

Marital Satisfaction And Its Role In Family Stability During The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic In A Sample Of Married Couples In Irbid Governorate

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Abstract

The study aimed to reveal the relationship between marital satisfaction and family stability in a sample of married couples in the Irbid Governorate during the novel coronavirus pandemic. The study sample consisted of (400) spouses chosen at random from among all Irbid Governorate nationals. According to the findings of the study, there is a statistically significant positive association between marital satisfaction and family stability.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction- Family Stability - COVID-19

Introduction

The rise in the number of cases of the novel coronavirus has put the world in a delicate situation that threatens the lives of many people. As a result of the pandemic, millions of people have been quarantined at home around the world. The length of quarantine, fear of infection, boredom, insufficient supplies, lack of information, and financial loss are all factors that contribute to quarantine stress. Being in a confined place for a considerably longer period of time than usual under stressful situations means that there are more opportunities to enhance both positive and negative dynamics. Thus, a strong and balanced marriage, with contentment and concord, overcomes these difficulties and crises; whereas, a weak, turbulent, and imbalanced marriage tosses the entire family into the wind, blasting it as it pleases. This is confirmed by a study (Paula,

2020), which concluded that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on people's daily lives and created multiple societal challenges. One of the key challenges with this particular stress is maintaining healthy intimate connections, which are inextricably related to mental and physical health. Nonetheless, research on romantic relationships indicates that external pressures such as economic issues, the need for a job, and natural disasters, may jeopardize the quality and durability of couples' relationships. Furthermore, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic's external stress is likely to increase harmful bilateral processes (e.g., hostility, withdrawal, and less responsive support), which will degrade the quality of a couple's relationship. These negative consequences are likely to be exacerbated by the broader context in which couples' relationships exist (e.g., social class, minority status, age), as

well as their individual vulnerabilities (e.g., attachment insecurities, depression). The study (Maiti, et al., 2020) also discovered that marital distress as a result of the Corona pandemic (COVID-19) has turned into a conflict, and it has become a growing problem during this turbulent time, making life even more difficult. When fear and anxiety for life and fundamental ontological survival become vital and evident, people lose their essential support such as conjugal bonding. This is all the more concerning since, even if the infectious pandemic's acute wave ended, the long-term effects of tremendous psychological tension and conflict (such as marital distress) would continue to impair our lives for an indefinite period of time. On the other hand, the strength of a healthy marital tie can be created by both strong and internally confident persons, which will undoubtedly aid them in fighting this ordeal more effectively, both individually and as a strong, unified couple.

According to Mooradian et al. (2011), the stability of marriage life is determined by how well the couple adjusts to new changes in their lives and how adaptable they are in modifying their social roles to suit the nature of marital life. Moreover, the couple's determination to obey and adhere to the moral ideals to which they belong contributes to marital stability and long-term success in order to achieve what is referred to as marital satisfaction.

Marital satisfaction is a natural result of the nature of the interactions between the spouses in various aspects of social, emotional, cultural, economic, trust, respect, and expression of the other party's emotional feelings, as well as the partner's emotional satisfaction, in addition to similarity or convergence in values, ideas, customs, and traditions, and compatibility in how to

manage the family and raise children, and provide the appropriate income (Clayton, 2014). Marital satisfaction covers several elements, including psychological compatibility, moral compatibility, age compatibility, and social, economic, and intellectual compatibility. There are several aspects that necessitate joint gratification must be met in order to achieve marital satisfaction by both partners: emotional, sexual, economic, social, intellectual, cultural, and religious fulfillment (Bylund et.al, 2010).

(Olson, 2000) defined marital satisfaction as "The result of sharing experiences, interests and values, respecting the other party's goals or needs and mood, automatically expressing feelings, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and cooperating in decision-making and problem solving, raising children, or mutual sexual satisfaction." (Gubbins et.al, 2010) defines it as "The ability of the spouses to harmonize with each other in an integrated manner and adapt to the demands of marriage, as evidenced by both husband and wife's methods for achieving their marriage goals, dealing with marital problems, expressing their emotions, and meeting their needs from this marriage."

Several psychological theories, including psychoanalytic theory, behavioral theory, and Self theory, have emerged to explain marital concordance. The interpretation of marital satisfaction in these theories has varied. According to analysts, projection of what one spouse is subjected to unpleasant experiences and projection on reality leads to marital incompatibility. However, the behaviorists believe that low marital satisfaction is due to learned behavioral patterns from others that can be changed by erasing the wrong behavior and learning the appropriate alternative. The Self theory, on

the other hand, maintains that the compatible individual is one who can accept all views, including his own (Abu Omar, 2011).

(Fenell, 1993) established a set of criteria that contribute to successful marriage and ranked them from most to least important: lifetime commitment to marriage; loyalty to spouse; respect for spouse as best friend; commitment to sexual fidelity; desire to be good parent; desire to please and support spouse; good companion to spouse. (Barry, 2006) adds some additional factors that contribute to marital satisfaction and summarizes them as follows: putting the partner in the shoes of the other party; recognizing the partner's opinions and problems; cooperating positively with the family and considering all of the partner's positive qualities during disagreements with the other partner; recalling previous happy times during disagreements with the other partner; seeking help from specialists or friends when marital problems arise; and not comparing the partner with others, that is, being satisfied with what the partner has and conversing with the partner.

(Hobert, 2007) also noted that a disruption in family ties causes psychological instability inside the family, and that spouses' lack of willingness to address the problem leads to the loss of many positive sentiments and respect. As a result of the scenario, they experience emotional detachment, which leads to numerous splits between couples as married life progresses, reducing their emotional compatibility. (Gottman, 1999) identified four behaviors that contribute to marital dissatisfaction: an excess of criticism that leads to disdain, which in turn creates a defensive attitude and, finally, unwillingness to remain along with lack of emotion between them. Thus, spouses are regarded incompatible or misfit together if their

behaviors harm each other, deny them of their needs, do not assist them in achieving their marriage objectives, or ruin their marital connection (Manning, et.al, 2010).

Marriage is formed by the presence of two people, each with their own ideas and tendencies, who share commonalities in order to achieve the goals of marriage, which include establishing a stable family, bringing happiness to the other, and understanding each other's individual differences and variations. (Basharpoor and Sheykholeslami, 2015). This is to achieve the concept of marriage, which states that it is a social, economic, and legal covenant, as well as an emotional and religious commitment in which both husband and wife share their customs and expectations for each other, as well as feelings of intimacy and love that motivate each spouse to put the other's needs ahead of their own (Barbara & Gynthia, 2010).

Study Problem:

Marriage is a vital social and psychological connection for young men and women, which God blessed since it provides a sound lawful foundation for establishing a family and is a universally acknowledged institution despite cultural, religious, and geographical variation. Any global crisis has the potential to have both direct and indirect effects on marriage throughout the world. In terms of its impact on relationships, the developing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic appears to be no different, with the risk of marital issues persisting long after the outbreak is over. A dependable marriage, on the other hand, may provide important psychological support, particularly in times of crisis, as well as contribute to the emotional well-being of both individuals and families (Maiti, et al., 2020).

The relationship may be subjected to a series of changes and emergencies as a result of the emergence of this pandemic, which forced millions of people into home quarantine and caused major disruption and disturbance to the course of life in all nations, putting its stability and cohesiveness in jeopardy. Furthermore, schools, universities, and a large number of businesses have been closed, internal and external travel has been restricted, and public gatherings have been prohibited. As a consequence, in light of the current crisis, it is critical to grasp opportunities to stress the significance of family stability in society, as we have witnessed a shift in family behaviors as a result of the amount of time that family members spend together within the house. Consequently, this crisis must be taken as an opportunity for family stability since the majority of families will be spending an extended period of time together in one location for the first time. To achieve family stability and marriage pleasure under these conditions, marital satisfaction must be one of the most essential factors accessible between spouses in order to accomplish family stability and marital pleasure for society to be a unified and cohesive where cohesiveness and stability predominate.

Many studies have demonstrated that marital harmony is critical to a family's stability, psychological comfort, the unification of interactions between spouses toward recognizing marital and sexual rights, and the maturity and optimism with which simple and regular conflicts between spouses are handled. It also improves spouses' capacity to withstand life's challenges and overcome crises, making them happier.

This is confirmed by the study (Al-Buraiki, 2016) that the Holy Sharia is concerned with compatibility since it is so important in

developing the relationship between couples, strengthening their love bonds, and attaining family cohesiveness and stability. This helps to minimize the phenomena that threaten the family entity and its values, and hence threatens to demolish and ruin society. Furthermore, the study (Vanover, Bradley, 2016) looked at what experienced marriage counselors feel are the most essential factors affecting marital satisfaction and success. The study revealed three major elements: the presence of external support, strong communication, and the amount of time people spend in marriage together. Furthermore, the study (Belanger et al., 2014) discovered that healthy relationships between spouses contribute to the psychological well-being of both couples.

As a result, the study's problem emerged from the two researchers' observations and daily experiences of the Jordanian family's social, political, and economic conditions, as well as the challenges they face during the home quarantine in order to maintain their role as the main pillar for maintaining an interconnected and cohesive society in which sympathy, respect, and responsibility prevail among its members. Given the importance of this subject and the scarcity of studies that have dealt with it, this study came as a new scientific addition to identify the relationship between marital satisfaction and family stability during the novel coronavirus pandemic from the couple's perspective.

Study Question

The study's problem can be recognized by answering the following question:

- 1- Is there a link between marital satisfaction and family stability in a sample of Irbid married couples?

Significance of the Study

- 1- In light of the coronavirus pandemic, this study is significant in terms of family life.
- 2- The study adds to the theoretical frameworks in the field of psychology, particularly in the field of family and marriage counseling.
- 2- The focus of this study is on the critical role that marital harmony plays in maintaining family stability and preventing family conflict.
- 3- The study's findings may provide information that may be used to develop therapeutic and preventative counseling programs that can help couples achieve marital satisfaction and improve their relationships.

The two researchers employed a descriptive correlational approach to investigate the correlation between marital satisfaction and family stability in a sample of married couples in Irbid Governorate.

Study Population and its Sample

The current study population consists of husbands and wives living in Irbid Governorate during the months of March, April, and May of 2020. To ensure that the study population was adequately represented, the two researchers chose a sample of (400) husbands and wives from the city of Irbid at random. Table (1) depicts the distribution of sample members based on variables such as personal and demographic traits.

Study Approach

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	200	50.0
	Male	200	50.0
	Total	400	100.0
Age	20-30 years old	77	19.3
	30-40 years old	128	32.0
	40-50 years old	120	30.0
	50-60 years old	66	16.5
	Over 60 years old	9	2.3
	Total	400	100.0
Marriage Duration	less than a year	9	2.3
	From 1-5 years	60	15.0
	6-10 years old	76	19.0
	11-15 years old	71	17.8
	16 years and over	184	46.0
	Total	400	100.0
Educational Level	Secondary	106	26.5
	Diploma	51	12.8
	Bachelor's	155	38.8
	Postgraduate	88	22.0
	Total	400	100.0

It appears from Table (1) that:

- In terms of the gender variable, it appears that there are (200) females and (200) males, with a proportion of (50.0%) for each.
- In terms of the age variable, it appears that (from 30-40 years) are the most frequent, which amounted to (128) and percentage (32.0%), while (more than 60 years) are the least frequent, which amounted to (9) and percentage (2.3%).
- In terms of the marriage duration variable, it appears that (16 years and above) are the most frequent, which amounted to (184), with a percentage of (46.0%), while (less than a year) are the least frequent, which amounted to (9) and with a percentage of (2.3%).
- In terms of the educational level variable, it appears that (bachelor) is the most frequent, which amounted to (155) and percentage (38.8%), while (diploma) is the least frequent, which amounted to (51) and percentage (12.8%).

Study Tools

To verify the study questions, the two researchers used the following tools:

Preliminary Data Form

The Preliminary Primary Data Form contains a number of general data, which include: gender, age, duration of marriage, and educational level (prepared by the two researchers).

Marital Satisfaction Scale

The Marital Satisfaction Scale (Al-Anazi, 2010) was employed in this study. It's a self-report measure with eighty-two (82) statements distributed over five dimensions:

(organizational dimension - personal dimension - emotional dimension - social dimension - cultural dimension). Scale statements have three response categories (happens a lot - happens a little - never happens), and individuals' responses to the scale's statements are corrected by assigning scores (3-2-1) for positive statements and scores (1-2-3) for negative statements, so that the total score of the scale reflects marital satisfaction. The arithmetic averages were additionally graded using the following classification: (from 1-1.66 to low); (from 1.67-2.33 middle); (from 2.34 to 3.00 high).

Family Instability Scale

The Family Instability Scale (Sahaf, 2016) was employed in this study. It's a self-report measure with thirty-one statements grouped into five dimensions: (presence of disturbances, desire for separation and divorce - respect and mutual communication - companionship - parental interference in the affairs of the spouses - participation in roles between spouses). Scale statements have five response categories (strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) and individuals' responses to the scale's statements are corrected by assigning scores (5-4-3-2-1) for positive statements and scores (1-2-3-4-5) for negative statements, so that the total score of the scale indicates family stability. The arithmetic averages were additionally graded using the following classification: (lower than 2.33 is low); (from 2.34-3.66 medium); (from 3.67 to 5.00 high).

Study Tools' Reliability

The tool reliability equation (Cronbach's alpha) was applied to all parts of the study and the tool as a whole for the exploratory sample of (50) persons in order to extract the study tool's reliability; Table 2 displays this.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the study areas and the tool as a whole

No.	Area	Number of paragraphs	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
1	Presence of disturbances, desire for separation and divorce	10	0.93
2	Respect and mutual communication	10	0.91
3	Companionship	5	0.82
4	Parental interference in the affairs of the spouses	3	0.90
5	Participation in roles between spouses	3	0.78
Measure of family instability as a whole		31	0.93
1	Organizationaldimension	17	0.73
2	Personaldimension	20	0.76
3	Emotionaldimension	21	0.80
4	Socialdimension	11	0,82
5	Culturaldimension	13	0,88
Measure of family stability as a whole		82	0.91

It appears from Table (2) that:

- The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scale of family instability ranged from (0.78-0.93), with the highest for “presence of disturbances, desire for separation and divorce” and the lowest for “participation in roles between spouses,” as well as the Cronbach's

alpha coefficient for the scale of family instability as a whole (0.93).

- Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the marital compatibility scale ranged from (0.73-0.88), with the highest for the “cultural dimension” and the lowest for the “organizational dimension,” and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the marital compatibility scale as a whole was

(0.91), with all recurrence coefficients being high and acceptable for the study's purposes.

Study Results

Question results:

The study question states: “Is there a link between marital satisfaction and family

stability among a sample of married couples in Irbid Governorate?” The computation of correlation coefficients was performed to indicate a link between marital satisfaction and family stability among a sample of married couples in Irbid Governorate in order to address this issue, as shown in Table (3).

Table (3) Correlation coefficients between marital satisfaction and family stability (n = 400)

Variables		Presence of disturbances, desire for separation and divorce	Respect and mutual communication	Companionship	Parental interference in the affairs of the spouses	Participation in roles between spouses	Measure of family stability as a whole
Organizational dimension	Correlation coefficient	.471**	-.132-**	.037	.467**	.368**	.543**
	Statistical significance	.000	.008	.457	.000	.000	.000
Personal dimension	Correlation coefficient	.440**	-.179-**	-.049	.407**	.345**	.586**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.327	.000	.000	.000
Emotional dimension	Correlation coefficient	.385**	-.093	-.023	.371**	.320**	.450**

	Statistical significance	.000	.062	.641	.000	.000	.000
Social dimension	Correlation coefficient	.232**	-.230**	-.095	.286**	.140**	.366**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.057	.000	.005	.000
Cultural dimension	Correlation coefficient	-.265**	-.004	-.002	-.121*	-.218**	-.390**
	Statistical significance	.000	.935	.971	.015	.000	.000
Marital satisfaction as a whole	Correlation coefficient	.449**	-.186**	-.025	.465**	.347**	.553**
	Statistical significance	.000	.000	.621	.000	.000	.000

Table (3) shows that the correlation coefficients between the two measures of marital satisfaction and marital stability as a whole were (0.553) and statistically significant (0.00), indicating that marital satisfaction and family stability are related.

Except for the cultural dimension, which had a correlation coefficient of (-0.390), all of the

correlation coefficients between the marital satisfaction dimension and the marital stability scale were positive, and the personal dimension came in first with a correlation coefficient of (0.586), followed by the organizational dimension (0.543), and finally the emotional dimension (0.450). Then there's the social dimension (0.366), which is statistically significant at the (0.05) level.

Discussion of the Findings

The sample as a whole showed a high level of marital stability, indicating that married couples in the Irbid governorate are content with their lives. In Jordanian culture, marriage and the family are sacred institutions that must be protected according to Islamic law. Divorce and marital separation still have a negative social stigma attached to them, making married couples more committed to their marriage's continuation and stability, making it difficult to consider separation unless things get heated and the spouses' relationship crumbles, making it difficult to find compromise solutions that satisfy both spouses. The sample's characteristics contributed to its high level of stability and marital compatibility, as well as its education and psychological maturity, which enabled it to rise above anything that threatened its security and comfort. As a result, the marriage connection, and especially the family, is considered as the key building block for constructing communities and protecting their members from loss. The sample members' educational level, on the other hand, enabled them to talk, converse, and interact with their partners about the ideas and concepts that each of them advocated, enhancing the emotional side. Furthermore, some husbands' exposure to foreign cultures, whether through the media, travel, or socializing with them at work, has eliminated a big portion of the culture of shame and routine in the marriage that existed in traditional Jordanian society until recently.

These findings, according to the two researchers, are due to the fact that married men and women are all children of the same geographical area, and they are expected to face the same family, economic, and cultural

situations and circumstances, so their behavior is governed by the prevailing customs, traditions, values, and social standards that perpetuate family building and satisfaction.

The study also found that the level of satisfaction and marital stability in males are keener to pay attention to the safety of marital life through the preservation of the components of satisfaction and marital stability and their practice during the course of marital and family life, as evidenced by the stability of the arithmetic averages and the significance of the differences.

Many elements, according to the two researchers, contribute to the improvement in marital satisfaction and stability, the most essential of which are: -

The length of time that the couple has been married. The duration of the period creates intimacy, mutual dependence, and personality maturity in the spouses, allowing them to better understand and communicate with one another, and thus allowing marriage to achieve the goals and functions for which it was created, namely stability and psychological security. Over the course of a marriage, the couples establish new marital trends. The shared experience of spouses creates a strong tie between them, allowing them to create their own universe in which they interchange taking and giving, as well as engage in dealing with crises and settling conflicts.

The approach of spouses that is based on mercy, compassion, and mutual respect, raising the ceiling of marital compatibility for the couples, which is dependent on the extent of religious commitment of the spouses.

The age range of the sample is (31-49), implying that the individual has achieved

maximum success and that his or her ideas are based on logic and facts, and that the individual has persevered through previous life struggles until they realize the success they aspire to, achieve goals, and try to avoid negatives and obstacles, as well as social, psychological, and public relations problems and pressures. Marital satisfaction rises with age, owing to the husband's increased awareness and comprehension of life as a result of his old age, which is characterized by a sense of stability in his married life.

The findings of this study corroborated those of other studies, such as Melhem and colleagues (2020), who found a high level of marital satisfaction among the sample members, and Ningsih and Herawati (2017), who found a link between the age of the husband and wife at engagement, marital satisfaction, family functions, and family cohesion. As well as Al-Mahdi's (2015) study, which indicated that marital adjustment was high, with inequalities in marital adjustment averages favoring husbands. Along with the study by Al-Khalidi, Al-Khatib, Al-Raqqad, and Al-Anani (2012), which found that there is an

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increase in the degrees of marital satisfaction, and that there are differences due to the age variable in favor of the two groups (the youngest - the oldest), and differences due to educational level in favor of women with a general secondary certificate and less.

The findings of this study contrasted from those of several other studies, such as Al-Samihien (2018), whose findings suggested that the level of marital satisfaction among the study sample was moderate, and that there was no statistical significance in social compatibility related to the gender variable.

Recommendations

- 1- Creating and launching official electronic advice websites specializing in family and marital issues, with the mission of counseling and advising spouses on how to deal with family crises and effective solutions.
- 2- Expanding research and studies on the phenomena of marital satisfaction during the Corona epidemic.

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