, .76 to .93), t (538) = 14.45, p=.000, d=1.314.

An independent sample t-test was run to determine if there were differences in traditional career couples and dual career couples with respect to marital satisfaction. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was met as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances (p=.005). Traditional career couples reported more marital satisfaction (4.19±0.887) than dual career couples (3.78±0.853), a statistically significant difference of 0.41 (95% CI, 0.252 to 0.565), t(538) = 5.14, p=.000. As p < 0.05, the difference between traditional career couples and dual career couples in experiences of marital satisfaction is found to be statistically significant.

Table 4: Comparison of marital satisfaction across gender and traditional Vs dual career couples

	Marital Satisfaction			
	Fathers	Mothers	Traditional Career Couples	Dual Career Couples
Mean	4.40	3.40	4.19	3.78
Std. Dev.	.770	.743	.887	.853
Std. Error	.041	.054	.047	.063
Variance	.593	.552	.786	.728
F	.486		8.01	
Sig.	.48		.005	
T	14.45		5.14	
Df	538		538	
Sig (2-tailed)	.000		.000	
Mean Difference	.993		.41	
Std. Error Difference	.069		.079	
95 % CI (Lower)	.76		.252	
95 % CI (Upper)	.93		.565	
D	1.314			

Discussion

In response to the first research question, marital satisfaction significantly differs between employed parents and household types. Working fathers reported more marital satisfaction than working mothers, and the difference is statistically significant. Fathers' increased satisfaction with marriage reflects the emotional support from their spouse. This spousal help undoubtedly enhances

the quality of family life and the quality of intimate relationships, more for men alias working fathers than for women alias working mothers.

The present study's findings echo relevant literature (see Fowers, 1991; Rhyne,1981; Schumm et al., 1998). Hill (2005) documented greater marital satisfaction in men than women. Likewise, according to Asamarai et al. (2008), men reported more marital satisfaction than women. Present findings conform to the Asamarai et al. (2008) suggestion that the likely difference in marital satisfaction with men experiencing more satisfaction shall also be evident in Muslim couples, and the present study supports the case.

In response to the second research question, traditional career households reported more marital satisfaction than dual-career households. Haas (1982) argued that working women's stressful handling of work and family obligations is rarely met with spousal support and understanding. On similar grounds, the present findings supported the notion of gender disparity in the context of marital satisfaction. For men, marriage and spouse act as a supportive resource to care for the tedious and menial tasks like parent-teacher meetings in schools and if employed work and career is towed by women. It is explained as:

> *House maintenance, laundry, cooking meals, intimacy needs, etc.; thus, they are beneficiaries of marital aftermaths. On the other hand, for women, apart from the social security provided by marriage, a package of responsibilities like house maintenance, socialization with in-laws, childbearing, and rearing, elder care (see Ayo et al., 2009)*

Thus, it can be surmised that marital satisfaction is more prevalent in traditional versus dual-career households.

Conclusion

Marital satisfaction is established to be gender sensitive (more in working fathers and lesser in working mothers) as well as sensitive to the nature of the household, i.e., traditional career households with male-breadwinner and female-homemaker model reported increased marital satisfaction than dual career households where both parents are career-oriented.

It can be surmised that while dual-career households are increasingly becoming common, the division of household work and domesticity remains unchanged and lies on the women's shoulders (alias wife and mother as in the present study). To bring equity in working parents and to safeguard the tarnishing marital satisfaction in Pakistan, a need is felt for greater recognition and understanding in both genders. It further calls for a shift in patriarchal norms and to reciprocate the spousal support, which has traditionally been the paradigm of working men.

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