# Gender Differences in Marital Happiness among Newly Married Individuals in India: Do the Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors Matter?

## Kamalesh Kumar Patel*[1] and Murali Dhar[2]

**Abstract:** Prior studies suggest that marital happiness in males is substantially higher than in females. However, little is known about the covariates explaining the male-female differences in marital happiness. The present study was conducted to assess the role of demographic and socioeconomic factors in explaining the male-female gap in marital happiness among newly married individuals in both rural and urban areas of Varanasi district in Uttar Pradesh, India. A total 502 newly married individuals were interviewed for data collection from both rural and urban areas. Standard and widely verified scales were used to measure marital happiness and social support. Fairlie's decomposition technique was used to know the contribution of different covariates in the male-female gap in marital happiness. Results showed that relative inequality of happiness between males and females was high. About half of the men were happy as compared to only a quarter of the women. Ninety-three percent male-female gap in marital happiness was explained by the selected covariates in the study. Results also found that female respondents were less happy with all the selected covariates. The largest percentage of gender difference in marital happiness was found with respect to family type (non-nuclear family, 12%), and social support (high social support, 56%). These were found to be statistically significant. Social support may play a key role in the formulation of policies. In addition, the findings may provide useful clues to the social workers and counsellors associated with marital well-being.

**Keywords:** Gender differences, marital happiness, newly married individual, cross-sectional study, India.

## Introduction

Marriage is an important demographic component and an almost universal phenomenon in India (Das and Dey, 1998). From the demographic point of view, it is important because it regulates the reproductive behavior of a couple (Islam, 2013). In addition in India, marriage has the implication of bringing closer two different families of the couple (Fatima and Ajmal, 2012).

A happy and prosperous married life is the ultimate goal for anyone who is either already married or is thinking about it (Murphy *et al.*, 1997). However, many studies in the past have found that men benefit from marriage more than women (Bernard, 1972; Gove and Tudor, 1973). A study by Fowers (1991) indicated that marriage was more favorable to males than females. Another study (Glennand Weaver, 1979) showed similar findings among married individuals, with men reporting higher marital happiness as compared with women. Even in India, a recent study by Patel and Dhar (2019) reported marital happiness to be more among males. Males and females play different roles in a marital relationship. The role of married females has been documented to be more stressful and disadvantageous than married

---
* Corresponding Author
[1] Senior Research Officer, Department of Public Health, Indian Institute of Health Management Research, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, Email: kamaleshkumar.patel@gmail.com
[2] Professor, Department of Population Policies and Programmes, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. Email: m.dhar@iips.net

males (Williams, 2003). The role of females has been observed to be more demanding but less rewarding in a marital relationship. In addition to this, the role of a housewife is less rewarding in developing countries than in developed countries (Kazak, et al., 1988). Empirical investigation of gender differences in marital happiness in the Indian context is important because the Indian population constitutes more than one-fifth of the world's population, which implies that the generalizability of the related theoretical accounts and hypotheses can be tested (Ho, *et al.,* 1989).

The existing studies on gender differences in marital quality concentrate on the Western societies. No effort has, to date, been made to examine this issue in the Indian society. Although marital research has been widely carried out in the West in the past several decades, related studies in the Indian societies are almost nonexistent. From the cross-cultural perspective, the lack of related research in the Indian context motivates one to ask whether gender differences in marital happiness exist in India as well, and whether such differences would be different from those observed in the Western culture. These questions are legitimate for cross-cultural differences in marital experiences, and related family processes might lead to the emergence of different phenomena (Shek, 1995).

Since marriage is an important social institution in India, several studies have been conducted in the past to understand its nature, patterns, and associated rituals and traditions (Deshpande, 2010; Fiese *et al.,* 2002; Sonawat, 2001). Though marital happiness has become an important issue among newly married individuals and the marriage analyst, there has been a lack of formal research around this topic. Besides, the existing studies related to this topic are mostly from the western or developed countries and may not be of much relevance for India. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the contribution of different factors to the male-female gap in marital happiness among newly married individuals in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India.

## Materials and Methods

### *Definitions*
Marital happiness is a self-reported judgment made by a respondent that indicates the sense of well-being or happiness he or she experiences in their marital relationship. Social support may be defined as the considerable support received from those directly or indirectly connected. It assesses three domains of support, viz, family members, friends and other persons considerably associated with the study subject (Zimet *et al.,* 1988, Zhang *et al.,* 2013).

### *Target population*
For the present study, the target population comprised newly married individuals in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. Those married for more than one year, but not more than five years (married for ≥1 year to <5 years), were defined as newly married individuals.

### *Study design and sampling*
A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect primary data required for the study. A multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure was used to select the needed sample of newly married individuals (251 males, 251 females) from both rural (252) and urban (250) areas in Varanasi district, Uttar Pradesh, India. The sample size was distributed in different villages/wards using the proportion allocation method. Approximate calculations of stratum-wise population were performed using the available Census figures to facilitate proportional

allocation of the sample. The selection of the respondents involved three stages of sampling. Community development block was selected in the first stage, villages/wards in the second stage, and newly married individuals in the third and the final stage. The data collection period was from April to July 2017.

### *Variables under study and their assessment*

Marital happiness was the dependent variable and was measured using a 20-item scale reflecting a respondent's feelings towards various aspects of the marital relationship. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale was 0.87. The principal component analysis was used to create a marital happiness index with two categories (0=Low marital happiness, and 1=High marital happiness). Social support was the most important among the independent variables. It was measured using a 12-item scale reflecting people's feelings. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale was 0.80. The principal component analysis was used to create a social support index with two categories (0=low social support, and 1=high social support) based on feelings about different dimensions of social support. The assessment of both of these variables (marital happiness and social support) has been described in detail elsewhere (Patel and Dhar, 2019).

Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the subjects and their household – incorporated as independent variables in the questionnaire and the analysis – included sex (male, female), age (up to 22, 23-26, 27 and above years), place of residence (rural, urban), educational differences between spouses (no difference, 1-2 years, 3-4 years, five and above years), marital duration (one, two, three, four and above years), monthly income of the household (<10000 rupees, >10000 rupees), family type (nuclear, non-nuclear), parental survival (both/either one died, both alive), family size (up to 4 members, 5-6 members, 7 and above members), ration card (no, yes), and wealth status (poor, rich).

### *Statistical methods for data analysis*

Descriptive statistics in general were used to analyze the profile of the respondents and to understand the marital happiness of the newly married individuals by selected background characteristics. Chi-square test was used to understand the association between the outcome and the predictors. Since the outcome variable was binary (0=low marital happiness, 1=high marital happiness) in nature, binary logit regression was used to examine the relationship between the set of predictor variables and the outcome variables. The Blinder-Oaxaca Fairlie decomposition technique is commonly used to identify and quantify the factors associated with inter-group differences in the mean level of outcome (Oaxaca and Ransom, 1994). Hence, this technique was used to examine the gender differences in marital happiness by the exposure variables among the newly married individuals and to obtain insights into which exposure variable contributes to how much difference. The principal component analysis technique was used to create the following indices: marital happiness index, social support index, and wealth index. CSPro 6.1 was used for data entry, while Stata-12 was used for data analysis in the study.

### *Ethical considerations*

This study was conducted as a part of Ph.D. thesis research. Since, it was based on primary data, ethical clearance was obtained from the Students Research Ethics Committee (SREC) of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai on 3rd March 2017 (Sr. No.15/1819). Apart from this, prior informed consent was obtained from the subjects included in the study. The anonymity of the participants was maintained.

**Results**

*Background characteristics*

There were fewer males (9%) than females (43%) in the young age group (up to 22 years), whereas male and female respondents were almost similar in number in the age group 23-26 years. In case of the 27 years and above age group, the number of males (47%) was much higher than that of females. For as many as 35% respondents, there was no educational difference between the spouses. Females (26%) in the initial years of marital duration were slightly more in number than males (22%). However, the percentage of females (35%) was higher than that of males (28%) in the case of 4-5 years of marital duration. Going by the household income, 64% of the males belonged to households having an income of less than Rs. 10,000; in case of females, this figure was 46%.

The study shows that 79% of the female respondents were living in a non-nuclear family, whereas only 30% of the males were doing so. Seventy percent males and 83% females reported that their parents were still alive. Eighteen percent of the respondents reported a family size of up to 4 members, whereas 49% respondents had a family size of 7 and above. In the present study, 70% respondents reported having a ration card. Results indicate 67% of the respondents to have a poor wealth status and only 33% to have a rich wealth status. As many as 77% females had low social support compared with 57% males. As such, the number of males (43%) having high social support exceeded that of females (24%).

*Sex differentials in marital happiness*

Marital happiness was higher among males (41%) than females (26%)(Figure 1 and Table 1). An overall difference of 15% was found in marital happiness between males and females, which is a huge difference. Respondents (both male and female) in the age group of 23-26 years, those with 1-2 years of educational difference, those in the first year of marriage, those living in nuclear families, and those having a family size of 7 and above members reported more marital happiness than their counterparts. There was a negative relationship between marital happiness and marital duration in both males and females. The respondents (both male and female) who had higher social support reported being happier than those with low social support.

Figure 1: Gender differences in marital happiness
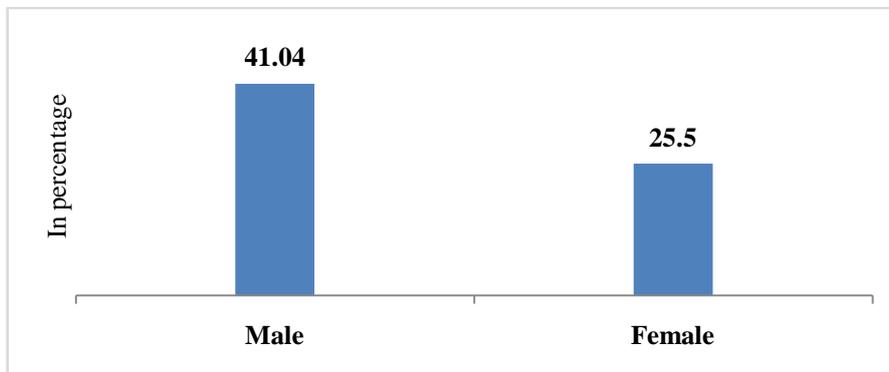
**Gender Differences in Marital Happiness among Newly Married Individuals in India: Do the Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors Matter?**

Table 1: Proportion (%) of marital happiness by sex and gender differences in marital happiness of newly married individuals with selected background characteristics in India, 2017

| Background Characteristics | Marital happiness (MH) | | Gender difference in MH (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) | |
| **Age** *(in years)* | p-value = 0.039 | p-value = 0.229 | |
| Up to 22 | 45.5 | 22.2 | 23.3 |
| 23-26 | 49.1 | 30.4 | 18.7 |
| 27 & above | 32.8 | 17.8 | 15.0 |
| **Place of residence** | p-value = 0.004 | p-value = 0.023 | |
| Rural | 50.0 | 31.7 | 18.3 |
| Urban | 32.0 | 19.2 | 12.8 |
| **Educational difference** *(in years)* | p-value = 0.041 | p-value = 0.628 | |
| No difference | 42.9 | 21.3 | 21.6 |
| One-two | 54.1 | 30.5 | 23.6 |
| Three-four | 45.3 | 28.3 | 17.0 |
| Five & above | 27.0 | 23.9 | 3.1 |
| **Marital duration** *(in years)* | p-value = 0.152 | p-value = 0.450 | |
| One | 53.6 | 32.8 | 20.8 |
| Two | 40.6 | 24.6 | 16.0 |
| Three | 38.5 | 23.6 | 14.9 |
| Four & Five | 34.5 | 21.1 | 13.4 |
| **Monthly income of household** | p-value = 0.026 | p-value = 0.028 | |
| Below 10000 rupees | 46.3 | 19.0 | 27.3 |
| Above 10000 rupees | 31.9 | 31.1 | 0.8 |
| **Family type** | p-value = 0.021 | p-value = 0.021 | |
| Nuclear | 52.0 | 13.2 | 38.8 |
| Non-nuclear | 36.4 | 28.8 | 7.6 |
| **Parental survival** | p-value = 0.287 | p-value = 0.290 | |
| Both/anyone died | 46.1 | 31.8 | 14.3 |
| Both alive | 38.9 | 24.2 | 14.7 |
| **Family size** | p-value = 0.725 | p-value = 0.190 | |
| Up to 4 members | 39.0 | 15.7 | 23.3 |
| Five-six members | 38.4 | 26.9 | 11.5 |
| Seven & above members | 43.6 | 28.7 | 14.9 |
| **Ration card** | p-value = 0.500 | p-value = 0.062 | |
| No | 37.0 | 32.0 | 5.0 |
| Yes | 42.1 | 21.4 | 20.7 |
| **Wealth status** | p-value = 0.046 | p-value = 0.059 | |
| Poor | 44.8 | 22.4 | 22.4 |
| Rich | 30.9 | 30.3 | 0.6 |
| **Social support** | p-value <0.001 | p-value <0.001 | |
| Low | 24.5 | 17.7 | 6.8 |
| High | 63.0 | 50.9 | 12.1 |

Table 2: Results of binary logistic regression of marital happiness among newly married individuals with selected background characteristics by sex in India, 2017

| Background characteristics | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OR | [95% CI] | OR | [95% CI] | OR | [95% CI] |
| **Age** *(in years)* | | | | | | |
| Up to 22® | | | | | | |
| 23-26 | 1.14 | (0.38-3.46) | 1.79 | (0.88-3.65) | 1.96*** | (1.14-3.35) |
| 27 & above | 0.69 | (0.22-2.18) | 1.25 | (0.36-4.35) | 1.23 | (0.66-2.29) |
| **Place of residence** | | | | | | |
| Rural® | | | | | | |
| Urban | 0.42*** | (0.22-0.80) | 0.56 | (0.27-1.15) | 0.50*** | (0.32-0.78) |
| **Educational difference** *(in years)* | | | | | | |
| No difference® | | | | | | |
| One-two | 1.02 | (0.41-2.57) | 1.19 | (0.48-2.99) | 1.04 | (0.57-1.89) |
| Three-four | 0.81 | (0.36-1.84) | 1.38 | (0.51-3.73) | 0.93 | (0.51-1.69) |
| Five & above | 0.35*** | (0.15-0.81) | 1.01 | (0.41-2.49) | 0.55** | (0.31-0.97) |
| **Marital duration** *(in years)* | | | | | | |
| One® | | | | | | |
| Two | 0.37** | (0.15-0.96) | 0.80 | (0.32-1.99) | 0.62 | (0.34-1.15) |
| Three | 0.28*** | (0.10-0.81) | 0.76 | (0.29-1.98) | 0.45** | (0.23-0.87) |
| Four & five | 0.32*** | (0.13-0.79) | 0.65 | (0.26-1.66) | 0.49** | (0.27-0.91) |
| **Monthly income of household** | | | | | | |
| Below 10000 rupees® | | | | | | |
| Above 10000 rupees | 0.78 | (0.36-1.68) | 1.82 | (0.86-3.85) | 1.10 | (0.67-1.81) |
| **Family type** | | | | | | |
| Nuclear® | | | | | | |
| Non-nuclear | 0.49* | (0.23-0.97) | 1.15 | (0.39-3.41) | 0.60* | (0.34-1.05) |
| **Parental survival** | | | | | | |
| Both/anyone died® | | | | | | |
| Both alive | 0.55* | (0.27-0.98) | 0.48* | (0.20-0.97) | 0.46*** | (0.27-0.77) |
| **Family size** | | | | | | |
| Up to four members® | | | | | | |
| Five-six members | 1.12 | (0.42-3.01) | 1.66 | (0.54-5.17) | 1.75 | (0.87-3.50) |
| Seven & above members | 2.41* | (0.82-7.09) | 1.68 | (0.53-5.22) | 2.26** | (1.08-4.72) |
| **Ration card** | | | | | | |
| No® | | | | | | |
| Yes | 1.32 | (0.61-2.83) | 0.45** | (0.23-0.89) | 0.83 | (0.51-1.33) |
| **Wealth status** | | | | | | |
| Poor® | | | | | | |
| Rich | 0.50* | (0.22-0.99) | 1.14 | (0.55-2.37) | 0.76 | (0.46-1.25) |
| **Social support** | | | | | | |
| Low® | | | | | | |
| High | 5.26*** | (2.80-9.85) | 4.77*** | (2.29-9.92) | 5.42*** | (3.49-8.43) |

*Note: *=p<0.10, **=p<0.05, ***=p<0.001, ® indicates reference category, OR=odds ratio, CI=confidence interval*

### *Covariates of marital happiness*

Table 2 shows the odds ratio and significance level at 95 percent confidence interval. In the case of males, place of residence, years of educational difference, marital duration, family type, parental survival, family size, wealth status, and social support were found to be significant covariates of marital happiness. Respondents that lived in the rural areas were found to be significantly more likely to be happy compared to those in the urban areas (OR=0.42; CI: 0.22–0.80). Respondents having 4 and above years of educational difference between spouses were found to be significantly less likely to be happy (OR=0.32; CI: 015-0.81) than others. Respondents in the first year of marriage were found to be significantly

happier than others. However, marital duration was negatively associated with marital happiness, except for those having a marital duration of 4 and 5 years. Respondents that lived in nuclear families were significantly more likely to be happy than those living in joint families (OR=0.49; CI: 0.23–1.05). Respondents whose parents were not alive were significantly less likely to have marital happiness than their other counterparts. Respondents having a poor economic status were found to have more marital happiness than those having a rich economic status (OR=0.50; CI: 0.22-1.12). Male respondents with high social support were found to be 5.26 times more likely to be happy than those with low social support.

In thecase of females, only parental survival, ration card, and social support were found to be significant covariates of marital happiness. Respondents whose parents were not alive were significantly less likely to be happy than their other counterparts (OR=0.48; CI: 0.20–1.14). In contrast, respondents who owned a ration card were found to be less likely to be happy (OR=0.45; CI: 0.23–0.89) than those who did not own one. Female respondents with high social support were found to be 4.77 times more likely to be happy than those with low social support.

Overall (both males and females), almost all covariates, except monthly income of the household, possession of a ration card and wealth status of the respondents were found to be significant covariates of marital happiness. Respondents aged 23-26 years were 1.96 times more likely to be happy compared to those in other age groups. Respondents with high social support were found to be 5.42 times more likely to be happy than respondents with low social support.

*Decomposition of differences in marital happiness*

The mean difference in marital happiness between males and females was 0.155. Selected covariates in this model explain 93% of the gap in marital happiness; only 7% of the gap in marital happiness is unexplained by the selected covariates in this model(Table 3). The mean differences were statistically significant.

Table 3: Summary results of fairlie decomposition analysis of mean difference in marital happiness between newly married male and female in India, 2017

| **Descriptive results of fairlie decomposition analysis** | |
|---|---|
| Number of observation | 502 |
| Number of male observation | 251 |
| Number of female observation | 251 |
| | **Marital happiness** |
| Mean prediction among male | 0.410 |
| Mean prediction among female | 0.255 |
| Difference (total gap) | 0.155 |
| Total explained gap | 0.145 |
| **Total explained gap (in %)** | **93.2** |
| **Total unexplained gap (in %)** | **6.8** |

Table 4: Contribution of each factor in male-female differences in marital happiness in India, 2017

| Background characteristics | Marital happiness | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Coefficient | %contribution | p-value | [ 95% C.I.] |
| Age (continuous) | 0.029 | 20.2 | 0.445 | (-0.046-0.104) |
| Place of residence (rural®/urban) | -0.012 | -8.1 | 0.036 | (-0.002)-(-0.001) |
| Educational difference (continuous) | 0.003 | 1.9 | 0.082 | (0.000-0.006) |
| Marital duration (continuous) | -0.010 | -7.3 | 0.010 | (-0.019)-(-0.002) |
| Monthly income of household (continuous) | 0.006 | 4.1 | 0.585 | (-0.015-0.027) |
| Family type (nuclear®/non-nuclear) | 0.017 | 11.9 | 0.030 | (0.002-0.033) |
| Parental survival (both/anyone died®/both alive) | 0.010 | 7.1 | 0.141 | (-0.003-0.024) |
| Family size (continuous) | 0.003 | 2.2 | 0.320 | (-0.003-0.010) |
| Ration Card (no®/yes) | 0.005 | 3.7 | 0.605 | (-0.015-0.026) |
| Wealth Status (poor®/rich) | 0.012 | 8.0 | 0.147 | (-0.004-0.027) |
| Social support (low®/high) | 0.081 | 56.2 | <0.001 | (0.055-0.108) |
| **Total explained** | **0.145 (93%)** | | | |

*Note:* ®: indicates reference category, CI: confidence interval

### Factors contributing to sex differentials in marital happiness

Table 4 presents the detailed decomposition of the male-female gap in marital happiness by the exposure variables. For the sake of simplicity, we calculated the coefficients in percentage. While the positive contribution of a covariate indicates that a particular covariate contributed to widening the male-female gap in marital happiness, the negative contribution of a covariate (e.g., place of residence and marital duration) indicates diminishing the male-female gap in marital happiness. Findings suggest that about 93% of the difference in male-female marital happiness was explained by the selected exposure variables. Although the magnitude of contribution of the exposure variables differed over the study period, the direction of contribution remained the same for most variables except place of residence and marital duration.

Surprisingly, years of educational difference, monthly income of the household, and number of persons in the household did not have asignificant role in widening the male-female gap in marital happiness. The percentage contribution of family type and social support was very high in widening the male-female gap in marital happiness. Respondent's age contributed 20% to increasing the male-female gap in marital happiness, whereas social support of the respondents contributed 56% to it. The contribution of social support in increasing the male-female gap in marital happiness was overwhelming. Moreover, it was found to play an increasingly important role in increasing the gap in the study. The number of persons in the household was found to widen the male-female gap systematically. Family size, parental survival status, ration card, and wealth status also contributed to the gap.

The decomposition results clearly point out the changing dynamics of factors affecting the male-female gap in marital happiness. While place of residence and marital duration helped in reducing the male-female gap in marital happiness, respondent's age, years of educational difference, monthly income of the household, family type, parental survival, number of persons in the household, ration card, wealth status, and social support contributed to widening it.

**Gender Differences in Marital Happiness among Newly Married Individuals in India: Do the Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors Matter?**

**Discussion**

This study was focussed on marital happiness and its associated factors among males and females in their initial years of married life. The study also assessed the contribution of each factor to widening or reducing the gap in marital happiness among newly married individuals. The present study observed higher marital happiness in men as compared with women. The result is supported by a previous finding documented by Radloff (1975), who observed that marriage benefits men more than women. Another study by Glenn and Weaver (1988) also indicated that married men were happier than married women. Men and women belonging to the age group of 23-26 years were happier than their counterparts. The finding was in line with the study conducted by Fincham and Linfield (1997), who stated that older adults were less satisfied with their marriage than younger ones. This is because married individuals at younger ages are likely to be more motivated and to give more time to the positive aspects of the marital relationship. The individuals (both male and female) residing in rural areas were happier than those residing in urban areas. Newly married couples gave more time to their spouse in rural areas in comparison to those in urban areas.

The study also found that marital happiness among newly married individuals was negatively associated with years of educational difference between the spouses. Groot and Van Den Brink (2002) also showed that years of educational difference between the spouses had a significant effect on marital happiness. One more study conducted by Yoshany*et al*., (2017) observed that higher years of educational difference between the spouseswas associated with less marital happiness. Marriage duration was also an important determinant of marital happiness. In newly married individuals, marital happiness was higher in the first year of married life, followed by in the second and later years. The findings were statistically significant. This is supported by Van Laningham *et al*. (2001), who found a curvilinear association between marital duration and marital happiness. The association was found to be strong.

Individuals from nuclear families were happier in their married life than those living in joint families. Among newlywed females, those who belonged to nuclear families were happier in their married life than their counterparts. This is because of less availability oftime for the partner in joint families during theinitial years of married life. This finding is consistent with the results drawn from a study by Johnson *et al*. (1988). Income was found to be an important factor which affected marital happiness. Male respondents with monthly income below Rs. 10,000 were reported to be happier than those having monthly income above Rs. 10,000. It was revealed by Tao (2005) that marital happiness was higher in respondents who were earning low and thathappiness remained constant among those earning high.

Household wealth status was found to be an important determinant of marital happiness. In males, respondents belonging to poor socioeconomic status were happier in their married life. By contrast, among females, marital happiness was higher in those whose spouse had a rich socioeconomic status. Results contradictory to those found by our study have been reported by Vanassche *et al*. (2013). They found that the financial condition of the respondents affected their marital happiness. Individuals from low and middle wealth quartiles were less happy than their counterparts belonging to the higher wealth quartile. This contradiction may be due to the study having been conducted in a developed country, where all other associated indicators were much better than in a developing country like India, where these factors have a direct and an indirect intense impact on happiness. Many other

studies have found that income is positively associated with marital and family life satisfaction (Schramm and Harris, 2011; Spanier and Lewis, 1980).

According to the World Happiness Report 2019 (Helliwell*et al.* 2019), social support was considered the most significant and important determinant of happiness. The present study also found that social support of an individual was positively and most significantly associated with marital happiness. Other studies have also revealed that respondents with higher social support were happier than their counterparts (Richter, 2014 and Acitelli, 1996).Social support of family, friends, relatives, etc. has been found to bepositively and significantly associated with marital satisfaction by various studies (Julien and Markman, 1991; Acitelli, 1996; Pasch and Bradbury, 1998).

## Conclusions

The present study concludes that the major factors that widen the male-female gap in marital happiness are social support and type of family. Social support (56%) and family type (12%) of spouse are the most important and statistically significant factors to widen the male-female gap in happiness in the initial years of marital life. Age of the respondent contributes 20% to the gap. Though age is an important contributing factor, it is not statistically significant. Hence, the study concludes that social support is one of the main factors leading to higher levels of happiness. There is a need to pay more attention to social support during the initial years of marriage to increase happiness. The findings indicate the importance of marital counseling during the initial years of marriage, whereby newly married couples may be made aware of the factors that improve marital happiness.

## Acknowledgement

## References

Acitelli, L.K., 1996, The neglected links between marital support and marital satisfaction. In *Handbook of social support and the family* (pp. 83-103). Springer BostonMA. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4899-1388-3_5.

Bernard, J., 1972, Factors in the distribution of success in marriage. *American Journal of Sociology*, 40(1): 49-60.

Das, N. P., and Dey, D., 1998, Female age at marriage in India: trends and determinants. *Demography India*, 27(1): 91-115.

Deshpande, M. S., 2010, History of the Indian caste system and its impact on India today.https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=socssp.

Fatima, M., and Ajmal, M. A., 2012, Happy Marriage: A qualitative study, *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 9(2): 37-42.

Fiese, B. H., Tomcho, T. J., Douglas, M., Josephs, K., Poltrock, S., and Baker, T., 2002, A review of 50 years of research on naturally occurring family routines and rituals: Cause for celebration?, *Journal of family psychology*, 16(4): 381-390.

Fincham, F. D., and Linfield, K. J., 1997, A new look at marital quality: Can spouses feel positive and negative about their marriage?, *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11(4): 489-502.

Fowers, B. J., 1991, His and her marriage: A multivariate study of gender and marital satisfaction. *Sex Roles*, 24(3-4): 209-221.

Glenn, N. D., and Weaver, C. N., 1979, A note on family situation and global happiness. *Social Forces*, 57(3): 960-967.

Glenn, N. D., and Weaver, C. N., 1988, The changing relationship of marital status to reported happiness. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50(3): 317-324.

Gove, W. R., and Tudor, J. F., 1973, Adult sex roles and mental illness. *American journal of Sociology*, *78*(4): 812-835.

Groot, W., and Van Den Brink, H. M., 2002, Age and education differences in marriages and their effects on life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *3*(2): 153-165.

Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., and Sachs, J., 2019, World happiness report (2019).https://s3.amazonaws.com/happiness-report/2019/WHR19.pdf

Ho, D. Y., Spinks, J. A., and Yeung, C. S. H. (Eds.), 1989, *Chinese patterns of behavior: A sourcebook of psychological and psychiatric studies*. New York: Praeger Publishers.https://insights.ovid.com/psyccritiques/psycc/1990/05/000/chinese-patterns-behavior /81/ 01258377.

Islam, M. M., 2013, Effects of consanguineous marriage on reproductive behaviour, adverse pregnancy outcomes and offspring mortality in Oman. *Annals of human biology*, 40(3): 243-255.

Johnson, B. L., Eberley, S., Duke, J. T., and Sartain, D. H., 1988, Wives' employment status and marital happiness of religious couples. Review of religious research, 29(1): 259-270.

Julien, D., and Markman, H. J., 1991, Social support and social networks as determinants of individual and marital outcomes. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8(4): 549-568.

Kazak, A. E., Reber, M., and Snitzer, L., 1988, Childhood chronic disease and family functioning: a study of phenylketonuria. *Pediatrics*, 81(2): 224-230.

Murphy, M., Glaser, K., and Grundy, E., 1997, Marital status and long-term illness in Great Britain. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59(2): 156-164.

Oaxaca, R. L., and Ransom, M. R., 1994, On discrimination and the decomposition of wage differentials. *Journal of econometrics*, 61(1): 5-21.

Pasch, L. A., and Bradbury, T. N., 1998, Social support, conflict, and the development of marital dysfunction. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, *66*(2): 219.

Patel, K. K., and Dhar, M., 2019, Marital happiness among newly married individuals in a rural district in India. *Journal of social science spectrum,* 4(2): 76-85.

Radloff, L., 1975, Sex differences in depression. *Sex roles*, *1*(3): 249-265.

Richter, J., Rostami, A., and Ghazinour, M., 2014, Marital Satisfaction, Coping, and Social Support in Female Medical Staff Members in Tehran University Hospitals. *Interpersonal*, 8(1): 115.

Schramm, D. G., and Harris, V. W., 2011, Marital quality and income: An examination of the influence of government assistance. *Journal of family and economic issues*, 32(3): 437-448.

Shek, D. T., 1995, Gender differences in marital quality and well-being in Chinese married adults. *Sex roles*, *32*(11-12): 699-715.

Sonawat, R., 2001, Understanding families in India: A reflection of societal changes. *Psicologia: TeoriaePesquisa*, 17(2): 177-186.

Spanier, G. B., and Lewis, R. A., 1980, Marital quality: A review of the seventies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 42(1): 825-839.

Tao, H. L., 2005, The effects of income and children on marital happiness—evidence from middle-and old-aged couples. *Applied Economics Letters*, 12(8): 521-524.

Vanassche, S., Swicegood, G., and Matthijs, K., 2013, Marriage and children as a key to happiness? Cross-national differences in the effects of marital status and children on well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *14*(2): 501-524.

VanLaningham, J., Johnson, D. R., and Amato, P., 2001, Marital happiness, marital duration, and the U-shaped curve: Evidence from a five-wave panel study. *Social Forces*, *79*(4): 1313-1341.

Williams, K., 2003, Has the future of marriage arrived? A contemporary examination of gender, marriage, and psychological well-being. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 44(4): 470.

Yoshany, N., Morowatisharifabad, M. A., Mihanpour, H., Bahri, N., and Jadgal, K. M., 2017, The effect of husbands' education regarding menopausal health on marital satisfaction of their wives. *Journal of menopausal medicine*, 23(1): 15-24.

Zhang, H., Xu, X., and Tsang, S. K., 2013, Conceptualizing and validating marital quality in Beijing: A pilot study. *Social indicators research*, 113(1): 197-212.

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., and Farley, G. K., 1988, The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of personality assessment*, 52(1): 30-41.