



Gamophobia and Social Adjustment in Women

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine differences in Gamophobia and social adjustment between married and unmarried women. The sample consisted of 120 women, including 60 married women and 60 unmarried women, selected for the study. Gamophobia was measured using the Gamophobia Scale developed by Dr. D. R. Doshi, while social adjustment was assessed using the Social Adjustment Scale developed by Bell and translated into Gujarati by Dr. D. J. Bhatt. Statistical analyses included the independent samples t- test to examine group differences and Pearson's product-moment correlation to assess the relationship between Gamophobia and social adjustment. The results revealed a significant difference in Gamophobia and social adjustment between married and unmarried women. Additionally, a significant negative correlation was found between Gamophobia and social adjustment, indicating that higher levels of Gamophobia were associated with poorer social adjustment. The findings highlight the impact of fear of marriage on women's social adjustment and suggest the importance of psychological and social interventions.

Introduction

Marriage has historically been viewed as the cornerstone of social stability, particularly for women. For centuries, it served not only as a personal union but as a primary vehicle for social mobility, economic



security, and community integration. In traditional societies, a woman's identity was often defined by her transition from daughter to wife and eventually mother. However, as the 21st century progresses, the socio-cultural landscape has shifted dramatically. The rise of female empowerment, financial independence, and the secularisation of social norms have altered the perception of marriage from a necessity to an option.

Despite these advancements, the pressure to conform to marital norms remains a potent force. For some women, this pressure manifests not as mere hesitation, but as a pathological dread known as Gamophobia. While many experience pre-wedding jitters, Gamophobia is a distinct psychological condition that can severely impair a woman's ability to navigate her social world, regardless of whether she is currently single or already wed.

Gamophobia, derived from the Greek words *gamos* (marriage) and *Phobos* (fear), is categorised as a specific phobia involving an irrational and persistent fear of marriage or commitment. Unlike those who choose to stay single for lifestyle reasons, individuals with Gamophobia often desire intimacy but are paralysed by the formal, legal, and permanent nature of marriage.

Psychologically, this phobia is often rooted in deep-seated anxieties. These may include:

Fear of Loss of Autonomy: The perception that marriage signifies the end of personal freedom and the erasure of individual identity.

Fear of Responsibility: The weight of legal and social obligations toward a spouse and potential children.

Fear of Vulnerability: The dread of being emotionally exposed or legally tied to a person who could cause future pain or abandonment.

Social adjustment is the process by which an individual achieves a state of harmony with their environment. It involves the ability to manage social roles, maintain healthy relationships, and cope with societal expectations. For women, social adjustment is often a tightrope walk. Society frequently judges a woman's success based on her ability to integrate into family life.

When a woman suffers from Gamophobia, her social adjustment is compromised. An unmarried woman may avoid social gatherings to escape the inevitable questions about her marital status. Conversely, a married woman with Gamophobia tendencies may feel alienated within her own household, unable to adjust to the social identity of a wife, leading to internal conflict and external withdrawals.



While Gamophobia affects all genders, the implications for women are unique due to the domestic burden and emotional labor often associated with female roles in marriage. Psychological literature suggests several conduits for this fear: **Observational Learning:** Women who grew up in homes with high marital discord, domestic violence, or traumatic divorces often internalise marriage as a trap rather than a sanctuary. **Attachment Theory:** Attachment styles formed in infancy play a critical role. Those with Avoidant Attachment see marriage as a threat to their self-reliance, while those with Anxious Attachment may fear the commitment because they believe they are destined for rejection.

Today's woman is expected to be a high-achieving professional and a nurturing homemaker. This double burden can make the prospect of marriage seem like an overwhelming administrative and emotional load, triggering a phobic response.

For unmarried women, Gamophobia creates a paradox. While they may experience a genuine fear of the institution, they also face social maladjustment caused by societal stigmatisation. In many cultures, the spinster or unmarried label carries a heavy weight. The Gamophobia woman may find herself increasingly isolated as her peer group enters marriage. Her social adjustment suffers because she no longer fits into the dominant social narrative, yet her phobia prevents her from taking the step required to belong. A common misconception is that Gamophobia only affects those who are single. In reality, many women enter marriage due to societal pressure or an attempt to conquer their fear, only to find the phobia intensifying after the ceremony.

In married women, Gamophobia manifests as: **Emotional Detachment:** A subconscious wall built to prevent true intimacy. **Social Maladjustment:** Difficulty in interacting with the husband's family or community, as these interactions reinforce the reality of the marriage. **Identity Crisis:** A struggle to reconcile their pre-marital self with the social expectations of their current role.

Despite the prevalence of commitment issues in the modern era, Gamophobia remains under-researched, particularly in its comparative impact on married and unmarried women. Most studies focus on general anxiety or marital satisfaction, but few isolate the specific phobia of marriage as a determinant of broader social adjustment. There is a pressing need to understand how this fear dictates a woman's ability to function in society, maintain self-esteem, and find fulfilment in her interpersonal relationships.

In summary, Gamophobia is more than a reluctance to wed; it is a complex psychological barrier that reshapes a woman's social reality. Whether it results in the avoidance of marriage altogether or a dysfunctional experience within it, the phobia significantly hampers social adjustment. This study aims to



bridge this gap in knowledge, providing a voice to the silent anxiety that many women feel regarding the most traditional of social institutions. By examining both married and unmarried cohorts, we can begin to understand how to better support women in achieving social harmony, regardless of their marital status.

Review of Literature

Gamophobia and Psychological Well-being

Arshad and Akhtar (2024) conducted a study on female university students and found that Gamophobia is significantly associated with lower life satisfaction and higher body image dissatisfaction. Their research suggests that the fear of commitment often creates a negative feedback loop where women feel socially inadequate, further hindering their social adjustment.

Parental Influence and Attachment

Childhood experiences play a pivotal role in the development of marriage-related anxiety. Ossia and Chujor (2023) identified that paternal family backgrounds specifically witnessing domestic violence or parental divorce is a primary predictor of Gamophobia in single women. This learned avoidance makes these women more likely to struggle with social adjustment in their adult lives, as they view the fundamental social unit (marriage) as inherently dangerous or unstable.

Marital Status and Adjustment Differences

A comparative study by Nanik and Natalya (2022) examined social adjustment between married and unmarried women. Their findings indicated that while there was no significant difference in emotional maturity, there was a notable difference in social adjustment. Married women often faced higher social demands (balancing career, home, and community roles), whereas unmarried women with Gamophobia traits often felt a social stigma that led to defensive social behaviours.

The Role of Independence

Recent qualitative research (PMC11021744, 2024) explores how the rise of independent consciousness in women has redefined Gamophobia. For many modern women, what is labeled as a phobia by society may actually be a rational pursuit of professional development and personal freedom. However, when this desire for independence clashes with rigid cultural expectations, it results in poor social adjustment and internal conflict.

Significance of the Study



This study helps mental health professionals identify that social awkwardness or withdrawal in women may actually be a secondary symptom of a deep-seated commitment phobia. It advocates for the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) specifically tailored to marital anxieties. By highlighting that Gamophobia often stems from valid traumatic experiences or a desire for autonomy, the study helps reduce the social stigma associated with unmarried women or unhappy married women. The research underscores the importance of healthy family communication. It shows that addressing a woman's fear of marriage can improve her overall ability to function within her community and extended family network. Findings can assist in developing pre-marital counselling programs that address phobias rather than just logistical compatibility, potentially lowering future divorce rates and improving overall social stability.

Objectives

1. To measure Gamophobia in women
- 2 To measure Social Adjustment in Women
3. To check the correlation between Gamophobia and social Adjustment

Null hypothesis

1. There will be no significant difference in Gamophobia in women
2. There will be no significant difference in Social Adjustment in women
3. There will be no correlation will be found between Gamophobia and Social Adjustment

METHOD

Research Tools:

- Gamophobia Scale: Developed by Prajapati, Nainuji, Zankat, Doshi and Jogsan.
- Social Adjustment scale: Developed by Bell

Sample:

120 participants (60 married women , 60 unmarried women) From Rajkot city

**Procedure of data collection:**

According to purpose of present study investigator explained the purpose of the study of the subjects. The whole procedure of filling the inventory was explained to them fully and clearly. the instruction given on the questionnaire were explained to them. It was also made clear to them that scores would be kept secret. It was checked that none of the subject left any questions unanswered or that no subject encircled both the answers given against question.

Research Designs

t- test and correlation analyses to explore Gamophobia and Social Adjustment in the sample.

Result and Discussion:

The main purpose of present study was to Gamophobia and social Adjustment in women result is as under:

Table-1**Showing the mean, SD and t-value of Gamophobia**

| Sr. No | Variables | N | Mean | SD | t | Sig. |
|--------|-----------------|----|-------|-------|------|------|
| 1 | Married women | 60 | 80.88 | 18.36 | 8.16 | 0.01 |
| 2 | Unmarried women | 60 | 93.12 | 23.28 | | |

Sig. Level = 0.05 = 1.98, 0.01=2.63

The calculated t-value is 8.16, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. Unmarried women reported a significantly higher mean score (M=93.12) compared to married women (M=80.88)The Standard Deviation for unmarried women (SD=23.28) is higher than that of married women (SD=18.36), suggesting that attitudes toward marriage are more varied among those who are not yet married.

Reasons for Higher Gamophobia in Unmarried Women

The following factors likely contribute to the higher mean scores observed in the unmarried group:



Fear of Loss of Autonomy

Unmarried women often fear that marriage will lead to a loss of personal identity, career stagnation, or the curtailing of social freedoms. This fear of engulfment creates a psychological barrier to commitment.

Observed Marital Discord

Unmarried women are often external observers of marriage. High rates of divorce, domestic conflict, or unhappy marriages in their immediate environment or media can reinforce a negative perception, leading to an avoidance response.

Pressure of Traditional Roles

In many cultures, marriage implies a significant increase in domestic responsibilities and emotional labor. Unmarried women may feel overwhelmed by the expectation of balancing professional goals with traditional daughter-in-law or maternal roles.

Commitment Phobia and Choice Overload

In the modern era, the abundance of choice can lead to decision phobia. Unmarried women may fear making a permanent choice, worrying that they might choose the wrong partner or regret the decision later in life.

Social and Peer Influence

If a woman’s peer group consists primarily of single individuals who value independence, the prospect of being the first to marry can cause social anxiety and a fear of being left behind by her current social circle.

Table-2

Showing the mean, SD and t-value of Social Adjustment

| Sr No | Variables | N | Mean | SD | t | Sig. |
|-------|-----------------|----|-------|-------|------|------|
| 1 | Married women | 60 | 76.67 | 17.43 | 3.75 | 0.01 |
| 2 | Unmarried women | 60 | 63.18 | 15.79 | | |

Sig. Level = 0.05 = 1.98, 0.01=2.63



The t-value of 3.75 is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a highly reliable difference between the two groups that is not due to chance. Married women have a significantly higher mean score ($M=76.67$) compared to unmarried women ($M=63.18$). Both groups show relatively similar Standard Deviations (17.43 and 15.79), suggesting that the spread of scores within each group is comparable, though married women show slightly more variation.

Reasons for Higher Social Adjustment in Married Women

The following factors may explain why married women scored higher in this study:

.Expansion of Social Networks

Marriage often doubles a woman's social circle by integrating her into a new family (in-laws) and a new set of mutual friends. Navigating these diverse relationships requires a higher level of social adaptability and diplomacy, which reflects as better social adjustment.

Defined Social Roles

Marriage provides a clearly defined social status and role within the community. This clarity can lead to increased confidence in social settings. Unmarried women, particularly in traditional societies, may face ambiguous social expectations or singleness stigma, which can lower their perceived social adjustment.

Emotional Support Systems

Married women generally have a consistent source of emotional and instrumental support (the spouse). This buffer helps them handle external social stressors more effectively. Having a partner to attend social events with can also reduce social anxiety and increase participation in community activities.

Skill Development through Conflict Resolution

Living with a partner requires constant negotiation, empathy, and conflict resolution. These soft skills are highly transferable to broader social environments, such as the workplace or community groups, leading to higher overall adjustment scores.

Psychological Stability

Research often suggests that a stable partnership can lead to greater life satisfaction and emotional regulation. When an individual is emotionally stable, they find it easier to adapt to social changes and interact positively with others.

**Table -3****Showing the correlation between Gamophobia and social Adjustment**

| Sr No | Variables | N | Mean | r | Sig. |
|-------|-------------------|-----|-------|-------|------|
| 1 | Gamophobia | 120 | 87.00 | -0.41 | 0.01 |
| 2 | Social Adjustment | 120 | 69.93 | | |

Sig. Level = 0.05= 0.11 , 0.01= 0.16

The value of -0.41 indicates a moderate negative correlation. The result is significant at the 0.01 level, meaning there is a 99% probability that this relationship is real and not due to chance. Because the correlation is negative, it means that as one variable increases, the other tends to decrease. In this case, higher levels of Gamophobia are associated with lower levels of Social Adjustment. The findings suggest that a fear of marriage is not just an isolated emotional issue but is closely tied to a person's broader ability to function within society. A correlation of -0.41 is considered moderate in psychological research; it is strong enough to be meaningful but also suggests that other factors like personality, upbringing, or environment also play a role in social adjustment.

Reasons for the Negative Correlation

The negative relationship between Gamophobia and Social Adjustment can be attributed to several psychological and social factors:

Avoidance Behaviour: Phobias naturally lead to avoidance. An individual with Gamophobia may avoid social gatherings (weddings, family functions, or couple-based events) where the topic of marriage might arise. This withdrawal limits their opportunities to practice and improve their social skills, leading to poorer adjustment.

Generalised Anxiety: Gamophobia is often a specific manifestation of a broader anxiety disorder. High anxiety can make it difficult for a person to feel comfortable in social groups, cooperate with others, or handle the give and take required for healthy social adjustment.

Pressure and Stigma: In many societies, marriage is a key marker of social success or maturity. A person fearing marriage may feel like a social misfit or fear being judged by peers. This sense of alienation can lead to defensiveness or social withdrawal, lowering their adjustment score.



Difficulty with Trust and Intimacy: Both social adjustment and the prospect of marriage require trust and emotional vulnerability. If an individual has deep-seated fears about trusting a partner (a core component of Gamophobia), they likely struggle to form the deep, trusting bonds required for healthy social integration.

Internal Conflict: The mental energy spent managing the fear of marriage can lead to emotional exhaustion. When a person is constantly on guard against commitment, they have less psychological energy to invest in adapting to their social environment and community roles.

Conclusion:

The present study aimed to investigate the levels of Gamophobia and Social Adjustment among women, specifically comparing married and unmarried groups. The empirical evidence gathered through statistical analysis provides significant insights into the psychological dynamics of marital commitment and social functioning.

The findings from Table-1 clearly indicate that unmarried women experience significantly higher levels of Gamophobia ($M=93.12$) than married women ($M=80.88$). This disparity, supported by a robust t-value of 8.16, suggests that the fear of marriage is largely driven by the "unknown" variables of the institution, such as the potential loss of autonomy, fear of traditional domestic burdens, and the influence of negative marital observations in society. Once women enter the institution of marriage, this specific phobic response appears to diminish as uncertainty is replaced by lived experience. Regarding Social Adjustment (Table-2), the study found that married women ($M=76.67$) are significantly better adjusted socially than unmarried women ($M=63.18$). This suggests that the marital structure provides a stable framework for expanding social networks, defining community roles, and developing essential interpersonal skills like conflict resolution and emotional empathy. Most importantly, Table-3 established a significant negative correlation ($r=-0.41$) between Gamophobia and social adjustment. This indicates that as the fear of marriage increases, an individual's ability to adjust socially tends to decrease. This relationship highlights that Gamophobia is not merely a personal aversion to weddings; it is a psychological barrier that can lead to social avoidance, generalised anxiety, and a sense of alienation from societal norms.

Limitations:

Limitations include the small sample size and focus only on youth. Future studies should include larger, more diverse samples and employ varied data collection methods.



Suggestion for future Research:

Future research should expand sample diversity, include other population and utilise diverse data collection methods to enhance study reliability.

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