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MARITAL CONFLICTS: EFFECT OF FAMILY ECOLOGY AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC STATUS

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Abstract:

The present study was conducted to investigate the marital conflicts among 240 couples of Jammu City having high, middle and low socio- economic status. Random sampling technique was used for sample selection and data was collected using interview guide. The results of the study revealed that marital conflicts exist in all the selected families. The main reason for marital conflicts in high socio- economic group was business tours of husbands, while conflicts due to needs of children and job of both the partners were causes of conflict in middle socio- economic group. Husband's alcoholism and low income were reasons in couples having low socio- economic status. In all these families, majority of the wives took first step for compromise as compared to husbands.

KEYWORDS:

Ecology, Socio-Economic, Bussiness, Family.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage and family, the two social institutions with biological foundations are complementary to each other. According to the traditional Hindu belief, marital bond is said to be inseparable and irrevocable. The concept of marriage that is indissoluble is itself a sublime one, which makes the husband and wife to adjust their tastes, tempers, ideals and interests. It thus involves sacrifices on the part of both husband and wife, for each is called upon to bear with other (Rao, 2001) but if there is opposition in marital relationship then conflict arises. Gottman(1994) says our stereotype of happy marriage is a couple, who likes each other, understand each other well and settle dispute easily. Yet some stable marriages do not fit our stereotype as some are volatile (fighting openly but making up passionately) and others carefully avoid conflicts, i.e. they don't "work things out" but agree to disagree.

When spouses share similar backgrounds, the tendency to reinforce the marriage bond strengthen but increasing rate of social and geographical mobility results in greater opportunities for marriage between individuals of having different social backgrounds and therefore a greater potential for marital conflict can be seen(Harlambos and Heald, 1981). The numerous decisions that conflicts must make will at sometime result in a hurt look in angry world, or quarrel. Some couples have more conflicts than others some are able to deal with it more constructively than others do, but potential for conflict is there in every relationship. Less respect and more disappointment in the other, more anger- arguments, more negative criticism, more blaming doing less together, feeling lonely or neglected, less trust, less joint sharing of thoughts, less joint decision making and less helping all these elements enhance marital conflicts.

Conflict management aspects the ongoing necessity of dealing with family differences. All couples strive to deal with their marital tensions in ways that are acceptable to them. Over all, the most

effective way to deal with differences is through rational discussions, which becomes possible when the couple relates to one another and share equal understanding and acceptance. Keeping in mind the above points, present research has been conducted to know the reasons for marital conflicts among couples having high, middle and low socio- economic status and also the initiators of conflict resolution.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sample for the present study consisted of 240 couples. Eighty each from high, middle and low socio- economic status using stratified random sampling technique from different areas of Jammu City (J&K) The socio- economic status of couples was observed from their positions in the society, education ,income, caste occupation and size of the family and mode of communication. For data collection, interview guide was prepared to get information about the causes of marital conflicts among couples. Observations were also done to get the better view of the respondents. The data was gathered through discussion and informal talks with both husband and wives. Care was taken not to let personal bias enter into it. After analyzing the results, data was systemically coded and tabulated according to exhaustive categories. Qualitative analysis was done for open- ended questions. For the close- ended type questions, percentages were calculated.

RESULTS

Marital conflicts in couples having high socio- economic status

After obtaining responses from couples, it was found that majority of the conflicts in these couples (25%) were due to more age gap between husband and wife and less joint decision making as husbands didn't involve wives in taking decisions pertaining to home affairs which causes conflict between them. Business parities of husbands and devoting less time for family were found among 21.2% couples. Interference of mother-in -law and sister-in-law also caused conflict among 19.2% couples. Usually unmarried sisters-in-law point out the mistakes in front of their (wife's) husband, which ultimately leads to conflict. In 12% couples conflicts were found because of joint family system. In families where wives were employed (11.2%) and playing dual roles, conflicts were also seen. Husband's alcoholism as a cause of conflict was found in only 10% couples. As far as mediator in solving conflict is concerned, it was found that the family members solved the conflict of 66%, while 32% solve it at their own and rest 2% seek the help of their friends. In majority of the cases (59%) wives take initiative in solving marital conflict by compromising with the existing situation.

Marital conflict in couples having middle socio- economic status

In families with middle socio-economic status, majority of the conflicts were due to employment of wives (42%). While business tours of husbands caused conflict in 25 % families. Again less joint decision – making and age gap between husband and wife tends to produce conflict in 13.7% couples. Interference of mother- in-law and sister-in- law also caused conflict among 13.7% couples. Conflict due to alcoholic husband was found in 5% couples. The respective family members solved the conflict of 57% couples, while 42% solve it themselves and 85% wives took first initiative for conflict resolution.

Marital conflicts in couples having low socio- economic status.

In these couples, small- scale business of husband viz. tea stall, confectionery shop and thus low income (35%) was major reasons for conflict. In 26.2% couples, husband's alcoholism was prevalent. Interference of mother-in-law and sister-in-law also produced conflict among 17% couples. Less joint decision- making and age gap between husband and wife tends to produce conflict in 12.8% couples. As far as mediator in solving conflict concerned, it was found that conflict in majority of the couples (57%) was solved by their family members but 40% solve it at their own and only 3% seek help from their friends. Majority of the wives (85%) take initiative in solving marital conflict.

After analyzing the results it was found that all the couples in high and middle socio- economic families realized their fault conflict but 60% couples of low- income families didn't realize their fault after conflict.

DISCUSSION

The present research focuses on the conflict between husband and wives belonging to high, middle and low socio- economic status. After analyzing results, we found that marital conflict has no economic, educational and racial boundaries. Conflict results from problem solving strategies due to couples interdependency(Rice, 1983).Down the centuries numberless woman across the globe have been coping with husbands who come home drunk, beat their wives and children and makes everyone's life miserable (Seasons, 2004) . On the one hand, it is husband's alcoholism, on the other hand it is ill treatment by the in- laws who too often interfere in home affairs with daughter-in-law. Inclen (1997) also reported that mother-in-law was most frequently reported as the family member who was the harasser of dissatisfaction with the dowry of daughter-in-law.

Wives entry into wage economy has been a cause of marital conflict as we found in the present study. Women who assume home and non- home roles, frequently experience conflict between completing role demands. Role conflict links with many consequences and according to Fisher and Gitelson (1983) role conflict is responsible for substandard performance and a host of dysfunctional affective behavioral outcomes. It is negatively related to organizational commitment, job involvement, job satisfaction and participation in decision making. In the present study, we found that business tours of husband also tends to produce conflict among couples which are consistent with the findings of Begum and Tanseem(1984) that marital harmony is related to how much time couples spend with each other . Husbands who spend more time for their job or travel outside because of their jobs hardly experience any family pressure. This situation produces more mental pressures on their wives due to added responsibilities.

Low income tends to cause marital conflict. This is best supported by the findings of Weiten (1986) that all marriages have money problems. If there is not enough money, the conflict is likely to be occurred. Low income places a strain on marital relationship particularly upon the husband who has largely failed in his role as breadwinner. As far as conflict resolution is concerned it was found that usually wives took initiative in compromising with the situation. Gottman (1994) also held the similar views that in most marriages wife is the one who tries to maintain relationship. In general women are more socially sensitive than men. They are better listeners, more empathetic in nature and give more confronting, warm and caring responses.

CONCLUSION

Marital conflict was found in all the couples irrespective of their socio- economic status. But the main task is not to solve every argument but to stop the escalating bitterness. So good communication skills between couples is required especially "I" statement and empathy responses.

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