

# Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment among Married Couples of Joint and Nuclear Families

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**Abstract:** "Marriage is the essence of life". It is one of the major pillars of the society as it offers the initial structures to establish family relations and to train future generations. The present study is an attempt to investigate the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Marital Adjustment (MA) among married couples amid diverse family setups i.e., nuclear and joint families. The study examines the interrelationship between EI and MA of married couples among nuclear and joint families using information collected from 60 heterosexual couples (120 participants) who have completed at least five years of marriage. The participants belonged to Thrissur district, Kerala. Tools on Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Singh and Narain (2004), and Marital Adjustment Questionnaire by Kumar and Rohatgi (1976) were used to conduct the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test analysis. The study also depicted significant gender differences in certain aspects concerning family type and EI and MA. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to find the relationship between EI and MA. The results have shown a significant correlation between EI and MA. Implications of the findings have been discussed as it carries strong implications for the family therapists, marital counselors and researchers in the domain of family studies.

**Keywords:** Married couple, Divorce, Emotional Intelligence, Marital Adjustment, Nuclear Family, and Joint Family

## 1. Introduction

The base of a family is marriage, and it is the foundation of society. It is one of the most intense human relationships and social contact which permits legal union between two individuals termed as spouses. Marriage is an institution within which a couple lives, not an ideal to which they aspire. In the institution of marriage, stability and continuity of marriage are important not only to the marital dyad but also to the community as a whole as it is the foundation for family and in turn to society.

To have a successful marital relationship, a couple needs to have love, understanding, mutual respect, trust, commitment and many other factors. Marital adjustment is "the state in which there is an overall feeling in husband and wife of happiness and satisfaction with their marriage and with each other (Sinha & Mukerjee, 1990; Nema, 2013). A successful marriage often results in the degree of adjustment achieved by the individuals in their marriage. When the factors binding the couple are lacking, the relationship gives rise to unexpected consequences and ends up in divorces.

Many studies have already been conducted on identifying the factors leading to a successful marriage. According to Dildar, Saadia, et al. (2012), there are observations that couples with higher emotional intelligence are more adjusted in their marital lives. Emotional intelligence acts as an indicator in determining the quality of marital relationship and adjustment (Batool & Khalid, 2009; Khalid 2012; Adhikari & Mary, 2012). However, because of maladjustment among the couple, the separation of couples is increasing. Though India has the lowest divorce rate in the world, an increasing trend is observed.

Divorce, once a subject of social stigma is becoming increasing popular in recent years, causes of which are varied. The causes and rate vary across geographies and cultures. While the United States tops at 54.9%, Sweden stands in the bottom line with 1.1%. India has an average divorce rate of 0.24%. Within India itself, there are regional disparities with rural India having 0.82% and urban areas having 0.89% (Gandhi, 2017). Also, southern and northeastern states have higher divorce rates than the north. While Mizoram tops at 4.08%, Kerala has 0.32%. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana have low rates of marriage dissolution. The state of Kerala with high human development indices (HDI) experience increasing divorces in the last decade itself, which has a maximum number of pending divorce cases in family courts (Vasudevan, Bindhu, et al. 2015). Reasons for such high marriage dissolutions are psychological problems, increasing dowry, physical, mental and emotional abuse, substance abuse, infidelity, impotency, unfaithfulness, incompatibility and many others. There are reports that social media also has a vital role in straining the relationship between couples as it gives room for couples entering extra-marital affairs. Though Kerala has caste-based matriarchal and patriarchal systems, in a male dominant patriarchal system, women abuse is reported to be higher. Many couples remain in an abusive marriage for a variety of reasons. With reducing joint family systems with no support from elders, nuclear family has more divorce rates. Also, because of career pressures, a couple working in shifts not able to spend enough time together, behavioural issues and lifestyles, struggle increasing independency are all contributing factors. Because of increased education status and job security, some women seek legal aid to come out of un-adjustable marriage (Scaria, 2010; Phukan, 2014; Soman, Tewari, & Mathew, 2016; and Gandhi, 2017).

Emotional intelligence and marital adjustment are two key components that decide the health of a marriage relationship. Emotional intelligence (EI) determines the capacity with which people get skilled awareness on one's emotions, understanding it and manage the emotions in a wise and empathetic way. In marriages, it is the ability to understand the emotion of spouse, capacity to make him/her understand, and skill to channelize emotions in the right way and accept the spouse as it is (Mayer et al 2004). Recent studies suggest couples with high EI are good at understanding each other's emotions and feelings that can enhance marital adjustment and happiness (Pandey and Anand 2010, Schröder-Abé, & Schütz, 2011). Similarly, marital adjustment (MA) also has been an important concept as it has a close relation to the stability of marriage. It is a condition in which couples are usually feeling pleasure and contentment with each other (Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan, 2007). So adjustment or coping and getting adapted to married life are imperative. Scientists have examined various factors constituting marital adjustment including agreement, cohesion, satisfaction, affection and tension. According to experts, emotional intelligence can be influential on marital satisfaction and marital adjustment can decide marital quality (Arshad et al 2015). Lack of EI and MI leads to a breakdown of communication and understanding, and then to complication and break-up of relationships.

Emotional intelligence and marital adjustments are closely related to each other. Within a marriage, there are many unspoken emotional dialogues and verbal and non-verbal communication that can affect marital satisfaction (Dildar et al 2012). Managing self-emotions and other emotions help the partner to resolve conflicts and live a satisfying life (Fitness, 2001). However, the status of a family, working status, education qualification, social class and many others have a greater influence in attaining EI and MA. Though they are cumulative effects, the type of family especially would differentially influence the development of personality, values, aspirations and marital adjustments. Investigating the marital adjustment of couples coming from the family set up such as nuclear and joint is very crucial in the current scenario where marriage dissolutions are on the rise. It is important as marriage counseling or intervention strategies could be evolved to reinforce overall marital adjustment and healthy development of couple as well as future generations.

The understanding of the causes as well as the role of emotional intelligence and marital adjustment is important so that sufficient measures can be taken from early stages to avoid instances and incidents of divorces in the future. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and marital adjustments, with a case study from Thrissur district of Kerala.

### Statement of the Problem

To compare the Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment among married couples of nuclear and joint families.

### Objectives

- 1) To understand the Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment among married couples of nuclear and joint families.
- 2) To understand the gender difference in married couples among the nuclear and joint families in emotional intelligence and marital adjustment.
- 3) To understand the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment.

### Hypotheses

- There will be no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in Emotional Intelligence.
- There will be no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in Marital Adjustment.
- There will be no significant difference between males and females in a nuclear family in Emotional intelligence.
- There will be no significant difference between males and females in a joint family for Emotional intelligence.
- There will be no significant difference between males and females in a nuclear family for Marital Adjustment.
- There will be no significant difference between males and females in a joint family for Marital Adjustment.
- There will be no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment.

## 2. Method

### Participants

A total of 120 participants (60 heterosexual couples) aged between 30-60 years from Thrissur district, of Kerala, were participants of the study. 60 couples each belonged to nuclear and joint families. Hence, the grouping of the sample was done accordingly. This research was executed after seeking permission and approval of all involved ethics. All the ethical considerations were kept in mind before the data collection. The participants were briefed on general, as well as separate instructions for each test on how to fill up the questionnaires after filling the demographic details. They were also informed about the confidentiality of their responses and their participation as a part of the study. After giving the adequate instructions, demographic sheet and questionnaires were given and each participant was requested to add socio-demographic details. After receiving written consent, the two study questionnaires were provided and were requested to choose the option they think is most appropriate to them. Couples were treated as individuals, and each partner was instructed to rate himself/herself on the measures without collaborating with a spouse. To ensure the independence of responses partners were separated into different rooms to complete their survey. There was no time limit set for the completion of tests, and it usually took about 20-30 minutes to answer a set of two questionnaires. Participants were encouraged to ask doubts and requested not to discuss their answers with their spouses.

## 3. Measures

### 1) Emotional Intelligence Scale

The Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Singh and Narain (2004), is a self-report scale consisting of 31 items.

The respondents are required to answer these statements as either 'Yes' or 'No'. Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar (2001) correlated this scale with the EI scale. Concurrent validity was found to be 0.86, which was significant at 0.01 levels.

**2) Marital Adjustment Questionnaire**

Developed by Kumar and Rohatgi (1974). MAQ is a self-report questionnaire developed in the English language consisting of 25 highly discriminating items, which are to be responded as either 'Yes' or 'No.' personality qualities, emotional factors, sexual satisfaction, marital role and responsibility factors, in-law relationship, attitude towards family planning and children, interpersonal relationship and economic, religious and social factors are the areas included. The face validity of the questionnaire appeared to be fairly high as the items were prepared following intensive interviews of 100 married couples regarding the concept of a happy married life. The content validity was adequately assured as only those items were selected for the initial questionnaire for which there was 100 percent agreement among the judgments. The questionnaire was validated against Singh's Marital Adjustment Inventory (Singh, 1972). The coefficient correlation between the questionnaire and Singh's Marital Adjustment Inventory for a group of 20 wives was found to be 0.71 with an index of the reliability of 0.84.

The responses were collected from the participants and were projected for further analysis. The data was coded and was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), version 16.0. The data were analyzed using the following statistical techniques:

- t-test
- Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient.

After the completion of data analysis, discussions and conclusions were made.

**4. Result & Discussion**

The present study aims to compare the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Marital Adjustment (MA) among married couples of nuclear and joint families. Furthermore, the study also aimed to understand the gender difference in married couples among the nuclear family in emotional intelligence and marital adjustment. The results are discussed and interpreted in the best possible way and conclusions are drawn accordingly. The necessary tables are given to support the results.

**Table 1:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among nuclear and joint families for Emotional Intelligence

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	Nuclear Family	60	24.33	4.03	1.9	0.06
	Joint Family	60	22.98	3.74		

Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among nuclear and joint families in emotional intelligence. From the table, it is seen that there is no significant difference (t=1.9; p > 0.05) between nuclear family (mean = 24.33; SD = 4.03) and joint family (mean=22.98; SD=3.74). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand accepted i.e., there is no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in emotional intelligence.

**Table 2:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among nuclear and joint families for Marital Adjustment

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Marital Adjustment	Nuclear Family	60	19.11	4.42	0.06	0.94
	Joint Family	60	19.06	3.49		

Table 2 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among nuclear and joint families in marital adjustment. From the table, it is seen that there is no significant difference (t = 0.06; p > 0.05) between nuclear family (mean = 19.117; SD = 4.426) and joint family (mean=19.067; SD=3.492). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand accepted i.e., there is no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in marital adjustment.

**Table 3:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance for males and females among nuclear family for Emotional Intelligence

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	Males	30	25.33	2.92	1.97	0.05
	Females	30	25.33	4.73		

Table 3 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among males and females among nuclear family in Emotional Intelligence. From the table, it is seen that there is significant difference (t = 1.97; p < 0.05) between males (mean = 25.33; SD = 2.92) and females (mean = 25.33; SD = 4.73). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand accepted i.e., the males and females have significant differences in emotional intelligence. Hence, on comparing the means, it can be seen that the males have more ability to identify their own emotions as well as other's emotions compared to their female counterparts in the nuclear family.

**Table 4:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance for males and females among joint family for Emotional Intelligence

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Emotional Intelligence	Males	30	23.6	3.34	1.28	0.2
	Females	30	22.3	4.06		

Table 4 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among males and females among joint family in Emotional Intelligence. From the table, it is seen that there is no significant difference (t = 1.28; p > 0.05) between males (mean = 23.6; SD = 3.34) and females (mean = 22.3; SD = 4.06). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand accepted. It means there is no gender difference in emotional intelligence in the joint families. This indicates that statistically there are no differences between husband and wives.

**Table 5:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance for males and females among nuclear family for Marital Adjustment

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Marital Adjustment	Males	30	18.77	4.71	0.6	0.54
	Females	30	19.47	4.16		

Table 5 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among males and females among nuclear family in Marital Adjustment. From the table, it is seen that there is no significant difference (t = 0.6; p > 0.05)

between males (mean = 18.77.6; SD = 4.71) and females (mean = 19.47; SD = 4.16). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand accepted. It means there is no gender difference in Marital Adjustment in the nuclear families.

**Table 6:** Mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among males and females in joint family for Marital Adjustment

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t value	Sig.
Marital Adjustment	Males	30	20.2	3.03	2.72	0.00
	Female	30	17.9	3.57		

Table 6 indicates the mean, standard deviation, t value and level of significance among males and females among joint family in Marital Adjustment. From the table, it is seen that there is no significant difference ( $t = 2.72$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) between males (mean = 20.2; SD = 3.03) and females (mean = 17.9; SD = 3.57). Therefore, the null hypotheses stand rejected i.e., the males and females of joint families have a significant difference for marital adjustment.

**Table 7:** Correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment

Variable		Emotional Intelligence	Marital Adjustment
Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	1	0.359
	Sig. Level		0.000
	N	120	120
Marital Adjustment	Pearson Correlation	0.359	1
	Sig. Level	0.000	
	N	120	120

Table 7 shows the correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment. From the table, it is seen that Emotional Intelligence has a positive correlation with Marital Adjustment at 0.05 levels. This means that as Emotional Intelligence increases, Marital Adjustment will also increase.

Couples with higher Emotional Intelligence will be more adjusted in their marital lives than those who had a low level of Emotional Intelligence. It is believed that the ability to perceive emotions can help an individual to understand verbal, nonverbal emotional cues of his/her partner. Managing self-emotion perhaps helps partners to resolve conflicts and by utilizing emotions, they can probably maintain the well-being of their spouses and themselves. In this way, Emotional Intelligence can facilitate adjustment and satisfaction in a marital relationship.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to compare the Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Marital Adjustment (MA) among married couples of nuclear and joint families and also to understand the gender differences in these variables.

The results reveal that there is no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in EI and MA respectively. However, there is a significant difference between males and females of nuclear families in Emotional Intelligence. It is seen that the males have slightly higher EI than females indicating that males having a slighter more

ability in understanding emotions of themselves and their spouses. There is no impact of gender in joint families for EI; also in nuclear and joint families for MA.

EI and MA are closely associated with each other which helps to have better quality of the marital relationship. EI helps in managing emotions of oneself and their partners which in turn help in well-adjusted and successful marriages. This is supported by Fitness (2006).

EI & MA plays a dominant role in marriage and the quality of a marital relationship. Hence, the couples need to control emotions, respect feelings and understanding their partner as well as their family members. This helps in reducing stress and reduces the possibility of future problems in married lives. The couples will be more empathetic & compassionate towards each other. Marriage is a delicate relationship which demands interpersonal skill, patience, optimism, tolerance, impulse control and managing emotions appropriately. Hence, EI will help married couples accommodate their emotions in the right manner.

It can be concluded that emotionally intelligent couples are more adjusted in their married lives. Couples with high EI will have high MA; as a result, they will try to adjust more and understand their partner and also give importance to their relationship. To reduce the divorce rates, the family members and society should play a vital role. They must encourage the couples to resolve the conflict between them rather than for forcing them to divorce.

## 6. Implications of the Study

The implications of the present study suggest that for a happy and healthy married life, it is essential to have Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment. The findings of the study show that there is no significant difference between nuclear and joint families in Emotional Intelligence and Marital Adjustment. There is a significant difference between males and females of the nuclear family in Emotional Intelligence; there is no significant difference between males and females of joint family in Emotional Intelligence; there is no significant difference between males and females of nuclear families in Marital Adjustment; there is a significant difference between males and females of joint families in Marital Adjustment. Emotional Intelligence & Marital Adjustment is positively correlated. The study has shed light on the fact that Emotionally Intelligent couples will have a greater level of Marital Adjustment.

The findings have implications for counselors, educationalists, professionals as well as parents that there is a need to facilitate good quality of Emotional Intelligence from childhood irrespective of socioeconomic status and family type as it is one of the most crucial aspects of an individual's life. The finding of the study gives enormous scope for improvement in Emotional Intelligence by managing one's emotions, and to help understanding emotions of oneself as well as others. Hence, Emotional Intelligence must be inculcated from childhood as it helps in succeeding in all aspects of life. A healthy sense of emotions will help a person lead a happy life.

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