

A Comparative Study on Marital Adjustment of Middle Class and Lower Class Couples Married within Last Five Years

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Abstract— This paper attempts to find out how young couples who live in Colombo; the metropolitan city of Sri Lanka adjust in marriage. The study selected couples from both middle class and lower class who got married within the period of 5 years. Marital adjustment is a key element in the institution of marriage. This is an analytical approach to understand the institution of marriage in its inception and how it evolves through adjustment. Nature of marriage & family has changed over the years. Within this dynamical framework, the factors contributing to marital adjustment namely companionship, consensus or agreement, affection or intimacy, satisfaction with the marriage and the partner and lastly sexual behavior have been studied in this paper.

Index Terms— Affection, Companionship, Consensus, Lower class, Marital adjustment, Marital satisfaction, Middle class, Sexual adjustment

1 INTRODUCTION

THE animals mate but humans marry. The significance of this distinction is simple and clear. Mating is purely a biological process aimed at maintaining the population of a particular species by means of reproduction, whereas marriage is a union with social sanctions and recognition of obligations to the community assumed by those entering this relationship. Marriage is regarded as an important social institution in every society as it contributes for the welfare of the society and is a key element in social dynamics.

By definition, marriage is a socially sanctioned union of one or more men with one or more women with the expectation that they will play the roles of husband and wife. [4] The role implies the expected behavior of the couple in according to marital expectations. In marriage, the groom has an idea of himself as a husband and of his bride as a wife. Similarly, the bride understands her role as a wife, and of how her husband will behave. If husband and wife are in agreement on each other's roles, the union may be harmonious, regardless of whether the agreement is on control by the husband, by the wife, or by consensus. Gender roles operate not only as power dynamics within marriage but also as allocation of work which links with the degree of marital happiness.

There are many factors contributing to the selection of a partner, one being the idea of the perfect partner is embedded in one's mind since childhood and later from adolescence experiences. In addition, factors such as proximity, common backgrounds and personality needs are the determinants of selecting a suitable partner in marriage.

Hence, marriage is a union between two individuals who

come from two different families. They may have brought up differently and may have different interests in life. Nevertheless, in entering a marriage, they have to live together and share their lives. Therefore, adjusting according to each other's way of life is considered as means of leading a successful family life. A well-adjusted marriage may be defined as a union in which the husband and wife are in agreement on the major issues of marriage such as handling finances and dealing with in-laws; in which they have come to an adjustment on interests, objectives, and values; in which they are in harmony on demonstrations of affection and sharing confidences; and in which they have few or no complaints about their marriage. [4]

Marital adjustment is a dynamic process. The couple always has the option of negotiating matters and adjusting themselves as required in their family lives. Reciprocal actions keep on changing, adjusting and thereby, create new forms of interaction among the couple. Indeed, interaction among husband and wife plays a major role in marital adjustment. Hence, marital adjustment should be considered rather a dynamic entity than a static entity.

In measuring marital adjustment, Locke and Williamson [1] have introduced five main factors in "Marital adjustment: A factor analysis study"; this included companionship, consensus or agreement, affection or intimacy, satisfaction with the marriage and the partner and lastly sexual behavior. Companionship is an important criterion in marriage. Most often, if one interrogates what a couple has gained from marriage, most possible answer is companionship. Companionship has four principal components: joint participation in common interests and activities, confiding and talking things over, understanding the ideas and feelings of one another and demonstration of affection. In short, a couple should be compatible in doing things together.

Consensus is the second criterion of marital adjustment. It denotes the degree of agreement or disagreement of a couple

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on the primary values or objectives of their marriage. As Burgess and Wallin [2] states in *Engagement and Marriage*; in instances where the couple is dealing with matters as handling finances, recreation, religion, demonstration of affection, friends, intimate relations, conventional behavior, and ways of dealing with in-laws and philosophy of life, there should be a sense of common feeling in order to take decisions in marriage. Consensus also includes absence of quarrels, how disagreements are settled, and similarity of attitudes towards having children and attendance at social events.

In marriage, affection or intimacy has to gradually build up among the couple. A love relationship begins in courtship and continues throughout the marriage and this is considered as the accepted ideal of modern marriage. The sentiment of love varies from infatuation, which is almost as fleeting as it is intense, to a companionship in which two personalities are united in a lifelong union. In marriage, love is maintained and strengthened by expressions and demonstrations of affection. Affection could change positively as well as negatively during the marriage. However, according to widely accepted view, love grows stronger and deeper when two people unite in marriage. Loveless marriages do exist in the society. However, they lack an element essential to family unity. Though they may survive even for a lifetime because of other unifying factors such as habit, mutual respect and feelings of duty, such marriages in society are vulnerable since they deviate from the social expectation that love will always be present in a successful marriage.

Satisfaction with the marriage and mate is the fourth criterion in measuring marital adjustment. Many couples judge the success or failure of their marriage by the amount of satisfaction they receive from it. In most cases, satisfaction with the marriage is associated with its harmony and happiness. However, sometimes, harmony and happiness might not be adequate measurements as husband or wife may be dissatisfied in a marriage where there is no conflict or incompatibility, or they may be highly satisfied in a union which has unresolved problems of adjustment. Hence, marital satisfaction is a complex phenomenon. In leading a family life, it might affect the relationship differently depending on the personality of the couple.

Sexual adjustment is considered one of the key criteria in adjustment of the couple according to each other's expectations. In fact, mutual satisfaction and enjoyment of sexual activities by the husband and wife is a unifying factor in marriage. However, this has never been considered as the sole factor which contributes to the success of marriage. As Terman [3] in *Psychological factors in marital happiness* mentions that marital adjustment is associated equality or near equality in sexual drives. Equal interest in sex associated with marital adjustment and unequal interest with marital maladjustment.

The sexual interrelationship in marriage is much more than the physical interaction between two individuals. It necessarily involves the conception of sexual act by the husband and the wife and the role which each one plays. It may be an extremely sensitive and intimate form of communication, with emotional and symbolic meaning. On the other hand, in the case of the unhappily married, there can be severance in

communication between them including sexual intercourse.

According to the matters discussed above, marital adjustment can be redefined as an adaptation between the husband and wife to the point where there is companionship, agreement of basic values, intimacy and satisfaction or euphoria. In addition, there can be other components of marital adjustment not being measured by the test. However, if one single criterion is to be used, adjustment is probably the most satisfactory measurement of success in marriage. In other words, marital adjustment is a crucial factor in determining the success or failure in marriage in the long run.

2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study mainly leads to understand;

01) To what extent middle class and lower class couples adjust themselves in early years of their marriage?

- Who shows greater and least level of marital adjustment?

- What are the factors associated with marital adjustment of young couples?

- What are the adjustment patterns or trends exist among the couples?

02) What sort of correlation exists between the degree of marital adjustment and other factors such length of marriage, occupation, level of education and number of children?

3 METHODOLOGY

The total population size of this study is approximately, 460 households. Out of which, couples who got married within the period of 5 years were selected. Within the time constraint of one year, I expected to conduct a comparative study on the phenomenon of marital adjustment with two social groups. Therefore, the sample had to be consisted of couples from middle class and lower class married within past 5 years.

To begin the collection of primary data, one of the non-probability sampling methods were used. In selecting the sample units, we had to use the cases that are judged beforehand such as length of the marriage and social class. Based on the requirements, the purposive sampling was selected to initiate collection of data.

Thus, based on the purposive sampling method, 20 couples who fulfilled the two requirements were selected. Altogether, 40 individuals participated in the study.

4 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The study began with collecting secondary data related to the research matter. As the starting point, background information was collected on the total number of slums located in Narahenpita, Colombo. An overview on demographic data related to the topic was reviewed. In this matter, data was obtained from Divisional Secretariat- Thimbirigasyaya, Colombo and the Grama Seva Niladari (Administrative head of the division).

After acquiring a precise picture of the area of study, the next step was to approach the community in order to gather primary data. Certainly, it is a difficult task for an outsider to

approach a slum community unless good rapport is built with key informants in the community. In this research, a lady within the particular community helped to approach the community and conduct the research in the area.

Based on Dyadic Adjustment Scale; a commonly known scale of marital adjustment associated with 5 factors discussed above, the closed ended questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire was developed for the purpose of gathering quantitative data for the study.

Having prepared the questionnaire, the next step was to test its effectiveness. 4 spouses (2 from each class) were given the questionnaires initially and it seemed to be promising. Thus questionnaires were then given to the other couples as well. The couples were asked to fill the questionnaire separately. Further, for lower class couples, the questionnaire was read out and explained to make them understand better.

After collecting data of 40 spouses using a closed ended questionnaire, another open-ended questionnaire was prepared in order to gather qualitative information. This questionnaire was also based on the 5 factors of marital adjustment. Selected 24 spouses (12 from middle class and 12 from lower class) were again interviewed thereby were able to develop a qualitative insight to the study to back up the data gather through the first questionnaire.

In short, three techniques are used in the research. Firstly, available secondary data were studied and then moved on to the empirical study. Afterwards, open ended and closed ended questionnaires were used to gather quantitative and qualitative data for the analysis.

5 FINDINGS

While finding the total score for marital adjustment, scores for each factor were generated in order to find out how middle class & lower class couples adjust themselves in marriage.

SPSS Statistics V21 x 86 was used to analyze data. In order to find out whether there's a significant difference in the adjustment scores of two social classes, parametric assumption test was applied first. In the parametric assumption test, results showed that the sample data are not normally distributed. Unable to pursue with parametric test, non-parametric test was used to generate the results.

Mann-Whitney tests were run for each factor of marital adjustment and total score of marital adjustment.

Companionship factor was tested involving 20 middle class and 20 lower class couples in Mann-Whitney Test. As it appears in the table, mean rank of the middle class couples generated as 28.88 and lower class as 12.13 which is less than half of the score of the companionship of middle class couples. The diversifying ratio of two classes clearly shows that the companionship of middle class couples is higher than the lower class couples.

It was further confirmed through the interviews conducted with few selected couples of middle class and lower class. In general, most of the middle class respondents expressed that they work together; they exchange their ideas and opinions in day today life and listen to the partner and they believe that they found a companion to share their lives with. Usually, young middle class couples engaged in variety of activities together. Night outs, watching movies together, day outs, shopping, visiting family and friends, cooking together were among the top activities that they enjoy doing together. Some couple expressed that they practice common hobbies such as swimming, tasting different food, travelling and attending social dancing classes.

The same question was answered quite differently by the lower class couples. In their leisure time, majority mentioned that they would stay at home, talk to each other especially about future plans. In answering the question on last time the couple went out together, all middle class couples were able to recall how many times they went out together in the recent past and for what. On the other hand, most lower class couple could not answer that question.

With regard to the household activities that the wife and husband do, we understood that usually men tend to do household chores such as cleaning, mopping, fixing etc. A lower class husband answered stating "I do the things that my wife cannot do" which literally means wife runs most of the household chores. Some husbands occasionally cook meals and often help their wives in cooking. Middle class couples tend to run errands together while this practice was rare among the lower class couples.

Further, the couples exchanged their views on many things. Middle class couples mentioned that they talk about almost everything including their jobs, future plan, social life, children, friends, parents, in-laws, politics, sex life etc. Lower class couples too talk about future plans, children, friends, parents etc. Compared to wives, husbands didn't like to share their work life with their wives. This was frequently seeing among lower class husbands. Further, sex verbalization was less among the lower class couples. The above detailed explanation implies that companionship is higher among the middle class couples. This is further seeing in the test statistics given below;

TABLE 1
MANN-WHITNEY TEST RESULTS FOR COMPANIONSHIP

Social class	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Middle class	20	28.88	577.50
Lower class	20	12.13	242.50
Total	40		

TABLE 2.

TEST STATISTICS ACCORDING TO GROUPING VARIABLE: SOCIAL CLASS

	Total compa- nionship score
Mann-Whitney U	32.500
Wilcoxon W	242.500
Z	-4.554
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000b
Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
Point Probability	.000

In the test statistics table, exact sig. is generated as .000. Standardized value of a significant study should be less than 0.05. The generated results clearly show that the scores of the companionship factor are significant.

Secondly, the Mann-Whitney test was run with the total score of the consensus and agreement in order to find out whether there is a significant difference in the factor the among middle class and lower class couples. The results showed significance in consensus and agreement of the two parties. Quite similar to the previously described companionship factor, mean ranks of the consensus and agreement of the middle class couples appeared to be significantly higher than lower class couples. Middle class couples indicated the score of 27.98 while lower class indicated 13.03.

In the interviews conducted, we understood how the decisions are made in marriage and how disagreements are settled. Some husbands expressed that they take most of the important decisions in marriage and tell their wives and seek their consent too. Most middle class wives said that they listen to their husbands and gives their opinion whenever necessary. Decisions with regard to children are mostly taken by wives whereas matters such as buying a car, investments are taken by men with the consent of wives.

Among the lower class young couples most decision makers are wives. Wives tend to make most of the decisions especially on family finance. In general, lower class young husbands believed that their wives are smarter than them. This is true to certain extent in assessing the educational background of the couples. In terms of financial management, almost every lower class husband had the habit of giving their salary to wife's hand and asks back when they needed. Quite differently, middle class couples tend to manage their family finance systematically. Most of the time, husband would bear the expenses of day to day life such as buying grocery, paying utility bills and wife filled the gaps. Some couples said they have

open accounts and they spend on daily expenses and sit together and balance the expenditure at the end of the month. Few couples have gone to the extent of dividing their monthly expenditure fifty- fifty and bear the expenses equally.

In dealing with parents and in-laws, most couples expressed that they know their limits and agree on how they should deal with them. Most middle class couples lived separate from their parents. Some couples were very much close to their parents since they are the only child in the families and some wives said that their husbands are emotionally detached from their families thus there is more room for the couple to take decisions on their own. On the other hand, most lower class young couples lived with two or three families in the same house where the couple did not have the freedom to take decisions on their own. Some couples happened to undergo clashes with parents or in-laws and have already moved out of the house and started living in adjoining room or upstairs of the house. Some wives expressed that their husbands feel jealous at times when they treat their parents thus, clashes arise because of jealousy.

Some couples had mutual friends. Nevertheless, husbands tend to have more friends compared to wives. Most wives despite of the class factor expressed their displeasure towards husband's friends. Most lower class wives did not like their husbands to have friends within the slum and strongly oppose in hanging out with them. One wife said "His friends do no good for him. Whenever they get together, they drink and smoke and my husband got use to bad things because of his friends".

Couples explained how they settle disagreements in their marriage. Most of the couples avoided speaking to their partners when they come across disagreements or disputes. This they called as "silence treatment" which actually a good way of avoiding fights. On the other hand, some middle class couples expressed that whenever they encounter disagreements, they talk to each other and sort out the matter on the spot. Some husbands said that they yell at their wives and later feel sorry and apologize for their behaviour. Some middle class husbands mentioned that they apologize over the phone by sending a text message to their wives when they are at work. Lower class husbands said that they would go out of the house for few hours to calm down. Most wives tend to shut themselves due to the fear of rejection and hesitance to make things unpleasant. Some wives were on the view that being fussy with their husbands have given them nothing therefore better to remain in silence or peacefully discuss and compromise. Lower class wives however stated that they blame their husbands if they had done something wrong and if the husband is correct, wives would keep quiet. Some couples found arguments over disagreements enjoyable and others irritating.

The scores of the affection and intimacy among the couples were generated according to the classes. The results were shown similar to the previous tests. The mean rank for the middle class was 26.55 while lower class was 14.45.

The results signify that the love and affection among middle class couples are stronger than lower class couples. In marriage, affection and intimacy strengthen the relationship.

Couples differ in ways in which they show their love and affection to the partner. Sometimes, it depends on the gender as well. Usually, middle class husbands showed their love and affection towards their partner by buying her gifts, verbal expression such as "I love you", kissing, cuddling, celebrating birthdays, anniversary etc. Meantime, lower class husbands stated that they show love and intimacy through sharing things in life even a small toffee, having meals together, and peck on the forehead etc.

Wives expressed their love and affection towards their husbands in the different way. Cook special meals for the husband was a common way of showing their love and affection. One middle class wife stated that they have "date at home" once in a while to make them feel romantic and loved and some women enjoyed shoulder massages from their husbands. Middle class wives expressed that they like to be given flowers, cards, presents on special occasions while lower class wives said that it is nice to be loved and looked after by their husbands when they are sick.

In the interviews, we realized that almost every couple seems to get on each other's nerves occasionally and in some cases frequently. The mostly heard complaints of husbands were that their wives are being fussy for coming home late, hanging out with friends; spending too much time on social media, especially on Facebook. Some husbands often got irritated with their wives for talking too much especially when they are thinking or engaged in some other work. On the other hand, wives got irritated usually with their husbands for being messy, over spending money, ignoring their opinion etc.

Scores of the marital satisfaction among the lower class and middle class showed the same tendency. Middle class couples got the mean rank of 27.80 while lower class got 13.20. Even though, the results proved that there is significance, marital satisfaction is a complex entity to measure.

Marital satisfaction is associated with harmony and happiness. Most couples stated that they are happy in their marriage. However, none of the couples expressed that they are perfect and completely satisfied with their marriage. Middle class couples were on the view that they have learnt to respect the difference and learned to live with it. Further, middle class husbands admired the qualities of their wives such as sharing good and bad things in life, being supportive and friendly. At the same time, some resented from their wives because of selfishness, talkativeness and being nagging. The same question was posed from the lower class husbands and they stated that they admire qualities of their wives such as listening and being patient with them. However, they did not like their wives being too talkative and emotional at times. Having asked what they admire and dislike in their partner, they were asked to describe what they see in a perfect wife. Middle class husbands said that a perfect wife would be the one who look after them, family, being supportive, understanding, loving and adjust out of love and understanding while lower class husbands said that a perfect wife would be a person who thinks about the future of their family and understand each other. In addition, they stressed that they do not look for superficial qualities like beauty and they would be happy with a women with average qualities.

Wives were too asked about good and bad qualities they see in their partners. Middle class wives liked smart, sexy, ambitious, romantic, intelligent and family person. Moreover, a man who can cook to impress them was something they found attractive in men. Further, they mentioned that they liked to be accepted by their partners as who they are. As bad qualities, they pointed out jealousy, egoistic qualities of their partners. Lower class wives admired qualities such as trustworthiness, caring and they disliked anger and use of filthy language by their husbands. Answering the question on the qualities they see in a perfect husband, they said that a perfect husband should be someone who is handsome, clean, smart, intelligent, romantic, and good in bed, caring, kind, attentive and understanding person. On the contrary, lower class wives seem to be less demanding. They thought caring, loving and good father to their children are the qualities of a perfect husband.

As the last factor, Mann-Whitney test was run to see the significance in sexual adjustment of the middle class and lower class couples. The mean rank of the middle class showed higher sexual adjustment tendency than the lower class couples

In the interviews conducted with the couples further revealed sex life of the young couples. The questions attempted to understand how far the couples enjoy sexual activities and its relation to sexual adjustment.

The average of the number of times that the couples have sexual intercourse was 2 -3 days per week. Some couples where they both are employed expressed that they are too tired to have sex after a long day of work hence; they would wait till the weekends to have a peaceful time together and have sex. However there were some exceptional cases as well. Some newly married couples seem to have sex every day and more during the weekends. On the other hand, a couple stated that they have sex 2-3 times per month because they do not wish to have regular sex since it might cause lack of interest. Most lower class couples who were being interviewed were either expecting a child or young parents with new born babies. These couples seem to have a silent phase in their sex life.

Couples expressed different reasons for having sex. To feel being loved, understand each other, feeling of belongingness, strengthen the bond, release stress, reproduction and solve petty disputes in family life were some of the reasons they mentioned for having sexual intercourse. Some lower class wives were on the view that they are obligated to satisfy their husbands by nature so the primary purpose of having sex is to give pleasure to their husbands which helps to safeguard their marriage. Urban middle class wives held a quite different point of view with regard to this matter. According to them, sexual intercourse should please each other. In order to do that; the couples should know each other's likes and dislikes. Sex verbalization was something both husbands and wives regarded important to have healthy sex life. However, lower class husbands regarded sexual intercourse as something habitual. They were on the view that sex is not so important in family life than the other factors. Among the middle class couples interviewed, almost every one used contraceptive methods while lower class couples didn't seem to have interest in

taking precautions to avoid undesired pregnancies. Having generated scores for all 5 factors affecting the marital adjustment of the couples, total marital adjustment score was generated in order to find out whether total marital adjustment between lower class and middle class show a significant difference according to the Mann-Whitney test. The results seemed to be positive. Mean rank of the middle class and lower class showed a significant difference while the exact sig.

TABLE 3
MEAN RANKS FOR MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

	Social Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Total MA	Middle class	20	29.23	584.50
	lower class	20	11.78	235.50
	Total	40		

TABLE 4
TEST STATISTICS FOR MEAN RANKS OF VARIABLES ACCORDING TO SOCIAL CLASS

	Total MA
Mann-Whitney U	25.500
Wilcoxon W	235.500
Z	-4.728
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000 ^b
Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
Point Probability	.000

was less than 0.05.

According to the non-Para-metric tests done using SPSS statistical software proved that the findings of the study are significant. In other words, the middle class couples adjust themselves in marriage better than lower class couples.

Having generated each score on marital adjustment factors and total marital adjustment, the next intention of the study was to understand how far other factors such as length of the

marriage, occupation, educational background and number of kids influence the adjustment patterns in marriage. In order to find out the correlations, non-parametric correlation tests were done using SPSS.

Correlation between the length of the marriage and marital adjustment showed negative as its Significance (2-tailed) is above 0.05. This implies that length of the marriage is not a significant factor in marital adjustment. On the other hand, educational background and occupation of the respondents and its connection to the marital adjustment seemed positive. Similarly, correlation between occupation and marital adjustment seemed to be significant as its value showed .000 which is below 0.05. The next test was run to see whether there is a correlation between number of kids and marital adjustment and the result proven to be negative.

6 CONCLUSION

The findings of this research show that marital adjustment of middle class couples is higher than lower class couples. The mean rank of the marital adjustment of middle class signifies 29.23 while lower class is 11.78. This result is further established through finding the significant levels of 5 factors associated with marital adjustment introduced by Locke and Williamson [1] namely companionship, consensus or agreement, affection & intimacy, satisfaction with the marriage and the partner and lastly sexual behavior. The scores for all five factors are higher among middle class couples than lower class couples; companionship: 28.88 > 12.13, consensus: 27.98 > 13.03, affection & intimacy: 26.55 > 14.45, marital satisfaction: 27.80 > 13.20 and sexual adjustment: 26.80 > 14.20.

The qualitative approach was helpful to find out the adjustment patterns of middle class and lower class couples. Thereby, we were able to identify some of the reasons for higher and poor level of marital adjustment. The study found that middle class couples are better companions than low class couples. They engage in varieties of activities together. In fact, middle class couples more or less tend to practice a hobby. Moreover, the family responsibilities are usually shared among the couple. This was very much seeing in the way they run errands in their day today life. On the other hand, lower class couples hardly seem to have a social life. Most of the wives were at home and they were quite dependent on their husbands. This had a negative impact on companionship of the couple. Further, effective communication was seeing more among the middle class couples. They often exchange their opinions and ideas in their day today life since they shared so much in common. It was very common among the middle class couples to talk about their work life with their partner. However, lower class husbands did not like to share their day to day life with their wives. Effective communication and involvement in common activities improve good companionship among the couples.

Similarly, consensus & agreement levels of middle class couples were higher than lower class couples. Here, we looked at why disagreements occur and how the disagreements are settled in marriage. Some of the decisions in marriage life are taken by men while some of the decisions are by women. In

taking decision with regard to family finance, middle class couples seem to opt for mutual agreement while lower class husbands rely on the opinion of wife. Lack of parental interferences for the middle class couples made it easier for the couples to take decisions on their own. When disagreements occur, the couples respond differently. Silence treatment, talking things over, compromising were some of the ways of settling disagreements among middle class couples whereas fights, bickering, going out of the house, leaving the partner were some of the ways of handling disagreements among lower class couples. Some couples found arguments over disagreements enjoyable and others irritating.

As the third factor, we noticed that the way of expressing love and affection to the partner differs not only on class difference but also on gender. Most of the time, ways of showing love and affection vary from couple to couple. It was also found that almost every couple seems to get on each other's nerves occasionally and in some cases frequently. This was common to most of the couples.

Most importantly, no couple thought that their marriage is perfect. Everybody thought that there is room for improvement. Nevertheless, expectations of middle class couples seemed higher than the lower class couples. Middle class wives tend to be highly demanding and choosy in selecting their life partner. Based on these findings, we came to an assumption that social class is a determining factor in marital satisfaction. Since middle class wives are independent, educated and liberal thinking, they thought that they deserve highly accomplished men in the society.

Even though sex life of a couple is not an openly discussed topic in Sri Lankan society, sex life is one of the key factors in marital adjustment. Urban middle class couples gave an important place for sex in their lives. They thought it should be in the manner of "give & take". They believed that sex is something intimate and special they share in marriage. On the other hand, sex was something more habitual for lower class couples. Most of the women interviewed were on the view that it is their duty to sexually satisfy their husbands and it is something important for their marriage to get going. Sex verbalization was very poor among lower class couples. In fact, some lower class women were unaware of their coitus & men were seemed to be ignorant of giving pleasure to their wives. In summing up, these issues we identified contributed to better sexual adjustment patterns among middle class couples.

Having done a comparative analysis on marital adjustment of middle & lower classes, its factors & patterns, we then looked at correlation of marital adjustment to some of the important elements in marriage. This was mainly intended to justify some of the findings we came across in previous studies and to show that it is relevant in Sri Lankan context as well. Tests were run to find out correlation of marital adjustment with length of the marriage, number of children, educational level and occupation. First two factors had no correlation with the adjustment whereas latter factors were positively correlated with marital adjustment. Correlation of marital adjustment and educational level has been already subjected to research by group of researchers from University of Bucharest, Romania [18] and found that educated couples showed better

adjustment pattern than uneducated or poorly educated couples. This factor was further taken into investigation in our study and was able to justify the result. Moreover, we were able to find out that partners who are both employed and engaged in professional jobs are better adjusted than the partners who are unemployed, housewives or engaged in unskilled or blue collar jobs.

Lastly, looking at the demographic data, It was found that majority of the middle class couples were between the age of 25-29+ and lower class was 20-24 which indicates that middle class couples are older & mature than lower class couples. This certainly could have an influence on their marriage and adjustment as well.

The primary purpose of this empirical study is to examine the phenomenon of marital adjustment in relation to social classes. The results are promising as it showed that the social classes do have an impact on marital adjustment. The findings confirmed that marital adjustment of middle class couples is higher than lower class couples. Moreover, some of the factors associated with marital adjustment were studied stage by stage thereby some of the patterns of adjustment were identified and were able to understand the reasons for maladjustment or positive adjustment.

This study is an attempt to look at the concept of marital adjustment in its totality. In other words, it's a micro-analysis on how couples adjust in initial stages of marriage. By studying how young couples adjust themselves in marriage pertaining to different social conditions, we are able to analyze the impact of social backgrounds have on marriage and marital adjustment. Moreover, this study also gives the opportunity to investigate the challenges faced by the young couples in urban environment and how they adjust accordingly depend on external factors such as socio-economic and environmental conditions.

Study of the family has been a theme for many researchers over the years. Both local and international researchers have looked at the concept of family and marriage. However, considering the Lankan context, many researchers have looked at the structure of family & marriage structural changes in these institutions. Even though there are studies on marital adjustment most of them are coming from psychological background. In such context, this study intended to look at the phenomenon of marital adjustment from sociological point of view. The findings of this study will come in handy in solving problems in marriage, specially, in couple therapy in familial counseling sessions.

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