

Lived Experience of Married Middle-aged Women Regarding Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract

Introduction: Marital satisfaction is a significant contributor to general sense of happiness. A fulfilling marital relationship meets the intimacy requirements of both partners and contributes to their overall physical and mental well-being. However, elderly couples in today's era face new challenges associated with prolonged longevity. A study was conducted to explore the lived experience of marital satisfaction among married middle-aged women in selected community in Kannur. Objective of study was to identify the lived experience of middle-aged women regarding marital satisfaction. **Methods:** The study employed a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 married women in middle age at their residences, using a semi-structured interview guide. **Results:** Sample characteristics were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data were analyzed using Colazzi's seven-stage method. Most of the subjects were in age groups of 25 to 34 and 45 to 54 years. In all, 70% subjects belong to Christian religion, 40% of them have secondary or higher secondary education, 40% had family income about less than INR 10000, 80% belongs to nuclear family, 60% of subjects lived in rural area of residence, most of subjects 90% had an arranged marriage, 40% of subjects use mass media such as newspapers and others, and 50% of subjects are homemakers. Themes and subthemes derived from qualitative analysis are physical dimension (sexual satisfaction, disturbance due to physical issues in marital life, problems with shared bedroom), social dimension (change in social life, effect of social media), financial satisfaction (satisfaction with family income, efficiency of spouse to manage family budget), spiritual dimensions (religious beliefs and support), psychological dimension (life before and after marriage, expectation before and after marriage, limitations in decision making among couples, fear in marital life, challenging part in marital life, thought about not getting married), behavioral dimension (fight and its cause in marital life, bad habits in marital life), satisfaction with partner (shortcomings felt in partner, dependence upon the partner), and communication aspect in marital life (quality of communication, concept about non-disclosure of fact).

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INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction is a state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage of a particular person. Unhealthy and dissatisfactory marital unions can have adverse impacts on both partners, leading to a decrease in overall life contentment. Marital satisfaction encompasses the

tangible feelings of joy, contentment, and enjoyment experienced by either spouse, encompassing all facets of their marriage and family life. Challenges within the relationship can jeopardize the happiness of couples and consequently affect the well-being of the entire family. Marital contentment is crucial for meeting the needs of both partners and is influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics, relationship dynamics, conflict resolution skills, financial management, sexual intimacy, and social support from relatives and friends. When critical aspects of marital satisfaction, such as sexual fulfillment, are compromised, it can strain the relationship between couples and pose risks to their mental health [1–8].

Statement of the Problem

A phenomenological study to explore the lived experience regarding marital satisfaction among married middle-aged women in a selected community, Kannur, Kerala.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experience of middle-aged women regarding their marital satisfaction.

Objective

- To explore lived experiences regarding marital satisfaction among middle-aged women.

Operational Definitions

- Marital satisfaction refers to the individual's perception or feelings about their own marital relationship.
- Middle-aged women refers to the women aged between 35 and 50 years.
- *Lived experience*: It represents an individual's encounters, choices, and the insights acquired from these encounters and decisions [9–12].

METHODOLOGY

Design

Phenomenological methodology was employed within a qualitative research framework.

Setting

The home setting of married middle-aged women within a chosen locality, Kannur.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sample of 10 married middle-aged women.

Sampling Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

Married women, who

- Are willing to participate in the study.
- Are in the age group of 30 to 50 years.
- Are available during the period of data collection.

Exclusion Criteria

- Married women who are not willing to participate in the study.
- Are in the age group of less than 30 years.
- Women who are newly married.

Instruments

1. Demographic data
2. Interview schedule with open-ended question

Data Collection: After receiving authorization from the relevant authority, the process of collecting data was elucidated to the participants of the study. Consent was acquired from the participants to record the interview sessions. An extensive interview was carried out utilizing an open-ended questionnaire [13–16].

Data Analysis: The recorded interviews were listened to and transcribed word-for-word. Thematic content analysis was conducted using Colaizzi's method.

Modified Colaizzi Analysis Framework

- The transcripts were converted into formulated statements.
- Significant statement and phrases pertaining to the experience of patients under investigation were extracted.
- Meanings of formulated statement and themes were identified.
- Significant statements were organized into clusters of themes.
- The themes were used for exhaustive description.

The subthemes extracted from the themes for married middle-aged women's marital satisfaction are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Subthemes extracted from the themes for married middle-aged women's marital satisfaction

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|--|
| 1. Physical dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual satisfaction • Disturbance due to physical issues in marital life • Problems with shared bedrooms |
| 2. Social dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in social life • Effect of social media |
| 3. Financial satisfaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with family income • Efficiency of the spouse to manage family budget |
| 4. Spiritual dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious belief and support |
| 5. Psychological dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life before and after marriage • Expectation before and after marriage • Limitations in decision making among couples • Fear in marital life • Challenging part in marital life • Thought about not getting married |
| 6. Behavioral dimension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight and its cause in marital life • Bad habits in marital life |
| 7. Satisfaction with partner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortcomings felt in partner • Dependence upon the partner |
| 8. Communication aspect in marital life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of communication • Concept about non-disclosure of facts |

DISCUSSION

In this study, 10 interviews were conducted with married women in middle age to explore their marital satisfaction. The analysis identified a total of eight themes, encompassing physical, psychological, economic, educational, social, and spiritual dimensions, along with interactions involving married middle-aged women and their marital satisfaction. The concept of relationship awareness involves contemplating interaction patterns, comparisons, or contrasts within one's relationship. This framework allows for the examination of how spouses' thoughts and discussions about their relationships impact marital satisfaction and overall life contentment. Marital satisfaction among married middle-aged women was positively correlated with their husbands' level of involvement in the relationship, the quality of time spent together, and participation in decision-making during the

interviews. Many expressed that the lack of time in involving marital life and workloads were main factors and also expressed the quality relationship what they had in the beginning was not there now and made them to think that “marriage was not necessary/I wouldn’t have married” at least once in their lifetime. In some families, religious affinity was very less for those who believe it is most important. As regards financial dimension, all were unsatisfied to meet their family needs. Nurses and mental and community health professionals need to intensify their involvement in welfare of the women and enhance the supportive environment and to bring the quality of life in their marital life [17–21].

CONCLUSION

The research aimed to investigate the firsthand experiences of marital satisfaction among married middle-aged women through the utilization of an interview schedule.

- The expectation of the married middle-aged women was desperately very low, and it was not intentional, but the situation made it all.
- The qualitative study demonstrated clear and continuous support for the women through all dimensions.
- Continuous support would bring some changes in their life and to meet the quality indicator of marriage.

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