

## A STUDY ON MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MALAYSIAN WOMEN

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### ABSTRACT

*Marital satisfaction is an important component of family success and personal growth. The role of women has gained importance in the economic and social field in line with the nation's progress. This study examines the factors influencing the marital satisfaction of Malaysian women. The factors include occupational status (working or non-working), the type of family (nuclear or joint), place of settlement (urban or rural), age, race, education, occupation, personal income, number of children, spouse education, spouse occupation, spouse income. The study adopted survey research design and the data was collected from 200 women in Malaysia. The independent samples t-test was used to test the differences in marital satisfaction in terms of occupational status (working or non-working), type of family (nuclear and Joint) and place of settlement (urban and rural) of the married women. The results indicate that marital satisfaction differs significantly between the working and non-working women. The non-working women are found to be more satisfied in their married life. There is no difference in marital satisfaction between groups based on type of family and the place of settlement. One-Way ANOVA was used test the differences in marital satisfaction in terms of age, race, education, occupation, personal income, number of children, spouse education, spouse occupation, spouse income. The results show that marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to race, education, occupation, spouse education. There is no difference in marital satisfaction between groups based on age, income, number of children and spouse income. Education of both women and the spouse has a significant effect on the marital satisfaction showing that education enhances married life. Marital satisfaction leads to job satisfaction which in turn has a positive impact on the organational performance. Therefore, with the women labor force playing an important role in the country's economic and social development, this research suggests the policy makers to consider some improvement in the working environment in order to increase the marital satisfaction of working women.*

Key words: Marital satisfaction, Education, working and non-working women, Occupation, Income.

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### Introduction

Family stability is vital and imperative for the development of a society and nation. A successful marriage will lead to a stable family. Marital Satisfaction is one of the prime factors of a healthy family performance (Greef, 2000). Schoen et al. (2002) describes marital satisfaction as a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning. Marital satisfaction is a conscious feeling of happiness and pleasure experienced by spouse, while considering all current aspects of one's marriage (Chandrakanth, 2015).

Marital satisfaction can be defined as a mental state of a particular person reflecting the perceived benefits and costs of marriage (Nadia & Shahid, 2012). Greater perceived benefits results in more satisfaction while more costs inflicted on a person will lead to less marital satisfaction (Nadia & Shahid, 2012).

Marital satisfaction can be studied in the context of both men and women. Various studies have proven that marital satisfaction differs significantly for men and women (Tucker & Aron, 1993; Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995; Nadia & Shahid, 2012). Women were found to have less marital satisfaction compared to the men in the studies by Rhyne (1981), Lee (1986), Zollar and Williams (1987). Women are not only restricted in their involvement on domestic chores, procreation of children and their nurturing with family care and attention (Adhikari, 2012). In recent decades, there has been an enormous increase in the number of women entering the labour market. It is an accepted fact that working married women have greatly changed their family lives (Vaghela, 2014). Several researchers found that working women have better marital adjustment than unemployed women (Rani, 2013; Vaghela, 2014).

Sahu and Singh (2014) in their study revealed that there is no significant difference in the marital adjustment between working and non-working women. The study further showed that both working and non-working women have good marital adjustment due to mutual trust, better understanding and sharing. A study by Sinha (2016) in India found that there is a significant difference in marital adjustment due to age and shows no difference in terms of job status while Zainah et al. (2012) pointed out marital satisfaction may vary across different cultures. Past studies revealed that the demographic characteristics such as number of children, level of education, personal income, husband's income are significant contributors of marital satisfaction (Pimental, 2000; Trudel, 2002; Guo & Huang, 2005; Zainah et al., 2012).

The main objective of the study is to examine the differences in marital satisfaction in terms of various factors between working and non-working Malaysian women. The factors include occupational status (working or non-working), the type of family (nuclear and Joint), place of settlement (urban and rural), age, race, education, occupation, personal income, number of children, spouse education, spouse occupation, spouse income.

Research methods and the hypotheses developed for the purpose of the study are presented in the next section followed by the results and discussion. The paper concludes with the conclusion of the research, limitation and directions for future research.

**Research Methods And Hypothesis Development**

The current study adopted the survey method, where questionnaire is used as the research instrument. The questionnaire consists of two sections which are section A and section B. In Section A, the demographic information of the respondents are asked. Section B consists of Marital Satisfaction Scale adapted from Roach et al. (1981) with 24 items to assess one's level of satisfaction towards her own marriage. Marital satisfaction is defined as an attitude of greater or lesser favourability towards one's own marital relationship and the items are designed to evoke affect or opinion rather than cognition. Response categories are along a 5 point Likert scale. Items had very high discrimination and the instrument had a reliability of 0.933 (cronbach alpha coefficient). Convenience sampling technique was used in this study. The data was collected from women in various localities in Melaka. Care was taken to ensure the important criteria for the research is met. These include women should be married and they can either be working or non working.

A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed to married women in Melaka, 209 of the questionnaires were returned and out of that total 9 set of questionnaires were incomplete. Thus, only 200 were valid responses. The data obtained was analysed using SPSS to test the following hypotheses:

- H1: Marital satisfaction differs significantly between working and non-working women
- H2: Marital satisfaction differs significantly between the women in joint and nuclear family.
- H3: Marital satisfaction differs significantly in terms of the place of settlement (urban or rural).
- H4: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the age.
- H5: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the race.
- H6: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the education.
- H7: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the occupation.
- H8: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the personal income.
- H9: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the number of children.
- H10: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the spouse education.
- H11: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the spouse occupation.
- H12: Marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to the spouse income.

**Results And Discussions**

The independent samples t-test was used to test the differences in marital satisfaction in terms of occupational status (working or non-working), type of family (nuclear or joint) and place of settlement (urban or rural) of the married women. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Independent samples t-test for the differences in marital satisfaction**

S. No.	Factors	N	Mean	t-statistic	p-value
1.	<b>Occupational Status</b>				
	Working	101	3.9039	-3.89	0.000**
Non-working	99	4.1768			
2.	<b>Type of family</b>				
	Joint	22	4.1288	0.869	0.388
Nuclear	178	4.0279			
3.	<b>Place of Settlement</b>				
	Urban	190	4.0384	-0.070	0.879
Rural	10	4.05			

\*\*significant at 0.01 level of significance.

Results indicate that marital satisfaction differs significantly between working and non-working women. Thus, H<sub>1</sub> is supported. Non-working women (mean = 4.1768) are more satisfied in marriage than the working women. This may due to the fact that working married women have double burden of housework and job outside the home. Researchers reported working married women cannot properly adjust with their married life because they have many tasks to perform at a time (Hops et al., 1972). Working married women found themselves moving from job to job due to frequent changes of bosses. Could it be that reduced autonomy and an ever-increasing workload, combined with the added burden of having a small child at home, made their job's huge claim on time and emotional energy intolerable? That is why they cannot perform well at home (Hofferth, 1979; Hicks & Platt, 1969). However, women from joint and nuclear family enjoy equal marital satisfaction. Similarly, marital satisfaction does not differ significantly based on the place of settlement after marriage.

One-Way ANOVA was used test the differences in marital satisfaction in terms of age, race, education, occupation, personal income, number of children, spouse education, spouse occupation, spouse income. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Oneway ANOVA for the differences in marital satisfaction**

S. No.	Factors	N	Mean	F statistic	p-value
1.	<b>Age</b>				
	Below 20	12	3.9965	1.119	0.342
	21 – 30	88	4.1065		
	31 – 40	61	3.9522		
	41 and above	39	4.0353		
2.	<b>Race</b>				
	Malay	110	4.1496	6.213	0.000**
	Chinese	47	3.9619		
	Indian	39	3.8942		
	Others	4	3.3125		
3.	<b>Education</b>				
	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	34	3.7782	3.716	0.006**
	Diploma	44	4.0265		
	Degree	96	4.1523		
	Master	22	4.0057		
	Ph.D	4	3.8542		
4.	<b>Occupation</b>				
	Manual	21	4.0099	2.787	0.019*
	Semiskilled	14	4.3006		
	Technical	15	3.9667		
	Clerical	24	3.7552		
	Executive	67	4.1262		
	Professional	59	4.0219		
5.	<b>Personal Income</b>				
	Less than RM 3000	118	4.0805	1.151	0.33
	RM3000 – RM 5000	45	4.0074		
	RM 5000 – RM 10000	26	4.0064		
	More than RM 10000	11	3.7992		
6.	<b>Number of children</b>				
	None	53	4.1085	0.737	0.568
	1	41	4.0701		
	2	52	3.9968		
	3	24	3.9115		
	More than 3	30	4.0486		
7.	<b>Spouse Education</b>				
	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	36	3.7836	3.096	0.017*
	Diploma	30	4.0792		
	Degree	100	4.0975		
	Master	29	4.1379		

	Ph.D	5	3.8917		
8.	<b>Spouse Occupation</b>				
	Manual	22	3.6553	4.075	0.002**
	Semiskilled	18	4.2130		
	Technical	45	3.9574		
	Clerical	5	4.0833		
	Executive	72	4.0880		
	Professional	38	4.1765		
9.	<b>Spouse Income</b>				
	Less than RM 3000	62	3.9241	1.831	0.143
	RM3000 – RM 5000	75	4.0917		
	RM 5000 – RM 10000	45	4.05		
	More than RM 10000	18	4.1875		

\*significant at 0.05 level of significance.

\*\*significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The results indicate that marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to race, education, occupation, spouse education and spouse occupation. This means that H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>10</sub>, and H<sub>11</sub> are supported. Post hoc tests were conducted for these factors to determine which of the groups differ significantly. In case of race, marital satisfaction of Malay women were found to differ significantly from the other groups. Furthermore group means show that Malay women are more satisfied in their married life when compared to Chinese, Indian and others. The result supports the fact by Zainah et al. (2012) that culture influences the marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction of women with Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), a secondary level qualification differs significantly from the women with Degree. Group means indicate that the women with degree is more satisfied than the women with SPM. The remaining pairs of groups does not differ significantly in their marital satisfaction. Generally, this means that the higher the education, the more marital satisfaction the women have. This could be due to the self-confidence they have on themselves and thus, lead to a positive emotion and these have a satisfactory impact on their married life.

In the case of spouse education, the marital of satisfaction of the women whose spouse has SPM differs significantly from the groups whose spouse's qualification is degree or masters'. The lower level of education results in less marital satisfaction. This is similar with the earlier result where the higher the education the higher the marital satisfaction and it can be seen in both the gender. A well educated spouse, would probably be able to provide better life for the family and thus, lead to a higher marital satisfaction.

The occupation of both women and the spouse affect marital satisfaction. The marital satisfaction of women in clerical position differs significantly from semi-skilled and executives. Women holding clerical positions has less marital satisfaction compared to semi-skilled and executive women. This could be due to a lower level job does not give a comfort to women compared to higher level job and the spillover is probably seen on the marital satisfaction. The marital satisfaction of women whose spouse occupation is 'manual' is less satisfied compared to the rest. The marital satisfaction of this group differs significantly from the groups of women whose spouse are 'Semi-skilled' or 'Executive' or 'Professional.' A probable reason is with a higher level job, it provides a higher status, a higher salary and all this lead to marital satisfaction. The results of the present study are consistent with the past research conducted by Pimentel (2000), Trudel (2002), Guo and Huang (2005) whose results found that education attainment and occupation affect marital satisfaction.

However, the current study reveals that the marital satisfaction does not differ significantly based on the age, number of children, personal income and spouse income which contradicts the results found by White and Edwards (1990), Pimentel (2000), Trudel (2002), Guo and Huang (2005), Zainah et al. (2012).

**Conclusion**

This study attempts to examine the differences in marital satisfaction among Malaysian women based on the demographic characteristics such as occupational status (working or non-working), the type of family (nuclear or joint), place of settlement (urban or rural), age, race, education, occupation, personal income, number of children, spouse education, spouse occupation and spouse income.

The findings reveals that marital satisfaction differs significantly with respect to occupational status, race, education, occupation, spouse's education and spouse's occupation. Marital satisfaction is found in women with better occupational status, higher education level and holding higher positions. Similarly, better marital satisfaction is also found for women whose spouses have higher education level and holding higher positions. This indicates education, occupation, occupational status are critical factors that lead to marital satisfaction. Having higher education enables one to hold a better employment position, having a status, as well as better monetary situation. Additionally, having a spouse, with a similar or higher level of education and occupation means that they able to have lead a comfortable life, socially and financially, and thus, achieving better marital satisfaction. Government and related agencies should looked into areas of improving women at the social and economic level. Courses can be

offered to women who do not have a high education or hold good positions. Among them are skill based courses, entrepreneurship courses, financial management courses.

The study also found working women have less marital satisfaction compared to non-working women. This could be due to stress or difficulty they face in balancing work and family life. Since marital satisfaction leads to job satisfaction which in turn has a positive impact on the organisational performance, policy makers should look into areas related to working women in order to improve their motivation level. Some of the critical areas include working hours, women related off days or leave and availability of childcare centers among others. Furthermore, the women labor force plays an important role in the country's economic and social development indicating the critical need to focus on working women.

The main limitation of the study is the sample size. The results must be treated with caution in terms of generalization due to the study's small sample size. Future study should consider a larger sample size. In addition, future study should consider the marital satisfaction across difference occupational group.

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