



## LOCUS OF CONTROL AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AS PREDICTORS OF HAPPINESS AMONG MARRIED COUPLES

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**ABSTRACT** The present study entitled "Locus of Control and Marital Adjustment as Predictors of Happiness among Married Couples" was undertaken to assess the level of happiness among married couples and to examine the contribution of locus of control and perceived marital adjustment on happiness of married couples. Oxford Happiness Inventory, Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scale and Marital Adjustment Questionnaire were administered on 100 married couples (26-35 years of age). The results revealed that a major proportion of married couples reported happiness at high levels. The husbands perceived more happiness and powerful others control as compared to wives whereas wives reported significantly higher marital adjustment, internal and chance control as compared to husbands. Correlation analysis revealed that marital adjustment was significantly positively correlated to happiness. The correlation between happiness and internal scale was found to be positively significantly correlated whereas powerful others control was negatively significant correlated and chance control showed negatively non-significant results

**KEYWORDS :** Happiness, marital adjustment, locus of control.

### 1. Introduction

Marital happiness is considered to be a judgment made by a spouse which indicates the sense of well being or satisfaction that an individual experiences in the marital relationship. Satisfaction in marital life typically refers to the subjective attitude that individuals have towards their marital relationship. Marital quality may be used synonymously with marital satisfaction, but it also has been used to refer to marital adjustment.

A mental state in marital adjustment among the married couples reflected the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to a particular person. The more costs a marriage partner inflicts on a person, the less satisfied one generally was with the marriage and with the married partner. Similarly, the greater the perceived benefits were, the more satisfied one was with the marriage and with the married partner. Marital satisfaction has been referred to be a global level of favorability that individual spouses reported with their marital relationship. It was, therefore, viewed as an individual's interpretation of the overall quality of their marriage or the person's happiness with the marriage (Edalati and Redzuan, 2010).

The marital adjustment was considered to be the balance that couples have feelings of happiness and satisfaction with each other. They agreed upon each other's opinions and thoughts, were satisfied with the type and level of relationship and also from the type and quality of leisure time. It was required in married couples to manage their time well and financial issues. Bradbury *et al.* (2000) have defined marital satisfaction as an overall attitude or feelings towards his/her spouse and his/her relationship. Such a definition of marital satisfaction suggested that satisfaction was a one-dimensional concept represented an overall assessment of the individual and his/her relationship to his/her spouse. The presence of marital satisfaction was inevitable for marital life permanency and how they enjoyed being together. But, having marital satisfaction does not mean the absence of any conflict in a marital relationship; it was a notion that there must be no conflict in the joyful and happy life was completely wrong because the conflict was inevitable in human relationships.

In studies related to the factors affecting the satisfaction of marital life, several factors have been mentioned in various sources. Since divorce has been increasing in the world and this increase has led some countries facing a crisis. Therefore, in the last decade, many researchers have investigated the factors affecting the stability of marriage and marital satisfaction. Among these factors, some factors were mentioned, such as psychological factors, demographic factors, parental characteristics, mental and physical health of couples,

personality characteristics, the amount of dependence on marriage, physical attraction and premarital factors or a combination of these factors. From a contemporary point of view, (Bradbury *et al.*, 2000), the factors which affected the marital satisfaction could be divided into two categories viz-a-viz Interpersonal processes which occur between couples including cognition, emotion, physiology, behavioral patterns, social support and violence, the environment that couples were living in, includes numerous changes of social, economic, personal, cognitive and religious factors that affected marital satisfaction and adjustment which might later on leads to a happy marital life.

Loci of control studies, in the context of an interpersonal relationship were rather scanty. The empirical studies conducted on the locus of control and marriage have centered on the relationship between locus of control and marital satisfaction and stability and problem-solving behavior in marriage (Doherty, 1983). Locus of control as a concept was also developed by Phares (1957) was related to beliefs about internal versus external control of reinforcement. Since, the advent of Rotter's social learning theory, locus of control has become an important variable in psychological researches, the construct is known as 'locus of control' first came into prominence with the publication of a monograph by Rotter (1966). He also presented the scale to assess locus of control. It was referred to as generalized expectancies of the individual for internal vs external control of reinforcement.

### 2. Conceptual Framework of the research study (Happiness, locus of control and marital adjustment)

In this section, the concepts used in the study are being discussed under the following heads:

#### 2.1 Happiness

Happiness was considered to be the most essentials in present-day society. It was not only an individual who wants happiness in their own life but also supports the idea of happiness of other people (Bentham, 1789). This philosophy of happiness was not only endured these days but also was practicable. The researchers in this field were working in-depth to explore the conditions of happiness (Veenhoven, 2005). In this context, happiness was commonly understood to explore as for how an individual life in a state of well-being and the degree to which one evaluates one's life as a whole positively.

Philosophers have traditionally distinguished two accounts of happiness which includes hedonism and the life satisfaction theory. According to Hedonists, they identified happiness with the individual's balance of pleasant over unpleasant experience. (Brandt, 1979, 1989; Carson, 1978, 1981; Kahneman, 1999; Mighterfeld, 1996, 1999). The

difference in their approach was that happiness need not accept the stronger doctrine of welfare hedonism. This emerged clearly in arguments against the classical utilitarian focus on happiness as the aim of social choice. Such arguments tend to grant the identification of happiness with pleasure, but challenge the idea that this should be our primary or sole concern and often as well the idea that happiness was all that matters for well-being.

Haybron (2000) stated his emotional state which departs from hedonism in a different way. He has described his view that instead of identifying happiness with pleasant experience which identified happiness with an agent's emotional condition as a whole, this included non-experiential aspects of emotions and moods (or just moods) and excluded pleasures which do not directly involve the individual's emotional state. It might also include a person's propensity for experiencing various moods, which could vary over time.

### 2.1 Marital adjustment

According to Gove *et al.* (1990), the relationship between marriage and well-being was explained by two different processes as social selection and social causation. According to the social selection perspective, an individual with high levels of well being was more likely to get married and stay married than an individual with lower levels of well-being. The social causation perspective, on the other hand, suggested that the marital relationship has produced high levels of well-being.

Researchers in support of social selection hypotheses have argued that persons who were emotionally or mentally unstable were less likely to marry, and if they do, so then they were less likely to stay married (Martin, 1976; Mastekaasa, 1992, 1994; Rushing, 1979; Turner and Gartrell, 1978). Mastekaasa (1992) found that psychological well-being significantly predicted transition into marriage for women with respect to their age (young and middle age). As levels of psychological well-being increased, the probability of marrying also increased. In a later study, Mastekaasa (1994) found that poor psychological well-being predicted later marital dissolution. For both men and women, he found that the average level of psychological well-being of those who later separated or divorced was significantly lower than that of those who were stably married.

### 2.2. Locus of control

Locus of control explains to the degree to which individuals perceive that outcomes result from their own behaviors or from forces that are external to themselves. This produces a continuum with external control at one end and internal control at the other. Rotter (1966) stated that locus of control could be generalized into a basic dichotomy: internal and external. Individuals with an internal locus of control believed that future outcomes depend primarily on personal actions, whereas individuals with an external locus of control described actions to factors outside of their control, such as fate or chance.

The empirical work conducted on the locus of control and a marital relationship has centered on the relationship between locus of control and marital satisfaction and stability (Constantine and Bahr 1981, Dohei 1981, 1983, Mlott and Lira 1977) and problem solving behaviour in marriage (Doherty and Ryder 1979, 1981). These studies have revealed weak and inconsistent results (Doherty 1980, 1981, Kawash and Scherf 1975). This might be due to the lack of theoretical attention typically paid to the mediating chain of events linking locus of control to specific behaviour that could interfere with or facilitate to marital problem-solving and ultimately marital satisfaction. Additionally, the very general locus of control measures used in these studies might make it difficult to establish a strong connection between individuals' orientations and specific behaviors within the restricted domain of marital interaction.

### 3. Previous Research

Marriage was frequently described as simply one of a number of lifestyle options, competing with advanced education, career achievements and less formal relationship structures (Mackay, 1997). A successful marriage was considered a marriage in which two individuals respect their own values and principles full-heartedly, have mutual interests, feel commitment towards each other, have made a decision to be together under any circumstances and cooperate with one another (Gardner *et al.*, 2004) and satisfaction of couples requires their efforts to gain it (Parker *et al.*, 1995). Periodically, researchers have sought to determine which factors distinguish happy, successful

and satisfying marriages from unsatisfactory ones (Halford *et al.* 2007, Kaslow and Robison, 1996; Lee and Ono, 2008).

However, in a study undertaken by Houseknecht and Hango (2006), it was revealed that disagreements and turmoil in a marriage have lots of negative effects on children's health conditions. Other factors, including the quality of premarital relationships, the quality of marriage and the way couples relate to one another, couple's personality types and the way they deal with problems in their marriage influence marital happiness and lead to compatibilities or disagreements in their relationships. In order, to gain a better understanding of marital success, researchers generally measure one or more factors including stability, duration, satisfaction, adjustment and commitment. Stability refers to whether marriage remains intact or is dissolved (Wright *et al.*, 1994). Duration refers to the number of years that marriage remains intact.

Studies have shown that those with an internal locus of control tend to be more successful people because they believe in their goal and work towards that goal (Neil 2005, Obasa 1990). Those with an external locus of control believed that forces outside of themselves had affected their achievement ability. They tend to stake their future on things such as fate, luck, god or society. Because they believed that they had very little personal stake in their future, those with an external locus of control tended to put less effort on most projects. Studies had even shown that they were generally less successful in an adjustment in marriage and career than those with an internal locus of control (Judge and Bono 2001). It was often believed that those with an external locus of control are destined to be unhappy (Lefcourt 1996).

In a contrary observation, Aliyha *et al.* (2003) noted that there was no guarantee that those with an external locus of control were not unable to be successful nor that they were unhappy. Many individuals who are externally inclined were able to see life as a series of fated events that they could just as easily fall on the good side of life. Conversely, some were able to find freedom in this concept and lived happy lives in the process whereas others did not. Those with an internal locus of control perceived that they could manage and adjust well with their marriages and life situations, while those with an external locus of control believed that what happened was beyond their environment or some higher power or other people control their decisions and their life (Rotter 1966). Hence, they might not well adjust to their marriage.

Marital compatibility also impacts many aspects of the individual and family social life. Compatibility in the marital setting is the cornerstone of the optimal functioning of the family. It increases the life span of the husband and wife (Gottman and Silver, 1995), improves the health, financial status of the family and increases life satisfaction (Nock, 1995). Further, a healthy marriage will also have a positive effect on children in the family and thus, enhancing the status of happiness and well-being among families.

### Need for the study:

The elements of marital happiness contribute to the amount of understanding received from the other spouse, the happiness with the spouse's companionship, the happiness of the amount of love and affection received from the spouse and the strength of love for the spouse may have a positive impact on the marital adjustment among married couples. Intact and harmonious marital relationships are required not only for the psychic health of the individual but also for progeny and thus, for the society in the broader sense. This study, was therefore, an effort to explore the contribution of factors such as locus of control and marital adjustment in the dynamics of happiness among married couples. The above-documented research evidence provided an insight that locus of control and marital adjustment has a significant effect on couples' relationship with each other. The present research focusing on the Indian context shall be an attempt to study the constructs of happiness among married couples. The study will also be helpful in providing strategies to married couples, both husbands and wives which will enhance their bond and promote well-being amongst them and their relationship.

### Objectives:

- To assess the level of happiness among married couples (aged 26-35 years)
- To examine the contribution of locus of control as a psychological factor among married couples
- To explore the contribution of marital adjustment as a contextual

factor among married couples

- To provide strategies for enhancing happiness and well-being among married couples.

**4. Methodology**

The present study was undertaken to examine the locus of control and marital adjustment as predictors of happiness among married couples belonging to Chandigarh City. A systematic procedure was designed for conducting the investigation, analysis and interpretation of the data. The sample for the present study was drawn from various households located in the urban areas of Chandigarh city. The sample size comprised of 100 married couples (N=200) in the age range of 26-35 years, living in Chandigarh city. The sample was divided to have an equal number of husbands (n<sub>1</sub>=100) and wives (n<sub>2</sub>=100). In each selected household, the investigator approached married couples and sought their help to prepare a list of married couples fulfilling the following criteria:

- Married couples living together
- Married couples in the age range of 26-35 years
- Belonging to Chandigarh city

**4.1 Tools/Measures**

1. Oxford Happiness Inventory (Argyle, 2001). This questionnaire was administered to assess the perception of happiness among adolescents. It is a 29 item questionnaire measuring the main components of happiness i.e. achievement and satisfaction, enjoyment, vigour and health. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.90.
2. Levenson's Multidimensional Locus of Control Scales (1974). The three sub-scales were used to assess the predictability of well-being from measures of control. Respondents selected their response to each item from a 6-point likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The reliability for each subscale was 0.64 for the Powerful Others dimension, 0.77 for the Internal Control dimension and 0.78 for the Chance Control dimension. The split-half-reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.62, 0.66 and 0.64 respectively.
3. Marital Adjustment Questionnaire developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatgi in 1999 was used to assess the perception of marital adjustment among married couples. The marital adjustment questionnaire (MAQ) comprised of 25 'Yes/No' items. The areas have been divided into three main broad categories like: Sexual, Social and Emotional. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.71 and validity was 0.84.

**5. Results and Discussion**

The present study was conducted to assess the level of happiness, locus of control and marital adjustment as predictors of happiness among married couples. The study also sought to examine whether factors like the locus of control and marital adjustment were affecting the happiness levels of the married couples and to determine whether the happiness level of the couples was correlated to these variables.

**5.1 Happiness profile of married couples**

**Table 1: Distribution of the sample as per the level of happiness perceived by married couples**

Happiness Scores	Total (N=200)		Husbands (n1=100)		Wives (n2=100)		Chi-square value	p-value
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%		
Low	66	33	29	29.0	37	37.0	1.465	0.481
Average	63	31.5	33	33.0	30	30		
High	71	35.5	38	38.0	33	33		

**Total Sample (N) = 200; Husbands (n<sub>1</sub>) = 100; Wives (n<sub>2</sub>) = 100**

Table 1 reveals the distribution of the sample across different levels of happiness as perceived by married couples. In the total sample, a major proportion (35.5%) of married couples reported happiness at a high level followed by 33 percent who perceived a low level of happiness. Only 31.5 percent of the total sample recorded an average level of happiness. The previous research findings by Hawkins and Booth in 2005 found that the spouses who were continuously married and who reported a mean or higher level of marital happiness had greater individual well-being over time than did continuously unhappily married respondents, even after taking into account initial levels of marital happiness. Argyle (1999) in his research documented that married persons reported greater subjective well-being than persons who have never been married or have been divorced, separated or

widowed. The two reasons have been evident that why marriage contributed to well-being were emphasized (Argyle 1999), which stated that firstly, marriage provides additional sources of self-esteem, for instance, by providing an escape from stress in other parts of one's life, in particular, one's job. It was advantageous for one's personal identity to have more than one leg to stand on. Secondly, married people had a better chance of benefiting from a lasting and supportive intimate relationship and suffered less from loneliness.

The majority of husbands (38%), as well as wives (33%), reported happiness at high levels. 37 percent of wives and 29 percent of husbands reported happiness at low levels whereas 33 percent of husbands and 30 percent wives perceived happiness scores at average levels in this category. Chi-square value depicted gender differences to be non-significant as far as the distribution of both genders across different levels of happiness as perceived by the couples was concerned. Though gender differences in the distribution of gender were non-significant, yet a high percentage of husbands (38%) perceived a high level of happiness as compared to wives (33%).

**5.2 Correlation between happiness and locus of control**

**Table 2: Correlation between happiness and locus of control among married couples**

Locus of Control	Correlation coefficient (r)		
	Total (N=200)	Husbands (n1=100)	Wives (n2=100)
Internal Control	0.312**	0.325**	0.314**
Powerful Others Control	-0.330**	-0.394**	-0.310**
Chance Control	-0.216**	-0.192	-0.196

**p<0.01 \*\*Total Sample (N) = 200; Husbands (n<sub>1</sub>) = 100; Wives (n<sub>2</sub>) = 100**

Table 2 gives the correlation between happiness and locus of control among the total sample (p<0.01) as well as both the gender groups. The correlation between happiness and different scales of locus of control were found to be significant in the total sample as well as two gender groups. It means that the more the married couples possessed locus of control, the more the happiness they were experiencing and were able to deal with possible outcomes in their relationship.

The correlation between happiness and internal scale was found to be positively significantly correlated in total sample (p<0.01), as well as in husbands (p<0.01) and wives (p<0.01). The results showed that the higher the degrees of internal control between the couples, the more happiness the couples were experiencing. It was also observed that the happiness scores were significantly correlated with internal control across both the married couples.

In the subscale of powerful others control, the coefficient correlation of the total sample (p<0.01), as well as both genders were found to be significantly negatively correlated. It means that lesser the control married couples felt upon themselves by others, the more was their happiness levels. The happiness levels of the couples increased in both husbands (p<0.01) and wives (p<0.01) when there was no or less control by the others.

The subscale of chance control showed negatively non-significant results between the husbands and wives. The result showed lesser the luck dominant, more was the happiness levels amongst wives. The present trends in an Indian context perceived luck to be of least importance in the marital relationship. The wives, who believed that their lives were shaped mainly by their own actions, achieved more marital harmony than those who believed that their lives were controlled by outside agents.

The results were in line with the previous research studies conducted by Judge and Bono which (2001) showed that married couples were generally less successful in an adjustment in marriage and career than those with an internal locus of control. On the contrary, those couples with an external locus of control were destined to be unhappy (Lefcourt, 1996). Research finding by Aliyha *et al.* (2003) noted that there was no guarantee that those with an external locus of control were able to be successful and hence they were happy. According to Lundberg (2012), he stated that the stable partnership between married couples was bounded to higher incomes, improved health, happiness and positive child outcomes in their marital relationship. A study on the

locus of control and marital satisfaction by Margaret *et al.* (2010) focussed on older couples, 83 from rural and 98 from urban communities in south-eastern Kansas confirmed the same findings and therefore, concluded that the couples remained in their marriages for a longer period of time successfully and happily. Findings indicated that the greater the internal locus of control for the wife, the higher the marital satisfaction. Results were also in favour of the study conducted by Margaret in 2010 which documented that locus of control was indeed associated with marital satisfaction and therefore, leading couples to live a happy married life

### 5.3 Correlation between marital adjustment and happiness

**Table 3: Correlation between marital adjustment and happiness among married couples**

Marital adjustment	Correlation coefficient (r)		
	Total(N=200)	Husbands (n1=100)	Wives(n2=100)
	0.284**	0.407**	0.401**

**p < 0.01\*\*Total Sample (N) = 200; Husbands (n<sub>1</sub>) = 100; Wives (n<sub>2</sub>) = 100**

Table 3 gives the correlation between marital adjustment and happiness among the total sample as well as both the gender groups. A marital adjustment was significantly positively correlated with happiness. It revealed a significant correlation in the overall sample ( $p < 0.01$ ) as well as husbands ( $p < 0.01$ ) and wives ( $p < 0.01$ ). The findings revealed that higher the degree of marital adjustment perceived by married couples, the more happiness they were experiencing.

The finding of the present study was consistent with previous research showing that a marital adjustment has a significant relationship with happiness. The study was done by Tucker and O'Grady (1990) also revealed that spouses enter marriage relationships with different beliefs about happiness and they differ in their expectations of happiness too. Therefore, mutual communication and sharing acted as the backbone for adjustment in marriage. Results of the study were harmonious with the findings by Sison (1976) in which he postulated that high levels of marital adjustment were observed among those who communicated well. Thus, the results showed a positive correlation between communication and adjustment. Couples, who communicated more regularly, adjusted themselves better to interpersonal and situation problems while others found it difficult. Communication was accounted as the life-breath of love, awareness of each other's feelings, needs, problems and expectations. The previous research study by Sinha and Mukerjee (1990) documented marital adjustment as the state in which there was an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other. Therefore, the couples reported experiencing a satisfactory relationship characterized by mutual concern, care, understanding and acceptance.

### 6. Salient findings

1. The majority of the married couples (52.5%) in this data were in the age group of 31-35 years. 47.5 percent were between 26-30 years of age.
2. The correlation between happiness and different scales of locus of control were found to be significant in the total sample as well as two gender groups.
3. The correlation between happiness and the internal scale was found to be positively significantly correlated in total sample as well as husbands and wives.
4. In the subscale of powerful others control, the correlation coefficient of the total sample as well as both genders were found to be significantly negatively correlated.
5. The subscale of chance control reported negatively non-significant results between husbands and wives.
6. Correlation analysis between marital adjustment and happiness revealed that marital adjustment was significantly positively correlated with happiness. It showed that the higher the degree of marital adjustment perceived by married couples, the more happiness level they were experiencing.

### 7. Conclusions:

It can be concluded that husbands perceived more happiness as compared to wives. Majority of the married couples perceived average levels of adjustment in their relationship. Wives reported significantly higher marital adjustment as compared to husbands as far as gender

differences were concerned. Correlation analysis revealed that marital adjustment was significantly positively correlated with happiness. The correlation between happiness and internal scale was found to be positively significantly correlated whereas powerful control others reported significant negative correlation in the total sample as well as husbands and wives. The chance control was found to be negatively non-significantly correlated.

### 8. Implications of the study

- The results can provide empirical feedback to the professionals and NGOs to plan and organize intervention strategies and programs to promote happiness among married couples and couples who are in their courtship period.
- The results can be used to improve upon those factors and situations which emerge as risk factors for happiness and to develop and sustain those which act as protective ones to enhance the level of happiness among married couples.
- This study can be useful as reference material for future research in the area of psychological well-being.

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