

Conflict Management Strategies for Married Couples with Hearing Impairment: An Explanatory Perspective

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Abstract

Effective communication and relationships are essential for hearing-impaired couples to lead happy lives. This study aimed to investigate the dispute resolution techniques that married couples with hearing loss might use to lead healthier, happier lives. This research was explanatory and qualitative. 15 adult couples, one of whom was hearing-impaired and the other was normal, made up the study's sample. The technique of sampling procedure was purposive sampling technique utilized to gather data for this investigation. Data were gathered using a self-designed semi-structured interview protocol. The expert opinion (N=02) confirmed the validity of the instrument. A thorough literature review was conducted to verify the instrument's reliability. Thematic analysis was done to examine the data. From the thematic analysis, four main themes were identified: the nature of conflicts, their causes, the difficulties faced by hearing-impaired couples, and conflict resolution techniques. The study's results showed that the majority of participants indicated that hearing-impaired partners eventually became accustomed to their normal mate. The study recommended special orientation sessions before and after marriages of couples with hearing impairment.

Keywords: Conflict management, Strategies, Hearing Impaired, Couple, Marriage.

Introduction

Marriage is a specific type of interpersonal and social relationship that plays a significant role in human life. Marriage, which is acknowledged as a legal, social, and ritualistic institution. Can also be said to be the most essential or important relationship between a man and a woman (Aman et al., 2021). For this reason, marriage life is contemplated as the significant aspects of human life.

Marriage life requires firm communication between husband and wife. If

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the matter is off to communicate with partner without appropriate hearing ability then various conflicts appear. Hearing loss affects interactions between couples and may result in less emotional connection. Hearing loss affects the lives of the individuals in numerous ways including degeneration like retinal vascular alterations (Sardone et al., 2021) and hearing loss, particularly age-related hearing loss, have all been linked to various health issues. These include dementia and mild cognitive impairment. Hearing loss affects interactions between couples and may result in less emotional connection. Daily communication between partners, whether it be about significant issues or issues that appear unimportant, is the foundation of a good relationship. Due to the difficulties in connecting with hearing people those who are hard of hearing (HH) frequently feel socially alienated. Hearing impairment particularly with the age is concerned with numerous conditions of the health including cognitive and physical fragility (Sardone et al., 2021).

Hearing loss can harm a husband and wife's relationship. Talking and understanding become exceedingly challenging as a result. Up to 8% of dementia cases worldwide are thought to be caused by hearing loss, making it the most significant risk factor for dementia that can be modified (Livingston et al., 2017). Marriages become difficult when there is too much blame, arguments, and verbal abuses are faced especially the major problem i.e., communication difficulty. Couples who are having problems should seek the advice of marriage professionals who can help them identify the issues and offer solutions (Abdulrauf & Gholami, 2018)

Rationale of Study

Hearing impairment can make fragile the relationship of couples with hearing impairment. Conflicts are common in married life but the nature of conflicts between a hearing-impaired couple will be quite different. This is due to the firm communication gap between couples with hearing impairment. The need is to apply conflict management strategies to enrich the relationship between the hearing-impaired husband and wife. According to several experts, communication is the essential component of a successful marriage, and both positive and negative behavior affects whether a marriage will last or end in divorce (Haris & Kumar, 2018).

Statement of Problem

Communication skills are the main components of marital satisfaction. If one partner is hearing-impaired and the other is normal then it creates a huge communication gap. This becomes the reason for conflict between the couple with

hearing impairment. As a result, the strategies for couples with hearing impairment to handle conflict include the expression of the problem.

Study's Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the nature of the conflict between married couples with hearing impairment, life.
2. Identify the challenges faced by married couples with hearing impairment in their married.
3. Suggest the strategies of conflict management for married couples with hearing impairment.

Research Questions

The questions of the research were:

1. What is the nature of the conflict between married couples with hearing impairment?
2. What are the challenges experienced by married couples with hearing impairment in their married life?
3. What are the strategies for conflict management for married couples with hearing impairment?

Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial for hearing-impaired couples in their marital life. Not only for hearing-impaired couples it is also beneficial for the society in which he/she move out and interact in daily life like as psychologists, parents of the hearing impaired, and friends. Psychologists justlike that if hearing-impaired couples visit a psychologist for counseling to resolve conflict that arises between them due to lack of communication understanding and another issue. Also, those parents who have hearing-impaired kids can use the strategies that we are discussing in this study. If someone has a hearing-impaired daughter-in-law or son-in- law in that case, this study will help for understanding each other point of view when they use strategies that reduce communication barriers so they can easily communicate. The domestic life of the daughter-in-law will build up and her relation also is healthy and maintained.

Limitations & De-limitations of the Study

- The study was limited to the province of Punjab only as the researchers could not cover all provinces of Pakistan due to time and financial constraints.

- The study was delimited to hearing-impaired couples only from the province of Punjab.
- A semi-structured interview was developed because of the non-availability of standardized instruments.

Review of the Literature

Marriage is one area of life where hearing loss may have a negative impact. Communication between spouses can be put at risk if one or both have a hearing impairment. Couples' pleasure in their marriages, which includes a good and joyful attitude in relationships, personality, conflict resolution, financial circumstances. And children is one component of couples lives (Abedi et al. 2016).

A couple's contentment is one of the most crucial parts of marriage. The attitude that the husband and wife adopt in relation to several parts of their relationship, such as their personalities, how they handle disagreements, how they handle money, how they relate to one another sexually, and how they nurture their children, is referred to as marital contentment.

Deafness has an effect on interactions between couples and may reduce emotional and physical intimacy. In couple's life, satisfaction is one of the most significant aspect of marital life (Abedi et al., 2018).

Disagreements between spouses throughout cooperative, social, and routine communication problems cause marital problems. The dynamics of the conflict first influence the development of the conflict scenario, which represents both spouses having conflicting desires towards an object, even if both couples are aware that only one will be able to satisfy their wants. Skill of problem solving, collaborative decision making, individual differences acceptance, forgiveness, active listening, empathy, and positively conflict management are the basis of marital communication (Navidian et al., 2014).

All close relationships require interaction, which makes the mismatch inescapable and very obvious. Unresolved marital disagreements, their neglect, and the adoption of incorrect conflict resolution techniques are what ruin relationships between partners. Couples must understand how to resolve partner issues, starting with the need to gain a deeper understanding of what makes a good partnership.

Even though there is a wealth of literature on marriage, relatively little research has looked at hearing loss as a physical health stressor that is associated with partner health outcomes. A hearing disability may be particularly important to examine in marital situations because of how it affects communication. Interactions are impacted by communication issues, which can lead to a decrease

in life quality. The progression of a couple through the marital life cycle may be connected to the relationship length and constructive strategies (Delatorre, 2018).

Although hearing loss does not cause divorce, its effects and issues in marriages, as well as a lack of training in conflict resolution techniques and poor communication, resulting in decreased life satisfaction and compatibility. As a result of losing their hearing sense. Individuals struggle with communication, social isolation, and dependency on others and are susceptible to violence, force, and sexual abuse. Increased weariness has also been connected to hearing loss (Holman et al., 2021). Negative feelings like anger and lack of enthusiasm to participate in listening circumstances can exacerbate fatigue in addition to the additional listening effort brought on by diminished audibility (Akeroydet al., 2019).

Hearing loss can have a detrimental impact on marital satisfaction since deafness has an impact on a couple's relationships and can cause a reduction in emotional and physical intimacy. Numerous studies have shown that several aspects, such as looking for a companion, maintaining composure, and being trustworthy, contribute to marital satisfaction. Being kind and faithful, being intimate while avoiding controlling behaviors, interacting and displaying interest (love and affection), empathetic, experiencing sexual fulfillment, cooperating, and recognizing and managing emotions as they arise. Significant research has shown associations between marital adjustment and certain types of marital communication as well as between marital conflict and depression (Tinaet al. 2011).

Our goal is to comprehend how household support systems, as expressed by variables like marital status and household makeup influence relationships between hearing loss and mortality.

Particularly, constructive styles, depressive, and angriness regarding conflict are playing their role of linking among depressive symptoms and marital dissatisfaction (Tina et al, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides particular theoretical guidelines for this study. The theoretical framework includes from traditional theory and contemporary theory. Kirchoff and Adams (1982) proposed the traditional theory of conflict management, according to which conflict is viewed negatively and is typically brought about by troublemakers, necessitating its resolution. Contrarily, contemporary theory acknowledges that human conflict is inevitable and that it arises as a normal outcome of choice. Therefore, this study is aligned with the theoretical support of Kirchoff and Adams (1982).

Methodology of the Study

Research Design

The study was qualitative and exploratory in nature.

Population of the Study

The study's participants were married couples with hearing impairment from several cities in Punjab.

Participants of the Study

The sample of the study included 15 married couples with hearing impairment with different socio-economic statuses. Among 15 couples with hearing impairment, 06 were from the Lahore district, whereas 09 were from different cities of Punjab including Sargodha, Saahiwal, khaanewa, Vehari, and Qasoor. The purposive sampling technique was used to collect data for this study. The tool for data collection was a self-developed semi-structured interview protocol. In-depth, sermi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. The validity of the interview protocol was assured by the expert opinion (N-02). The reliability was confirmed through an extensive literature review.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis and coding were used to analyze the data. Based on categories, three overarching themes were created. Additional sub-themes were created from the categories. With help from the literature, the themes' patterns were used to provide explanations. I reviewed the text several times throughout the process of data analysis because I am the original author. We make a lot of effort while approaching the study's participants becoming the first female. The study's subjects were solicited by the author. Contacting and obtaining the approval of each respondent takes two weeks.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Demographics

Sample	Frequency and Percentage
Age	Mean=37.3(minimum21,maximum50)
Gender	6 Males (40%), 9 Females(60%)
Husbands' Education	5 Illiterate (34%), 4 Matric (26%), 3 F.A/B.A(20%), 3 BS/M.A(20%)

Wives Education	2 Illiterate (14%), 4 Primary (26%), 4 Matric (26%), 3 F.A/B.A (30%), 2 BS/M.A (14%)
Period of Marital Life	5 less than 5 years (34%), 10 more than 5 years (66%)
Family System	9 Single (60%), 6 Joint (40%)
Partner with H.I	8 Husband (53%), 6 Wives (40%), 1 Both (7%)

Establishing trustworthiness

The participants' assessment and confirmation of the findings, as well as the co-author of the study and two outside researchers' approval of the findings, all served to ensure the study's reliability and conformability. Five participants were presented the study's key topics, and they confirmed that the findings applied to them. To ensure transferability, specifics such as the coding procedure and the creation of categories from raw data were given to observers and outside researchers to assess whether the data would be applicable in other fields. The participants were chosen from a variety of Punjab cities and social backgrounds. We researchers did our best to maintain objectivity and limit the influence of researcher bias.

Only the interview technique was used to collect the data; no observation or document analysis were employed.

Ethical considerations

This research included ethical concern as a fundamental component. Without putting any pressure on the subjects, we obtained their responses. The participants were given the assurance that all of their personal data and information would be kept private and utilized only for research. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time and refuse to provide a response to any of the questions. The participants were not required to provide any unnecessary confidential information.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Research Question 1:

What is nature of the conflict between married couples with hearing impairment?

Theme 1: Nature of Conflict

These categories, which are listed below, have produced this theme. These categories include communication barriers, complex topics, mistrust, behavioral issues, and different temperament. The spouses' emotional alienation was the

result of extreme acute and chronic stressors, losses, and sentiments of excessive demand and desperation(Kieslich, 2022).

Category 1: Communication Barriers

This category shows that few of the participants responded that they faced communication difficulties at the start of their married life. This participant also stated that communication problem becomes a barrier for hearing-impaired couples. However, one of the participants said that:

“Me and my wife both face problems regarding communication based on daily life routine.”

Category 2: Complex Topics.

This category shows that few of the participants responded that they faced difficulties in complex topics at the start of their married life. This participant also stated that complex topics become a problem for hearing-impaired couples. However, one of the participants said that:

“When he is alone in the room and the room is locked and he is unable to call anybody, this is the problem I have faced many times.”

Category 3: Mistrust

This category highlight that less than half of the participant responded that mistrust is the main problem at the start of their married life. This participant also stated that mistrust becomes a problem for hearing-impaired couples. However, one of the participants said that:

“Due to mistrustfulness, I have faced homely and domestic problems.”

Category 4: Behavioral Issues

This category indicates that few of the participants responded that behavioral issues are the problem at the start of their married life. This participant also stated that behavioral issues become a problem for hearing-impaired couples. However, one of the participants said that:

“I have many problems with my husband such as domestic violence, and sexual abuse.”

Theme 2: Reason of Conflict

From the categories listed below, this theme has emerged.

These categories include tough situations, No cooperation.

Reasons for marital disputes among spouses according to their academic level and length of marriage(Tolorunieke, 2014).

Category 1: Tough situation

This category displays that few of the participants responded that the difficult situation face at the start of their married life. However, one of the participants said that: “In starting there is a tough situation to understand each other.”

Category 2: No Cooperation

This category depicts that the majority of the participants responded that there is no such cooperation from the partner that creates conflict. Additionally, one of the participants said that:

“The main reason for our conflict is no cooperation.”

Research Question 2:

What are the challenges experienced by married couples with hearing impairment in their married life?

Theme 3: Challenges in Marital Life

From the categories listed below, this theme has emerged. These categories include Not mutual understanding, psychological problems, In-laws interference, and financial issues. It's a frequent misconception that one of the main issues couples experience is stress and arguments over finances. The marital relationships are based on the subjective evaluation of the individual for marital satisfaction (Chauhan & Sekher, 2022).

Category 1: Poor Mutual Understanding

This category draws attention to the fact that less than half of respondents indicated that they and their spouses do not fully understand one another. They do not try to understand each other so, they faced a big challenge in their marital life. These participants stated that a normal partner can not understand easily the non-verbal communication of a hearing-impaired couple at the start of marital life. Moreover, one of the participants said that:

“She can not understand me this is a big challenges for me.”

Category 2: Psychological Problems

Less than half of the participants replied to this category, which they said their partner has psychological issues like as they have not trusted their life partner, one husband was not satisfied with his wife, and he think his wife was not a good home organizer. These participants stated that their partner always doubts on other partner's character. However, one of the participants said that:

“She has a psychological problem that she thinks I am not giving her respect this is a big challenge for me in my married life.”

Category 3: In-Laws Interference

This category highlights that only a few of the participants responded that they faced the challenge of interference from in-laws in their personal married life. They face a problem due to their in-law's behavior in their married life, in every situation, in every issue, they interfere and their partner also does not support their partner. They shared every situation with their in-laws.

However, one of the participants said that:

“My in-law's behavior is a big challenge for me.”

Category 4: **Financial Issues**

Less than half of respondents in this category said that they had financial difficulties. They cannot afford their children's expenses, the rights of their children, their carer, and financial issues are the main challenges in their marital life. Moreover, one of the participants said that:

"Financial problems, raising children, and protecting their rights are challenges for me."

Research Question 3: What do you suggest to solve the conflict between the couple with hearing impairment?

Theme 4: **Strategies for Happy Married Life**

From the category listed below, this theme has emerged. These categories include partners who should be educatable, consultancy, and try to understand each other. According to Huntington et al., (2022), the selection effects as compare to effects of social causation, getting married is probable by individuals who are better-adjusted.

Category 1: **Understanding**

This category depicts that few of the participants responded that they suggested living a happy life. They should try to understand each other partner. Married couples should listen other carefully and try to understand and ignore any conflict that arises between them. Additionally, one of the participants said that:

"I suggest that they should every situation carefully, talk slowly. Listen carefully, and need to ignore an angry situation."

Category 2: **Educated Partner**

This category identifies that half of the participants responded that their partner should be educatable. Because one partner is hearing impaired and the other normal so they talk toothers by verbal communication in the form of text, if other partners are not educatable so she/he can easily understand each other point of view. These participants also said that they want their partner should be educated because if they texted their partner so they can read. Moreover, one of the participants said that:

"Couples should be educated and understand each other point of view, written text also helps to solve the conflict."

Category 3: **Consultancy**

This category represents that the majority of participants responded that they take consultancy. They want to tell us that married couples should consult with elders like parents, family relatives, and other experienced people who listen to conflict and they try to resolve it. They responded that if they consult with someone so a lot of their conflicts was resolved.

However, one of the participants said that:

“My family tries to solve the conflict between us.”

Findings

The findings of the study have been given below:

Nature of Conflict

The study found that the nature of conflicts that occurs between hearing-impaired couples are communication barriers, complex topics, mistrust, and behavioral issues.

Reason of Conflict

The study found that the reason for conflict that occurs between hearing-impaired couples is misunderstanding the situations, not behaving appropriately, and non-cooperative behaviors in certain situations of both life partners

Challenges In Marital Life

This study found that challenges faced by hearing-impaired couples are poor mutual understanding. Psychological problems, and in-law interference.

Strategies for Happy Married Life

It was suggested by the majority of participants suggested that strategies for happy Married life include understanding, an educated partner, and consultancy. These strategies are helpful for married couples for living a happy life.

Discussion

Conflicts are part of happy married life. Hearing-impaired couples also experience various conflicts in their happy married life. All marriages inevitably experience conflict, but how the couple handles those disputes can have a positive or negative impact on their relationship (Ünal&Akgün 2022). Such conflicts include communication barriers, mistrust, and behavioral issues. The natural part of interacting other is the conflict (Hysi, 2015).

Difficult situations as per circumstances and the non-cooperative behavior of the life partner create conflict between hearing-impaired couples. Multifaceted picture was founded in the study that how partners marital life satisfaction is influenced by the conflict resolution styles of the partner's by Using the actor-partner interdependence model (Morgan et al., 2017). Conflicts occur naturally and undoubtedly in human relationships (Elgoibar et al. 2017). There are various challenges that couples with hearing impairment face in their marital life. These challenges are experienced in the initial stage or soon after it. Additionally, Govender&Jongh (2021), reduced quality of life is significantly associated with the hearing difficulties.

The marital life of hearing- impaired couples requires such harmony that could bind them as other normal married couples spend their lives. Therefore, the

need is to follow such strategies that could make the precious relationship of marriage strong. One of the most crucial aspects to taking a practical and remedial approach to problems is strategy formulation (Farid, 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the life of hearing-impaired individuals is not easy. There is a main communication deficiency if one life partner is with normal hearing and the other life partner is without hearing sense. This communication difficulty is resulted in creating various conflicts between married couples with hearing impairment. It has been proved in this study that various conflicts appear in the life of hearing-impaired individuals. These conflicts contain various reasons and situations. However, various strategies of conflict resolution suggested by this study will surely play an important role to resolve such conflicts.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study have been given below:

1. Particular training should be provided to hearing-impaired couples for better communication.
2. Free counseling services should be provided for hearing-impaired couples and families.
3. Seminars regarding happy marital life must be conducted to spread awareness among hearing-impaired couples.
4. Media should play its role in spreading the happy marital life of hearing-impaired students.
5. Public and private sectors should promote employment opportunities for hearing-impaired individuals to earn their livelihood.

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