Loneliness among Married Individuals

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(M.Sc.) (F.C.Sc.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **"Loneliness among Married Individuals"** has been carried out independently by Ms. Samreen Saiyed under the guidance of Dr. Jigisha Gala, in partial fulfillment for the degree of Masters in Life Span Development from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. This research is her original bonafide work carried out from April 2022 to May 2023.

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Ethical Compliance Certificate 2022-2023

This is to certify that Samreen Saiyed's study titled, "Loneliness among Married Individuals" has been approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research (IECHR), Faculty of Family and Community Science, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The study has been allotted the ethical approval number IECHR/FCSc/M.Sc./2022/52.

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Abstract

The focus of the study is to examine loneliness among individuals, especially in the context of marriage, and the various factors that contribute to it. The study looks at loneliness and how it relates to marital satisfaction. The methods used include mixed methodology with a sample size (N=60) and includes both quantitative and quantitative research on young Muslim married individuals (aged 30-45). An interview was also scheduled to determine if joint and nuclear family structures were linked to loneliness and marital dissatisfaction. As for the quantitative study, a questionnaire was filled in by married individuals of both genders belonging to different family structures. Among our key findings, it was noted that women lacked quality time with their partners, while men lacked connection and direction in their marriage. While joint families provided more support for women, nuclear families emphasized individual autonomy for men. The degree of happiness in a marriage was seen to be negatively correlated with loneliness. Men and women who felt isolated were reported to be in an unhappy marriage. However, it was also noted that men and women compensated for the feeling of loneliness. Improving communication, developing shared interests, and addressing the issue through awareness and counseling were suggested to alleviate loneliness. Apart from this, educating the youth about social norms and cultural values helps them develop healthy marriages. The study uniquely brings together the sociological and psychological perspectives to understand the effects of loneliness in a marriage.

Introduction

Loneliness is defined as "a subjective distressing emotion caused by a gap between one's actual and desired social relationships" (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008, pp. 447). Loneliness is found to be a significant risk factor for depression. One study found that lonely individuals were more likely to develop depressive symptoms over time than those who were not lonely. This may be because loneliness can lead to negative thinking patterns, feelings of hopelessness, and a lack of motivation, which are all common symptoms of depression. Loneliness and depression have been linked to a range of physical health problems, including chronic pain, heart disease, and weakened immune function. They can impact a person's relationships, leading to conflicts with family members, friends, romantic partners or spouses. Research has shown that marriage and loneliness are significantly more closely linked than cohabitation and loneliness (Olson & Wong, 2001; Hsieh & Hawkley, 2018). While marriage is expected to bring joy, comfort and security, it can also come with challenges and obstacles that can strain the connection. Factors like misplaced expectations, fear of vulnerability, family, work, and stress can all contribute to loneliness in a marriage. Low marital satisfaction is associated with a lower level of happiness than being single, claim Chapman and Guven (2016). The couple's physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as the health of their children, are all impacted by their marital satisfaction. Globally, loneliness is recognized as a significant public health concern, with studies suggesting that it can lead to depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

In India, cultural and societal factors can exacerbate the problem of loneliness, particularly for men and women in marriages. Indian culture places a strong emphasis on unity and interdependence, which can make it challenging for individuals to admit to feelings of loneliness and seek help. Those who are perceived as being alone or lonely may be stigmatized.

Men may feel pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and be seen as strong and self-sufficient, while women may face societal expectations of being caregivers and nurturers, leading to feelings of isolation and neglect when their emotional needs are not met. However, solitude is a perspective appreciated in Indian culture. Research suggests that men and women may differ in their sources of loneliness. Women tend to experience more emotional loneliness, which is the feeling of lacking close and meaningful relationships with others, while men tend to experience more social loneliness, which is the feeling of lacking a social network and a sense of belonging. This may be because women tend to prioritize emotional connections in their relationships, while men tend to prioritize shared activities and interests.

Another factor that may influence how married men and women experience loneliness is the quality of their relationship. A study found that both men and women who reported lower levels of marital satisfaction also reported higher levels of loneliness. Additionally, men who felt emotionally disconnected from their partners reported higher levels of emotional loneliness. Loneliness can affect married couples in joint and nuclear families in several ways. Loneliness can lead to decreased relationship satisfaction in both joint and nuclear families, as couples may feel emotionally disconnected from each other. In nuclear families, loneliness can affect parenting, as parents may struggle to meet the emotional needs of their children when they themselves are feeling lonely. In joint families, loneliness may be less common as couples have the support of extended family members. However, if a couple feels isolated within their joint family, it might worsen feelings of loneliness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the feeling of loneliness in marriages, as many couples have been isolated from their usual support networks and have limited opportunities for social interaction outside of their relationship. According to research,

several couples have experienced increased loneliness and isolation from their social support networks, including friends and family. (Jeste et al., 2020). Unfortunately, this stress and uncertainty has led to the prime cause of feelings of loneliness. To the contrary, the pandemic has also provided opportunities for couples to strengthen their relationship and combat loneliness together, such as video chats, phone calls, and socially distanced outdoor activities. With the help of enhanced technology and virtual reality, individuals have been able to ameliorate the key causes of loneliness and find solutions to such issues. Overall, the pandemic has presented significant challenges for couples in terms of loneliness, but it has also highlighted the importance of communication, adaptability, and mutual support in relationships.

Loneliness is a complicated issue that can impact people in all kinds of relationships, even in marriage. It's essential to understand how loneliness affects mental health and encourage people to seek help, which can lead to better well-being for everyone. This study examines loneliness among individuals and the various factors that contribute to it. The participants are stratified by gender and family structure. The study also looks at loneliness and how it relates to marital satisfaction. Additionally, it highlights the differences between Indian and Western family values and marriage.

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews literature that illustrates relationship between loneliness and marital satisfaction, as well as the disparities between Indian and Western cultural norms surrounding family values and marriage.

Loneliness

Loneliness is defined as the subjective, unpleasant experience of a perceived disparity between the quantity and quality of existing relationships (e.g., with a spouse, children, friends, or family) and the relationships one wishes to have (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2006; Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Loneliness is subject to interpretation; an individual may be alone without being alone and can feel empty even when other people are around them. The contrast between a person's desire for social connections and their actual social relationships is the typical definition of loneliness. (Russell et al., 1980). Loneliness research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the causes and consequences of loneliness over the last three decades. Some factors include a lack of social skills (Deniz et al., 2005; DiTommaso et al., 2003), negative expectations and attributions (Jones et al., 1982; Peplau et al., 1979; Vitkus et al., 1987), and shyness (Wei et al., 2005).

Due to different theoretical perspectives, there are many different definitions of loneliness. Weiss (1973) differentiates between emotional loneliness and social isolation when defining loneliness as a common response from people who lack secure attachments. The absence of close relationships causes emotional loneliness, which can make a person feel uneasy or constantly seek company. Various people have quite varying perceptions of loneliness, and one person can have different levels of loneliness throughout his or her life. Changes in personal

circumstances or situations can alter an individual's need or desire for companionship and emotional closeness. (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Many studies in the literature claim that men are lonelier than women. Several studies using the UCLA scale found significant gender differences (Demirci-Yoraz & Demir, 2009; Deniz et al., 2005; Russel et al., 1980; Schultz & Moore, 1986), whereas others found no gender difference in loneliness (Berg & Peplau, 1982; Cramer & Neyedley, 1998; eçen, 2007b; DiTommaso & Spinner, 1997). Men were found to be lonelier than women in studies that considered loneliness as a multi-dimensional construct, particularly in the emotional loneliness dimension (Eçen, 2007a). Borys and Perlman (1985) discovered that women were lonelier than men. Social integration and feelings of social embedment are the contrary of loneliness. A diverse social network and ideal support exchanges with members of one's social network are major elements influencing social integration and easing loneliness, and thus quality of life and living standards (Hawkley et al., 2008; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2001).

The findings of studies that address loneliness on multiple levels are consistent with the assumptions of attachment theory (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1969, 1973). Bernardon et al. (2011), for example, found that when marital status was controlled for, social, family, and emotional loneliness dimensions had a negative correlation with insecure attachment styles and a positive correlation with fearful, preoccupied, and avoidant attachment styles.

Loneliness in Marriage

According to Levenson et al. (1993), marriage is the most significant, long-lasting and unique relationship in one's life, providing happiness. A stable marriage is crucial for marital satisfaction. In addition to safeguarding individuals against emotional loneliness, marriage

reduces the risk of social loneliness by providing access to a larger social circle and opportunities for shared social activities as a couple (De Jong Gierveld & Dykstra, 2004). Marriage and loneliness are more comparable than would be expected by chance (Distel et al., 2010). According to Kenny, Kashy, & Cook (2006), various factors, including assortative mating, shared life stressors (such as job loss or child death), mutual influence on loneliness levels, and one partner's assessment of the marital quality, could all contribute to loneliness within a marriage.

According to research (Cacioppo, Fowler, & Christakis, 2009; Hawkley et al., 2008), loneliness spreads among people based on the frequency and quality of their interactions, suggesting that couples should be especially aware of partner effects. Negative partner behaviours, such as withholding love, whining, or criticising, can make their partner feel lonelier (Carr, Freedman, Cornman, & Schwarz, 2014). On the other hand, people who treat their relationship well can lessen their companion's loneliness. Even in the early stages of a marriage, partner's may feel lonely. Sadava and Matejcic (1987) discovered that newlywed couples experienced high levels of loneliness. Lonely husbands were more hesitant to communicate with their wives than nonlonely husbands. Wives of lonely husbands have less affection for and intimacy with their partners. In essence, lonely people's marriages appear to be doomed from the start. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), romantic relationships between adults are attachments, just like relationships between infants and their caregivers, and romantic love is a characteristic of the attachment behavioral system as well as the motivational systems that lead to caregiving and sexuality.

Bowlby (1979) believed that an individual's attachment history influenced marriage, the primary adult relationship. Following this prediction, research revealed that, when compared to

adults with insecure attachment styles, those classified as securely attached had more positive beliefs about romantic love and believed that romantic love could be sustained over time (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bartholomew's two-dimensional model of adult attachment proposes that an individual's attachment style is shaped by their self-image and image of others. Positive or negative views of self and others can result in four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful. These attachment styles are influenced by childhood attachments and can have significant impacts on relationships, mental health, and well-being. By identifying their attachment style, individuals can work towards developing secure and fulfilling relationships (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998).

Solitude

Solitude refers to the state of being alone and spending time in one's own company, and it can have both positive and negative effects on an individual's well-being. Studies have shown that solitude can have benefits for individuals, including increased creativity, self-reflection, and improved mental health. Kaufman and Gregoire (2018) found that solitude can enhance creativity by allowing individuals to engage in deep reflection and introspection, leading to new and innovative ideas. Similarly, research by Hopper et al. (2017) suggests that solitude can be an important component of well-being, providing opportunities for individuals to recharge and restore their mental energy. Cacioppo et al. (2015) suggests that loneliness, which is a negative emotional state associated with perceived social isolation, can have detrimental effects on an individual's physical and mental health, including increased risk for depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. Epley and Schroeder (2014) discovered that despite knowing the benefits of solitude, people frequently prefer to avoid it. This may be the result of unfavorable stereotypes like social isolation or loneliness.

Marital Satisfaction and Loneliness

According to Chapman and Guven (2016), marital satisfaction affects individual subjective wellbeing, and people with low marital satisfaction are less happy than unmarried people. Marital satisfaction affects not only the couple's work and life, but also their physical and mental health, as well as the health of their children (O'Connor et al., 1999; Davila et al., 2003; Pruchno et al., 2009). Marital satisfaction (Hamilton, 1929) refers to an individual's attitudes and views on spouses and marital relationships, and it is regarded as a key factor in marital quality (Li & Fung, 2011) and an important path that influences marital outcomes (Karney & Bradbury, 1995).

In actuality, loneliness and marriage quality are related. Couples in less cohesive marriages—those with less communication and emotional intimacy—are more alone than those in more cohesive partnerships (Olson & Wong 2001, Hsieh & Hawkley, 2018). The quality of a marriage is determined by a combination of positive and negative attributes, with the balance of each being crucial to its strength and resilience. In a study conducted by Hsieh, Ning, and Louise Hawkley (2017), individuals who felt that there was an unequal amount of negativity in their marriage reported feeling more isolated compared to those who perceived a more even mix of negativity and positivity. Adopting a dyadic approach to assessing marital quality can help us comprehend how marriage impacts various aspects of our well-being, including physical, cognitive, emotional, and social health.

Family and Marriage in Western Countries

According to Zimmerman (2008) familism (marriage, the family, and reproduction) has been a crucial component of civil society and a major interface with human nature throughout the course of Western civilization, with the advancement of character and moral values as important goals. Marriage in the United States is fundamentally different from marriage in other Western countries, according to Andrew J. Cherlin (2009). On the one hand, most Americans strongly embrace marriage and give it a lot of symbolic significance. Similarly, most individuals marry, marry early, and remarry if their first marriage fails. Many Americans, on the other hand, adhere to the principles of expressive individualism, which holds that everyone has the right and perhaps even the duty to pursue happiness and emotional wellbeing (Baskerville, 2009).

Indian Families and Marriages

Many Indian families are able to modify, adjust, and adapt to shifting social norms, values, and structures, and have shown a special strength in being close-knit despite mounting stress and strain. Rising relationship breakdown and separation rates, domestic abuse, generational conflicts, and social issues like drug abuse and juvenile delinquency are some of the major contributors to family dysfunction. (Sonawat, 2001). The family has been the subject of numerous studies in India over the past few decades, with a focus on its various facets (including its various forms, structure, size, shifting functions, and responsibilities). In India, family studies are viewed through the institutional lens of a specific society (Sonawat, 2001).

Sonawat (2001) says that family patterns in the West show lifestyle experimentation and the search for new patterns; in India, they suggest survival-related adaptation to socioeconomic and personal circumstances. Some of the most frequently seen family variations in India include

single-parent families, female-headed households, dual-earner/career families, families with no children, and blended families.

In India, class, caste, and religion are important factors in how parents and kinship groups arrange marriages. However, young people now want a say in who they want to marry. The idea of companionship and love is gradually displacing the traditional notion of getting married as a social requirement. Women's reasons for getting married and expectations from marriage have changed because of education and employment (Kashyap, 2004). Indian families are understood to be the foundation of society and to serve as a bridge between the individual and the larger community. Marriage patterns, such as inter-caste marriage and age marriage, have undergone several changes. Marriage between a husband and wife is becoming more and more fragile, as evidenced by the divorce rates (Sonawat, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

General Systems Approach

The theory's underlying presumption is that living things behave in a way that reflects the interconnected effects of various systems working together. In Flanders' opinion, loneliness can be painful, but it can also serve as a positive feedback mechanism that improves the wellbeing of both individuals and societies.

The Existential Approach to Loneliness

The philosophical foundation of existential theory is the notion that freedom of choice allows people to give their lives meaning and purpose. According to Moustakas' (1961) existential model of loneliness, feeling lonely is a result of realizing how alone we are in life. This realization requires us to accept our situation and, in doing so, overcome our loneliness.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
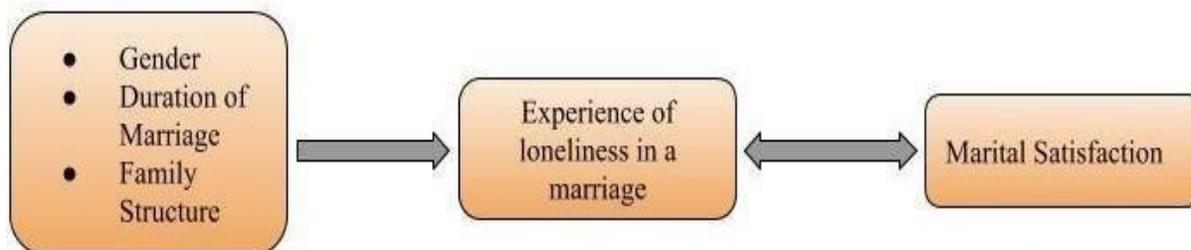
Figure 1 depicts the concept of this study. The concept of this study is to conclude the impact of marriage on the feeling of loneliness. A key factor to be considered is the amount of time for which a couple has been married. The level of marital satisfaction can either strengthen a relationship or result in isolation and feelings of disconnection. A joint family setup versus a nuclear family setup can result in varying degrees of loneliness in their marriage. Individuals who have lived in the same family structure for a long time may feel lonely, which can lead to marital dissatisfaction. A joint family setup may obstruct a couple's private space and play an effective part in causing loneliness in a marriage, or an individual may have support from their close family in the absence of their partner.

Rationale

Marriage is an interdependent relationship in which each individual's understandings, desires, attitudes, and feelings not only add value to their own marital experience but also improve the marital experience of their partner. In contrast, loneliness in marital relationships has received very little research attention to date. Loneliness research has also made significant contributions to our understanding of the causes and consequences of loneliness, according to numerous studies. Marriage and loneliness are significantly more closely related than cohabitation and loneliness. Men and women may experience loneliness in different ways than their same-sex counterparts. The amount of social support that partners give and receive from one another is directly related to the quality of a relationship. The goal of this study is to discover factors such as marriage duration, different family setups, marital satisfaction that may cause loneliness in a marriage, and what makes a marriage lonelier than it needs to be, as well as how much they are aware of the same.

Research Questions

Broad Questions

- What factors lead to loneliness among married individuals?
- What is the impact of loneliness on marital satisfaction?

Specific Questions

- Do men and women experience loneliness differently.
- Does family structure influence the experience of loneliness in a marriage.

The methodology used for this study is discussed in the following chapter.

Methodology

This chapter contains the research objectives, research design, sampling information, tools for data collection, procedure of data collection, field testing, procedure of data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research Objectives

Broad Objective

- To identify factors that lead to loneliness among married people.

Specific Objectives

- To describe the experiences of loneliness and compare both genders.

- To understand the effect of family structure (joint/nuclear) on the loneliness of married people.

- To know the association of loneliness with marital dissatisfaction.

Research Design

The current study used mixed methodology and included both quantitative and quantitative research on young married individuals (aged 30-45). The quantitative study was conducted to understand the cause that contributes to loneliness in married people. A questionnaire was filled by married individuals of both genders belonging to different family structure i.e., joint family and nuclear family

Further the qualitative interview was conducted to determine whether joint/nuclear family structures were linked to loneliness and marital dissatisfaction in married people.

Sampling

Sampling criteria

The criteria for selecting the sample were as follows:

1. The participants were middle-aged individuals (30- 45years).

2. The participants belonged to urban middle-class Muslim families living in Baroda city.

3. The men in the study were employed, while the women were homemakers.

4. Purposive snowball technique was used to locate participants according to the

   aforementioned criteria in order to maintain the homogeneity of the sample.

Sample Size and Distribution

Figure 2

Sample Size and Distribution
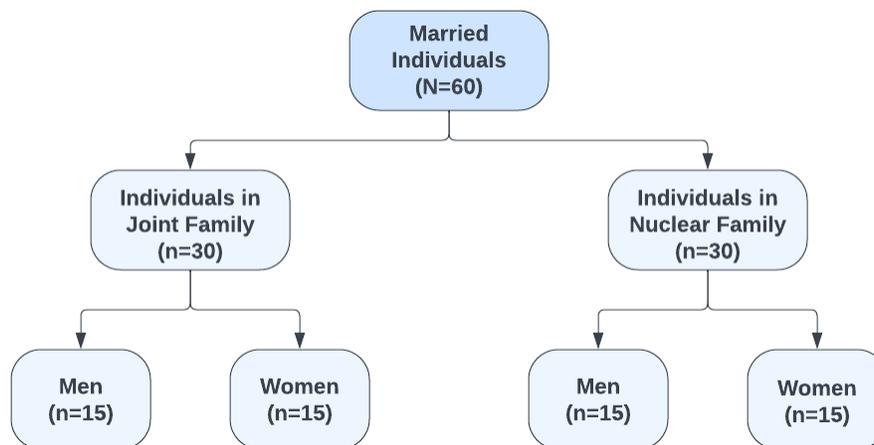
Figure 2 shows a sample distribution of the study. The total sample size will be 60 participants. 30 middle-aged individuals from a joint family setting and 30 middle-aged individuals from a nuclear family setting. They will be given a quantitative questionnaire followed by a qualitative interview.

Tools for Data Collection

Tools that were used in data collection are mentioned in Figure 2 and further explained below (Refer to Appendices B & C).

Figure 3

Tools used in Data Collection

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                                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                                                    │      Demographic tool         │
                                                    └──────────────────────────────┘
                                                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                              ┌──────────────┐      │  UCLA Loneliness Questionnaire │
                              │ Quantitative │      └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │    tools     │      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                              └──────────────┘      │   Solitude Questionnaire      │
        ┌──────────┐                                └──────────────────────────────┘
        │  Tools   │                                ┌──────────────────────────────┐
        └──────────┘                                │   Quality of relationship     │
                                                    │      Questionnaire            │
                              ┌──────────────┐      └──────────────────────────────┘
                              │Qualitative tool│    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
                              └──────────────┘      │     Interview Schedule        │
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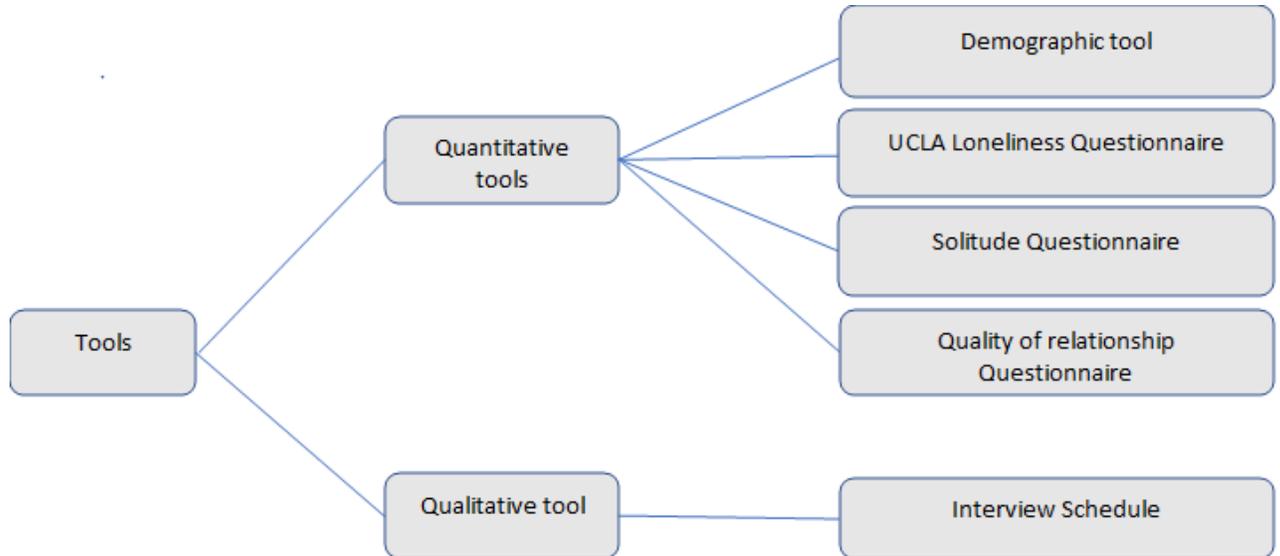
Demographic Tool

The demographic form collected details like name, age, gender, contact details, date of birth, number of years of marriage, number of children and family structure they live in.

Quantitative Tools

Table 1

Tools and Domains (Refer Appendix B)

No.	Tools	Domains Covered	Author of the Scale
1.	Loneliness Questionnaire	Feeling of Isolation Unavailable Social Connections Feeling Left Out	Daniel W. Russell (1996) UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)
2.	Solitude Questionnaire	Connection with Nature Achievement Enjoying One's Own Company	Palgi, Y., Segel-Karpas, D., Ost Mor, S. et al. (2021)
3.	Couple Satisfaction Questionnaire	Degree of Happiness Sense of Belonging Connection and Attachment	Funk, J. L. & Rogge, R. D. (2007). Couples Satisfaction Index. Journal of Family Psychology

Table 1 summarizes the questionnaire's specifics, including the domains covered. The questionnaire was also translated into Hindi so that it could be easily read by the participants.

Qualitative Interview Schedule

The interview scheduled consists of open-ended questions for in-depth understanding to comprehend how the joint or nuclear family structure affects the loneliness of married people, understand how loneliness affects marital dissatisfaction and what other factors may lead to loneliness individually. The domains covered for qualitative questions were feeling of loneliness, dealing with loneliness, spending quality time with partner, expectations from marriage,

relationship with in-laws, support of in-laws for childcare (Refer Appendix C). Since the participants came from Muslim backgrounds, their parents chose their partners from within their immediate families.

Field Testing of the tool

- The tool was field tested on two participants (n=2)
- There were two participants, one man and one woman.

Field testing was done for following:

- To see if everyone could understand and evaluate the tool's language and specific words.
- To determine whether the Hindi translation matches the English statement.
- To see how much time, it took to complete the tool.

The participants were better able to comprehend the questions with ease. Some participants were hesitant to discuss their family dynamics in detail.

Content Validation

Two professionals, a licensed counsellor and hypnotherapist in Baroda, and a faculty member in the philosophy department at Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda validated the tool's content. The tools weren't changed further as the experts thought they were well-designed and fulfilled the objectives of the study.

Procedure of Data Collection

Participants were contacted for the quantitative tool through friends and family. Following their agreement, data was collected, and interviews were conducted**.**

Procedure for Data Analysis

Data gathered through interviews and questionnaires were examined separately.

Quantitative data

The data was digitized, and scoring was done using the manual's Likert Type Rating Scale.

For the analysis of the scales, mean values, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated, and they are shown in tables and figures. Scoring ranges were also used to examine the differences in scores across the scales. Because ranges were not specified in the tool's manual, they were created using the standard formula i.e., maximum score was subtracted from the minimum score and then divided by number of intervals.

The variables were compared, and their differences were found using the t-test. To assess the link between predictor factors and the dependent variable, correlational analysis was carried out.

Qualitative data

The necessary verbatims for subsequent analysis were extracted from the transcribed qualitative data. Thematic analysis was performed to identify common themes, topics, thoughts, and patterns of meaning that emerged repeatedly from the collected data. Each interview took about 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire and interview the questions asked.

Ethical Consideration

- Written consent was taken from the participants before conducting the survey.

- With the participant's permission, qualitative data was audio-taped and used for academic purposes only.

- No participants were forced to take part in the study.

- Participants would leave the study whenever they wish.

- As we all know, quantitative data collected via Google Forms is stored somewhere by software companies, which violates ethical considerations. So, to keep the participants' identities anonymous and maintain confidentiality throughout the study, quantitative data was collected manually as well.

- The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee for Human Research (IECHR) at the Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. The ethics clearance number for this study is IECHR/FCSc/M.Sc./2022/52.

The next chapter presents the results of the study.

Results

This chapter demonstrates the results of this study under two sections. Quantitative section and qualitative section which are further divided into sub-sections respectively. For the analysis of the scales, mean values, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated, and they are shown in tables.

The t-test was used to compare the variables and identify any differences. Correlational analysis was done to determine the relationship between the loneliness scale and the relationship satisfaction scale.

Quantitative is further divided into sub-sections:

 Section I- Demographic details of Participants

Section II- Loneliness among Individuals

Section III- Solitude among Individuals

Section IV- Relationship Satisfaction among Individuals

Section V- Pearson's Correlations between Loneliness Scale and Relationship Satisfaction Scale

Section I- Demographic details of participants

Demographic details included questions related to name, age, years of marriage, number of children. There were 60 participants, who were evenly distributed by gender and family structure. The age criteria of the participants were 30-45 years middle-aged individuals. All the participants were from Baroda belonging to Muslim urban class families.

Figure 4

Number of Children

N=60
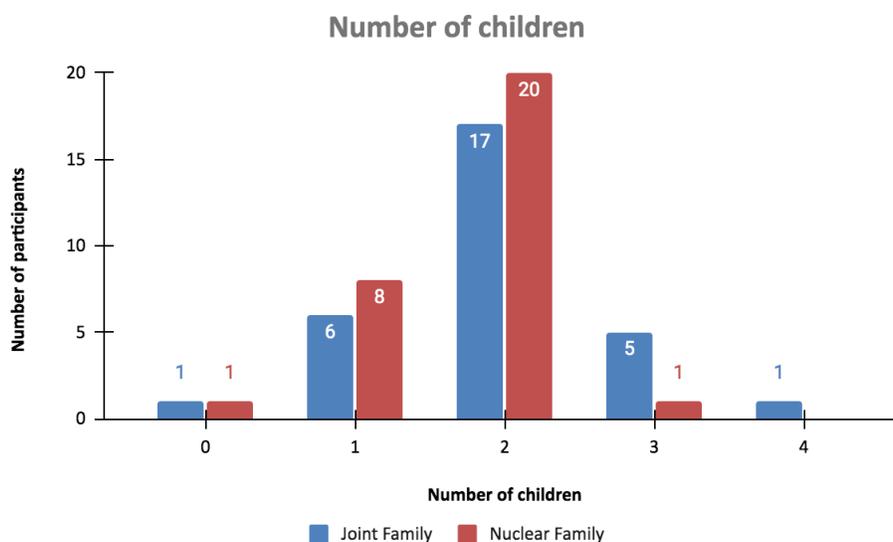
Figure 3 depicts that 3.33% of individuals in both joint and nuclear families had no children. Only one child was seen in 20% of joint family members and 26.67% of nuclear family members. Two children were seen in 56.67% of joint family members and 66.67% of nuclear family members had 2 children. Three children seen in 16.67% of joint family members and 3.33% of nuclear family members. Apart from this, 3.33% of joint family members had four

children. In joint families, couples are noted to have more assistance with childcare, possibly

leading to the planning of a higher number of children.

Section II- Loneliness among Individuals

Table 2
Mean Values of the Variables in Feeling of Loneliness

	Joint Family	Nuclear Family	Total			**N=60**
Gender	M	M	M	Lowest Score	Highest Score	
Women	12.35	5.48	7.65	1	22	
Men	6.25	16.09	10.32	1	30	

Looking at the data in table 2, women in joint families have a higher score (M=12.35)

compared to women in nuclear families (M=5.48). On the other hand, men in nuclear families

have a higher score (M=16.09) compared to men in joint families (M=6.25). However, as per the

total mean score men score higher than women which concludes that men are lonelier than

women.

Table 3

T-test of Loneliness Scale across Gender and Family Structure

	Gender		Family Structure	
	t	p	t	p
Loneliness	0.324	0.747	1.636	0.107
Feeling of Isolation	0.657	0.514	1.128	0.264
Unavailable Social Connections	0.000	1.000	1.059	0.294
Feeling Left out	0.187	0.852	1.329	0.189

N=60

Degree of freedom= 58

*p<0.05

In table 3 to further investigate, a t-test was conducted across the various domains under the loneliness scale. In general, the t values and p values reveal no significant gender differences in the experiences of loneliness in the domains, i.e. feeling of isolation, unavailable social connections and the feeling of being left out.

Table 4

Frequency, Mean Values of Men and Women across the Domains of Loneliness Scale

N=60

Ranges	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Total	
	f	M	f	M	f	M
(I) Feeling of Isolation						
1. Women						
Low (0-10)	9	3.66	9	3.11	18	0.6
Moderate (11-20)	5	11.4	6	13.33	11	0.36
High (21-30)	1	22	0	0	1	22
2. Men						
Low (0-10)	11	3.27	7	3.85	18	0.6
Moderate (11-20)	4	15.5	7	14.42	11	0.36
High (21-30)	0	0	1	30	1	30
(II) Available Social Connection						
1. Women						
Low (0-5)	11	0.6	12	2.33	23	2.21
Moderate (6-10)	3	0.36	3	6.66	6	7.5
High (11-15)	1	22	0	0	1	11
2. Men						
Low (0-5)	12	1.08	7	1.57	19	1.26
Moderate (6-10)	3	7	7	6.71	10	7.7
High (11-15)	0	0	1	15	1	15

(III) Feeling Left Out

   1. Women

Low (0-5)	9	12.5	10	2.6	19	2.68
Moderate (6-10)	5	8.6	5	7.6	10	7.2
High (11-15)	1	11	0	0	1	11
2. Men						
Low (0-5)	11	1.9	8	2.62	19	2.21
Moderate (6-10)	4	7	6	9	10	8.2
High (11-15)	0	0	1	15	1	15

According to Table 4 women in both joint and nuclear family structures experienced similar levels of feeling of isolation, with most falling into the low category (9 in joint and 9 in nuclear family). Men in joint families had higher mean scores in the moderate category (M=15.5) compared to men in nuclear families (M=14.42), but there were no men in the high category in joint families. However, demographic details revealed that men and women in these groups felt less isolated because the majority of them had at least one child, which kept them occupied.

For available social connections In the case of joint family, men (f=12) and women (f=11) were noted to show high frequency in the low category, thereby implying that individuals in a joint family require fewer social connections. Since joint families are close knit and provide stronger social support, men and women may not require social links outside the family.

For feeling of being left out, the mean scores in the low range were generally higher in women from both joint and nuclear families. From the qualitative interviews, these patterns correspond to strong communication between married couples. Men and women are seen to share interests and make personal attempts to engage spouses in their daily lives.

Section III- Solitude among Individuals

Table 5

T-test of Solitude Scale across Gender

| | | **N=60** |
| | | |

| | Gender | | |
	t	p	MD
Solitude	0.809	0.422	1.433
Connection with Nature	3.008	0.004*	2.033
Activity Involvement	3.430	0.001*	1.867
Enjoying one's own Company	1.207	0.232	0.867

*p<0.05, Degree of Freedom=58

The results from table 5 were used to determine whether there was a significant difference between genders in the solitude scale. For the domain of connection with nature, there is a statistically significant difference between the two variables based on gender (t = -3.008, p = 0.004), with a mean difference of 2.033. This suggests that women may have a greater affinity for nature and outdoor activities while alone and enjoy solitude in nature. For the domain of activity involvement, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups based on gender (t = 3.430, p = 0.001) with a mean difference of 1.867. This suggests that women may be socialized differently than men, with more emphasis placed on activities that involve nature and the outdoors.

Table 6

Frequency, Mean Values of Men and Women in Joint and Nuclear Families in Connection with Nature

N=60

Intervals	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Total	
	f	M	f	M	f	M
Women						
Low (0-5)	1	3	2	6	3	0.1
Medium (6-10)	7	7.42	7	6.57	14	0.46
High (11-16)	7	11	6	11.16	13	0.43
Men						
Low (0-5)	3	2.33	2	1.5	5	0.16
Moderate (6-10)	12	7.16	13	7.23	25	0.83
High (11-16)	0	0	0	0	0	0

As seen in table 6, it showed that both joint and nuclear families have similar levels of connection with nature, across gender. Most of the responses fell into the moderate level of connection with nature, with more women reporting a high level of connection than men. With women being homemakers, they are able to organize their routine and carve out their time to enjoy the nature. On the other hand, men prefer going outdoors only on weekends and enjoy nature as a family. Being in nature allows both genders to reconnect with nature and find tranquilly.

Table 7

Frequency, Mean Values of Men and Women in Joint and Nuclear Families in Escapism

	N=60					
	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Total	
Intervals	f	M	f	M	f	M
Women						
Low (0-7)	2	4.5	3	4.67	5	4.6
Moderate (8-14)	9	8.22	7	7.14	16	7.75
High (15-20)	4	12.25	5	10.6	9	12.44
Men						
Low (0-7)	4	3.75	2	4.5	6	4
Moderate (8-14)	10	8.9	12	8.33	22	8.5
High (15-20)	1	11	1	14	2	11

Table 7 shows that women in joint families (M=12.25) show more signs of escapism than women in nuclear families (M=10.6), as indicated by their higher mean score in the high category. Women who live in joint families are seen to be occupied by their familial roles thereby allowing little time to themselves. Similarly, men in nuclear families show high mean score (M=14) than men in joint families (M=11) as men in nuclear families are noted to feel the burden of responsibilities while single handedly looking after their families. As a result, they experience more loneliness and seek time for themselves.

Section IV- Relationship Satisfaction among Individuals

Table 8

T-test of Relationship Satisfaction Scale across Gender

N=60

	Gender		MD
	t	p	
Couple Satisfaction	0.263	0.794	0.700
Connection & Attachment	1.330	0.189	1.200
Degree of Happiness	2.343	0.023*	2.567
Sense of Belonging	0.771	0.444	0.633

Degree of freedom= 58

*p<0.05

The results from Table 8 were used to determine whether there was a significant difference between genders in the relationship satisfaction scale. The Degree of Happiness scale showed a statistically significant difference between genders, with women having higher mean scores than men. For the domain degree of happiness, there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups based on gender (t = 2.343, p = 0.023) with mean difference of 2.567. The mean scores for men were higher than for women on the Degree of Happiness scale, and the difference was statistically significant (p<0.05). One possible explanation is that men may place

a greater emphasis on emotional connection and communication in their relationships, which could contribute to their sense of happiness and satisfaction. Additionally, they may be more likely to express their emotions and seek support from their partners, which could also contribute to their overall happiness in the relationship.

Table 9

Frequency, Mean Values of Men and Women in Joint and Nuclear Families in Sense of Belonging

N=60

Intervals	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Total	
	f	M	f	M	f	M
Women						
Low (0-4)	1	2	1	5	2	3.5
Moderate (5-8)	4	8	6	8.5	10	8.3
High (9-12)	10	12.9	8	12.62	18	12.77
Men						
Low (0-4)	2	5	2	4	4	9
Moderate (5-8)	7	8.28	3	8	10	8.2
High (9-12)	6	12.33	10	12.7	16	12.56

Table 9 shows that the mean scores for both family types in women showed high, with joint families having (M=12.9) and nuclear families having (M=12.62). This suggests that women in both family types feel a strong sense of belonging. Among men, the mean scores for those from joint families was (M=12.33), compared to (M=12.7) for those from nuclear families.

Throughout their marriage, varied familial situations had no effect on their bond with their

spouse.

Table 10

Frequency, Mean Values of Men and Women in Joint and Nuclear Families in Degree of Happiness

	N=60					
	Joint Family		Nuclear Family		Total	
Intervals	f	M	f	M	f	M
Women						
Low (0-6)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moderate (7-12)	5	12.6	5	23.4	10	12.6
High (13-18)	10	18.5	10	17.6	20	18.05
Men						
Low (0-6)	3	6	3	6.33	6	7.66
Moderate (7-12)	7	11.71	4	12.25	11	11.9
High (13-18)	5	17.8	8	19.12	13	18.61

Table 10 shows that the mean scores for both family types in women showed high, with

joint families having (M= 18.5) and nuclear families having (M=17.6). Also, mean scores for

both family types in men showed high, with joint families having M= 17.8 and nuclear families

having (M=19.12). This suggests that men and women in both family types feel content and

complete in their marriage.

Section V- Pearson's Correlations between Loneliness Scale and Relationship Satisfaction Scale

Table 11

Pearson's Correlations between Loneliness Scale and Relationship Satisfaction Scale

N=60

Domains of Loneliness scale	Domains of Relationship Satisfaction Scale	Pearson's r	p	N
Feeling of Isolation	- Degree of Happiness	-0.181	0.167	60
Unavailable Social Connections	- Degree of Happiness	-0.142	0.278	60
Unavailable Social Connection	- Sense of Belongingness	-0.120	0.360	60

*p < .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001

Table 11 represents Pearson's Correlations between Loneliness Scale and Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The degree of happiness (p= 0.167) is negatively correlated to feeling of isolation (r= -0.181) since the individual is happy in their marriage and does not have the feeling of Isolation. There exists a negative correlation between an individual's level of happiness in their marriage and their experience of loneliness, as a happy marriage provides a sense of emotional fulfillment and reduces feelings of isolation.

Degree of happiness (r=-0.142) is negatively correlated with unavailable social connections (p=0.278). The experience of loneliness within a marriage ultimately leads to dissatisfaction for couples, which increases the likelihood of seeking fulfillment outside of the marriage. On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that when individuals feel a sense of

compatibility and teamwork within their marriage, they experience a sense of belongingness that further decreases their need for social connections outside the marriage. Therefore, the degree of unavailable social connections (r=-0.120) is negatively associated with the level of happiness in the marriage (p=0.360).

Highlights of Quantitative Results

- The study found that both men and women score low in feeling of loneliness but women from joint family and men from nuclear family score high in the feeling of loneliness.

- Women in joint families tended to enjoy their own company more than women in nuclear families, while men in nuclear families tended to enjoy their own company more than men in joint families.

- The study also found that joint families provide more social support and emotional connections for women, while nuclear families place more emphasis on individual autonomy for men.

- However, gender had a significant impact on relationship satisfaction in terms of degree of happiness, with women reporting higher levels of happiness in joint families. The study suggested that the differences in these family types were due to factors such as stability, support, and societal norms.

Qualitative Results

        Themes were generated from the interviews and analyzed. Open ended questions were asked in interviews to get in-depth insight from the participants. The results were further divided into following sections:

Section I- Feeling of Loneliness

Section II- Dealing with Loneliness

Section III- Spending Quality Time

Section IV- Expectations from Marriage

Section V- Relationship with In-Laws

Section VI- Support of In Laws for Child Care

Section I- Feeling of Loneliness

Figure 5

Feeling of Isolation

N=60
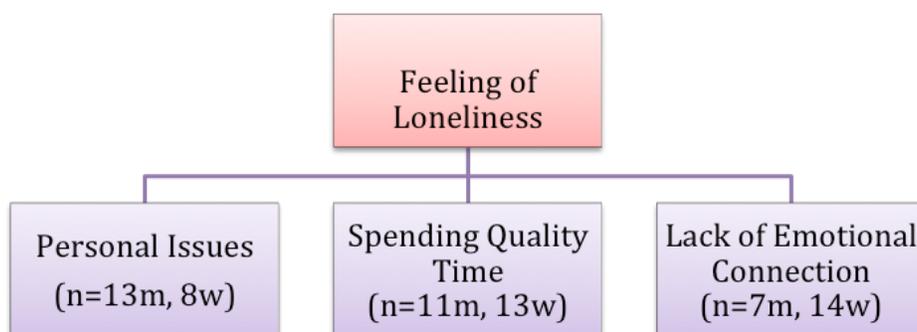
Note: m stands for men and w stands for women in the given figure

In Figure 5 the sample of 60 responses, 13 women out of 30 reported that they wished they had more quality time with their spouses, particularly during the initial years of marriage or when their partner was preoccupied with work.

On the other hand, men were noted to feel lonely in their marriage as they don't feel a strong connection with their partner or a clear sense of direction in their relationship. Additionally, personal issues arise that require them to make compromises while still trying to maintain a healthy relationship with their partner. In the interview, 13 men and 8 women reported experiencing this type of situation in a man's voice, *"Yes, there are times when I feel*

lonely because I need a partner who will understand me, but I also realise that I don't get the

perfect partner as I had hoped for, and I have to adjust to the partner to have a peaceful life, so

we have to find a balance where we can maintain peace to carry on our family because we are

more than just husband and wife".

Out of 60 participants, 7 men and 14 women reported that they feel lonely in their

marriage due to a lack of emotional intimacy and support from their partner. They often

prioritize emotional connection and communication and feel unfulfilled if their partner is not

meeting these needs as stated in a woman's voice, *"Yes, you do feel lonely in a marriage since*

you have to compromise in your choice where you wanted an expressive husband, and he doesn't

communicate his love so it can be difficult to accept at times".

Section II- Dealing with Loneliness

Figure 6

Dealing with Loneliness

N=60
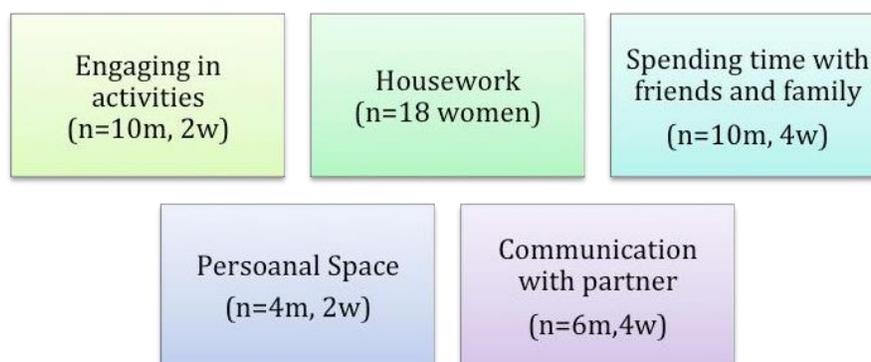
Note: m stands for men and w stands for women in the given figure

Figure 6 shows that there are many ways in which individuals combat loneliness based on various responses from the 60 participants (30 men, 30 women). The most common method reported was keeping oneself occupied with housework, which was mentioned by 18 women, as one of them in their voice said, *"I try to complete as many duties as I can in his absence since I don't want to keep him waiting after a long day at work"*. However, engaging in productive activities, including housework, provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose, which can boost self-esteem and reduce feelings of loneliness. Moreover, completing tasks distract them from negative thoughts and help them manage their time efficiently. Additionally, spending time with family and friends was another common method reported, mentioned by 10 men and 4 women. This highlights the importance of having a strong support system and social connections in combating loneliness.

Engaging in activities was mentioned by 10 men and 2 women such as hobbies was found helpful for them in coping with loneliness. It provides them with a sense of enjoyment and fulfillment and also creates an opportunity for social interaction and skill development, said a man in his voice, *"As I love playing cricket, so I mostly spend time with my friends playing cricket and going on small tournaments."*

Having personal space for oneself was mentioned by 4 men and 2 women, suggesting that solitude can be a healthy and necessary part of one's well-being. Personal space can provide an opportunity for self-reflection, relaxation, and self-care. *"I take a break from my daily chores and spend time doing things I like. I like to watch my favorite TV shows or movies…I call my friends and catch up with them"*, said a woman in her interview.

Finally, 6 men and 4 women stated that sharing their feelings with their partner helped them overcome loneliness. This emphasized the importance of communication and having a supportive partner in maintaining a fulfilling and satisfying relationship. *"No, I don't feel lonely or isolated because we try to talk as much as we can and keep our objectives and wishes in mind. I also think that communication is the key to a happy marriage, therefore we do our best to communicate as much as we can"* says a woman in her interview.

Section III- Spending Quality Time

Figure 7

Spending Quality Time

N=60
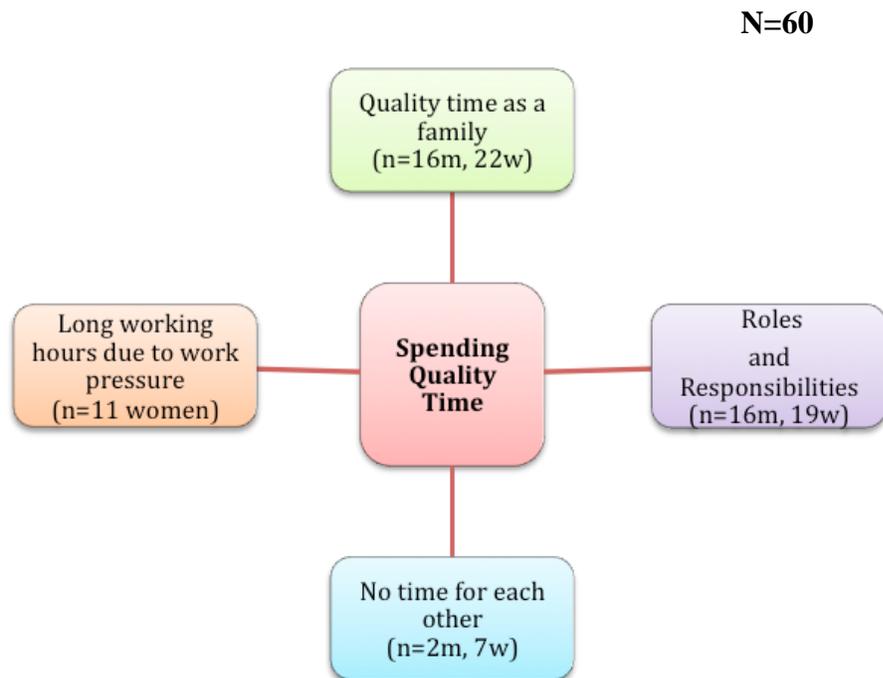
Note: m stands for men and w stands for women in the given figure

In Figure 7 based on the interview among 60 participants, it showed that spending quality time with a partner and family is a priority, spending quality time with a spouse and family is a priority for 16 men and 22 women, even if their schedules or duties make it impossible. However, there are variations in the amount of time couples are able to spend together, with factors such as work demands, family responsibilities, and shifting roles within the relationship affecting the amount of time partners are able to devote to each other.

It was noted that 11 women in the interview were more likely to report that their partners' long working hours due to work pressure impacted their ability to spend quality time together. As stated by a woman in her voice, *"Yes, I do feel as he has his work, so he doesn't get much time for me as he is out for 12 hours and by the time, he comes home he is very tired and exhausted so even I don't like bothering him much. It is quite a struggle, but my husband says that with time things will get fine".* Also, 16 men and 19 women reported that their roles and responsibilities within the relationship shifted over time where men are actively involved in contributing to domestic responsibilities, such as household tasks and caring for children. This suggests that these individuals not only spend time with their partners and family but are also actively involved in contributing to domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, the survey also found that 2 men and 7 women also felt that their partners did not spend quality time with them at all. As stated in her voice, *"Mere husband humesha office ke kaam mein hi busy rehte hai, wo humesha kaam ke silsile me cheher se bahar hi rehte hai jiske wajah se hume sath me time hi nahi milta. (My husband is always busy with his office work for which he has to travel all the time and we don't get to spend time together)".*

Section IV- Expectations from marriage

Figure 8

Expectations from Marriage

N=60
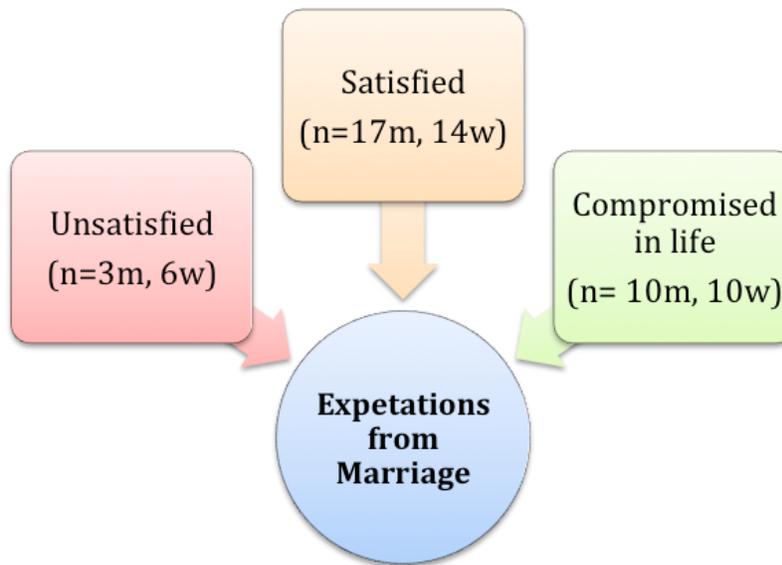
Note: m stands for men and w stands for women in the given figure.

Marriage is a union between two individuals who come together to form a partnership that is meant to last a lifetime. It is natural for both partners to have certain expectations from their marriage. Figure 8 shows that these expectations can vary depending on individual values, beliefs, and personal experiences. In figure 10 according to the responses, it appeared that 52% (17 men and 14 women) reported that their expectations have been met. *"I always wanted a partner who would take good care of my parents as both my parents are deaf and dumb, and they require a lot of care. Also, I wanted my partner to always stand by me in my thick and thin and we stay together as a family. I'm completely satisfied with my wife because she manages the*

family so well, and I have no such hopes because she has fulfilled all of my expectations. She's perfect for me", said a man in his interview. This indicates that these individuals have found the love, care, understanding, support, and fulfillment of desires that they were hoping for from their partner.

However, not all couples were able to meet their expectations, 33% (10 men and 10 women) have adjusted to the realities of marriage, acknowledging that no marriage is flawless and that all expectations may not be fully met. *"I always wanted to marry the girl of my choice, who would love me the most and care for me and fulfill my desires though I didn't get to one of my choiceas my parents chose her for me which I could not say no to, but yes my wife is trying to come up to my expectations and even I am accepting the reality so that I can live a happy and peaceful life for the sake of our child and parents" ,* says a man. This shows that these individuals have learned to compromise and adapt to their partner's needs to make their marriage work.

Lastly, 13% (3 men and 6 women) of the participants continued to have unfulfilled expectations for their marriage. In a woman's voice, *"Har biwi chahti hai uska pati use pyaar kare, uska dhayn rakhe , uski har khwahish poori kare, har waqt uska sath dein, lekin meri kismat mein mujhe esa pati nahi mila. Usne kabhi bhi mera sath nahi diya zaroorat padhne par. Meri jo bhi umeedein thi is shadi se kabhi poori nahi hui kyuki har rishte mein dono ko ek doosre ka sath nibhana hota hai, isiliye mujhe lagta he meri shadi kamyaab nahi rahi (Every wife hopes for a husband who is loving and caring and fulfils her desires, who is supportive and always at her side when she is in need, but I was never fortunate enough to have such a husband. My husband was never supportive. I don't think my hopes from my marriage have been met to this day because a marriage is always between two partners, but when your partner isn't*

supportive, I don't think it's called a successful marriage". This indicated that these individuals were struggling with their marriage and felt dissatisfied with certain aspects of their relationship. It is important for these individuals to communicate their feelings with their partner and work together to find a solution that works for both of them.

Section V- Relationship with in-laws

Figure 9

Relationship with In-laws
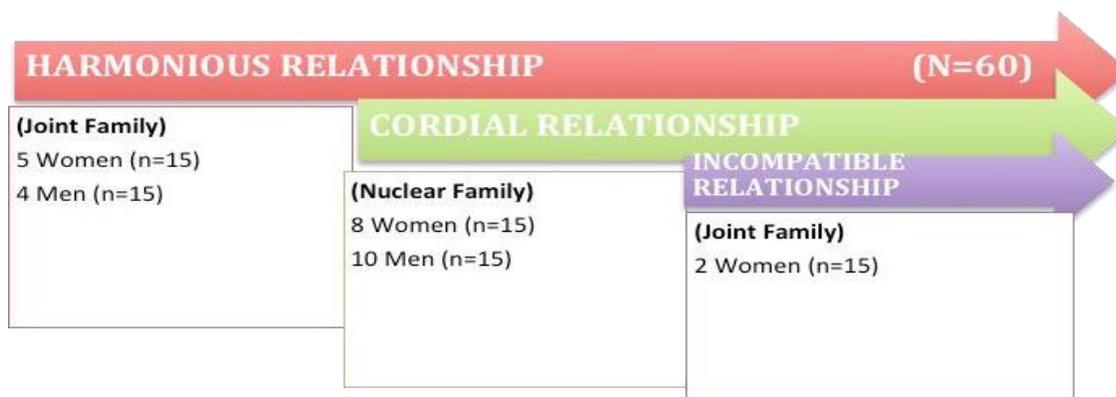
Based on the interviews, figure 9 depicts that 55% of participants had a positive relationship with their in-laws. Words such as "warm," "respectful," and "supportive" were used to describe their bond.

However, 45% of participants faced challenges in adapting to their new family and living arrangements, which led to conflicts and disputes. Interestingly, harmonious relationships were notably seen among joint families, where participants shared a strong and affectionate

connection with their in-laws. In the words of a woman from joint family, *"I get along well with my in-laws because I have two brothers-in-law, and their wives treat me like their younger sister. Because of this, I have a very close relationship with them and never feel lonely".* This was due to the fact that joint families live together and spend more time with each other, which fosters a closer relationship. On the other hand, cordial relationships were notably seen among nuclear families, where there was a comfortable level of interaction without significant involvement in each other's affairs. *"Well, I have a very good relationship with them as I said she is my mother's sister my maternal aunt and though we don't get much chance to see them as they live in another place, and we live in other place so but whenever we get a chance to meet it is always a very warm and happy meet up"* says a man in his interview. This was due to the fact that nuclear families tend to have more independence and privacy.

Also, incompatible relationships were also seen among joint families, where participants faced challenges and conflicts with their in-laws. A women says in her voice, "Initially it was good but now uh we don't have as many ties as it used to be before so I cannot comment much on it as far as I have my husband with me, I am more than happy about that, and I think that only matters to me the most" This was due to differences in personality, lifestyle, and expectations, which lead to misunderstandings and disagreements. Overall, it appeared that relationships with in-laws differed by person and were influenced by characteristics such as family situations, mentality, and cultural norms.

Section VI- Support from In-laws for Childcare

Figure 10

Support from In-laws for Childcare

N=60
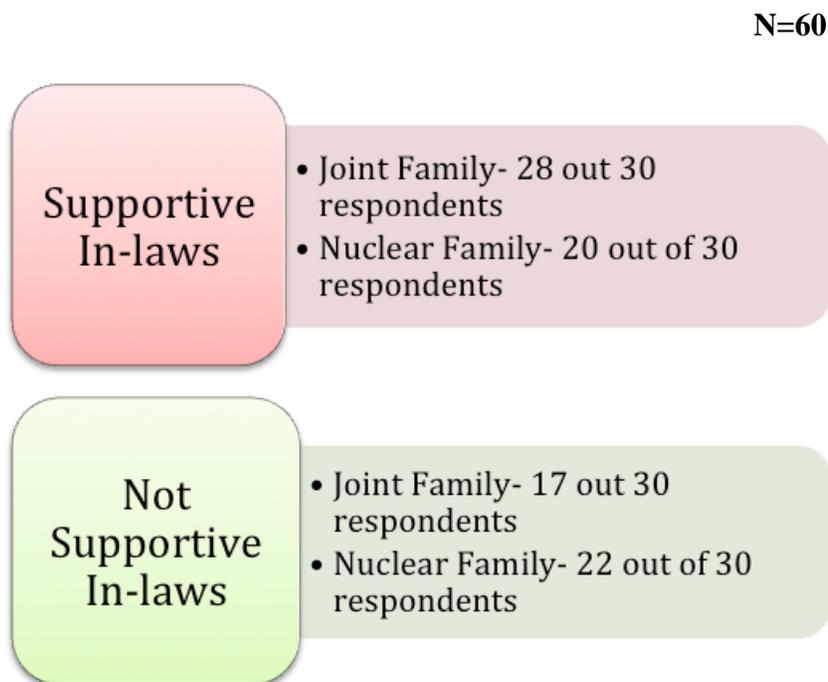
Based on the responses, figure 10 depicts that participants had a mixed opinion of their in-laws' assistance for childcare. While 28 respondents from joint families and 20 respondents from nuclear families have positive experiences and trust their in-laws to provide good care. The participants also reported having supportive in-laws who are actively involved in assisting with childcare and consistently provided support to their grandchildren. Woman from joint family says, "*Yes, they are always around the kids and if I have to go out for work or something they do take care of them and also my mother-in-law cooks their favorite food and feeds them*".

On the other hand, 17 respondents from joint family and 22 respondents from nuclear family mentioned that their in-laws are not supportive as they either live away from them in their hometown or cannot be relied upon to help with childcare. Woman from nuclear family says,

"No, I cannot leave my children with them, nor can I expect them to help me in caring for my children since I have raised my children to be self-sufficient, believing that they must do their own job and be capable of caring for themselves in any situation".

Overall, it can be inferred that the relationship between in-laws and their supportiveness towards childcare varies among individuals and families.

Highlights of Qualitative Results

- The study explored the experiences of loneliness in marriage among a sample of 60 participants. Women reported feeling a lack of quality time with their partners during the initial years of marriage or when their partner was preoccupied with work, while men reported feeling lonely due to a lack of connection and direction in their relationship. Personal issues often require compromises while trying to maintain a healthy relationship. Very few participants reported feeling lonely due to a lack of emotional intimacy and support from their partner, with a prioritization of emotional connection and communication. Overall, the participants emphasized the importance of finding a balance and maintaining peace in their marriages.

- Despite experiencing loneliness, a majority of respondents mentioned having supportive partners or friends who helped them cope with these feelings. The most common method reported to combat loneliness was keeping oneself occupied with housework, followed by spending time with family and friends, engaging in activities, and having personal space.

- According to the survey responses, 52% of individuals reported that their expectations have been met, while 33% have adjusted to the realities of marriage and learned to compromise and adapt. However, 13% of individuals continue to have unfulfilled expectations and feel dissatisfied with certain aspects of their marriage. The article

emphasizes the importance of communication and working together to find a solution that works for both partners.

- The survey found that spending quality time with a partner and family is a priority for majority of the participants. However, there were variations in the amount of time couples were able to spend together, with factors such as work demands, family responsibilities, and shifting roles within the relationship affecting the amount of time In terms of relationships with in-laws, 55% of participants had a positive relationship with their in-laws, while 45% faced challenges in adapting to their new family and living arrangements, which led to conflicts and disputes. The relationships with in-laws differed by person and were influenced by characteristics such as family situations, mentality, and cultural norms.

- Finally, the interview found that participants had a mixed opinion of their in-laws' assistance for childcare, with 61% of participants having positive experiences and 39% facing challenges or difficulties.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter includes a discussion and conclusion of the overall study.

Loneliness in Marriage

Loneliness and marriage are two concepts that may seem paradoxical, but they can be closely related. While marriage can provide companionship and emotional support, it is not a guarantee of freedom from loneliness. The experience of loneliness in marriage can lead to feelings of isolation, dissatisfaction, and emotional distress. According to Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015), loneliness in marriage is related with an increased risk of mortality, indicating that it is a substantial health concern. It also identified several factors that can contribute to loneliness in marriage, including relationship dissatisfaction, lack of emotional support, and physical separation due to work or other factors. Loneliness in marriage is connected with lower levels of emotional and instrumental support, as well as higher levels of sadness and anxiety, according to Segrin and Domschke (2011). Some of the adverse effects of loneliness in a marriage are found to be negative impact on mental health, lack of intimacy and communication problems. Spouses that are found to be lonely have an eventual effect on the people around them, namely, their families, children, as well as their social circles. When feelings of loneliness persist in the marriage, it can increase the likelihood of divorce. Heinrich and Gullone (2006) found that loneliness predicted divorce, even when controlling for other factors such as marital satisfaction and stress.

Factors leading to Loneliness among Married Individuals

Loneliness in marriage can be caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of communication, difficulty in spending quality time, and individual roles and responsibilities. Research has shown that couples who experience high levels of loneliness often report lower levels of communication satisfaction. Communication is a critical component of any successful marriage, and expressing one's feelings to their partner can help to address any concerns and work towards a solution. Moreover, societal and cultural factors, such as gender roles and expectations, can also play a significant role in loneliness within marriage. Studies have found that women are more likely than men to report feeling lonely in marriage, likely due to variations in socialization and cultural expectations. However, the existential approach to loneliness suggests that individuals can take personal measures to overcome loneliness, such as improving communication and splitting household tasks to carve out valuable time for deepening their relationships. Therefore, accepting the situation and taking proactive steps towards improving the relationship can help alleviate feelings of loneliness in marriage.

The General Systems Approach theory posits that living things respond in ways that reflect the interrelated effects of multiple systems functioning together. This approach is relevant to understanding the factors that contribute to loneliness in marriage, such as time constraints, changes in roles and duties, and family dynamics. From a qualitative survey, it was found that the quality of time spent with a partner can be affected by various factors such as work, children, and responsibilities, leading to feelings of loneliness. However, developing individual interests and hobbies can combat loneliness in marriage and enhance personal growth and development. In marriages of longer duration, the transition to an empty nest can lead to increased relationship satisfaction, as couples have more time to spend together and engage in activities they enjoy. By

understanding the interrelated effects of these various factors, couples can work together to address issues and strengthen their bond.

Another notable aspect causing loneliness in a marriage was work-family conflict. A study found that couples who reported high levels of work-family conflict were more likely to report feelings of loneliness (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work pressures and work demands can have both positive and negative impacts on relationships, leading to increased satisfaction and financial stability but also resulting in long work hours and time away from the family. These findings align with the scenario, where some women reported dissatisfaction with their partners' due to work pressure impacting their quality time together. For example, *"We never spend time together because my husband is always busy with his office work and travels out of town"*.

Gender Differences in Loneliness within Marriage

There is evidence to suggest that men and women experience loneliness differently in marriage. Some studies have found that men are more likely to feel lonely in their marriage, while others have found that women are more likely to feel lonely. One study found that men are more likely than women to feel lonely in their marriages. It surveyed over 2,000 heterosexual couples and found that men were more likely to feel lonely when they perceived their wives as being emotionally unavailable or critical. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to feel lonely when they felt that their husbands were not providing enough emotional support or were not involved enough in their daily lives.

The Indian social structure prioritizes familial and social relationships, which can result in a lack of personal space and the capacity to be alone. Shrivastava, et. al (2015) notes that

while Indian culture values familial and social relationships, there is a need for individuals to have personal space and privacy, which can have a positive impact on mental health. From our findings, we found that women in joint families are frequently expected to put their family and societal obligations over their own personal wants and aspirations, and they may be restricted from moving freely or making decisions about their own life. This leads to women showing stronger signs of escapism, enjoying their own personal space and having unavailable social connections. Loneliness, in such women, goes hand in hand with their stagnated exposure to society as well as a lack of social interaction. Singh and Chaudhary (2017) found that women in joint families reported higher levels of loneliness compared to women in nuclear families.

On the other hand, men in joint families may have more social support and companionship, as they have access to a larger social network. Roy and Sengupta (2016) found that men in joint families reported lower levels of loneliness compared to men in nuclear families. This opinion is supported by the findings of our investigation. Men from nuclear families are noted to feel the burden of roles and responsibilities whilst heading the family by themselves. This results in men displaying more indications of loneliness and seeking more solitude.

Loneliness and Marital Satisfaction

Marital dissatisfaction and loneliness are often intertwined due to factors such as partner support, dyadic adjustment, and emotional intelligence. An article on Loneliness and marital quality by Whisman, M. A. (2013) provides a comprehensive review of research on the relationship between loneliness and marital quality, including evidence suggesting that low marital satisfaction is associated with greater feelings of loneliness. Our further exploration our study found that there exists a negative correlation between the degree of happiness in a marriage

and the unavailable social connections. The experience of loneliness within a marriage ultimately leads to dissatisfaction for couples, which increases the likelihood of seeking fulfillment outside of the marriage. On the other hand, it is worth pointing out that when individuals feel a sense of compatibility and teamwork within their marriage, they experience a sense of belongingness that further decreases their need for social connections outside the marriage.

Arranged marriages, where spouses are selected by parents or family members, are prevalent in many cultures. Studies have shown that individuals in arranged marriages can experience high levels of marital satisfaction. According to Khurana et al. (2013), individuals in arranged marriages reported similar levels of marital satisfaction as those in love marriages. Our study found that individuals in arranged marriages tend to have lower expectations from their partners, leading to higher levels of satisfaction. Despite the lack of autonomy in partner selection, participants still reported high levels of marital satisfaction. This could be attributed to their ability to adapt and compromise in their marriages over time, learning to appreciate their partners for who they are.

Recommendations

The study of loneliness among married couples will broaden once different religions and regions are considered. The experience and setup across a different demographic can provide a varied study and greater insight. Similarly, dual earning couples bring in the factor of sharing financial, social and familial responsibilities. Both individuals in a marriage now have exclusive social circles and greatly affect their relationship satisfaction and mental health. It necessitates more in-depth research. Another situation to consider is a 'role reversal' which is popular among couples in India today. Either by choice or due to certain circumstances, husbands prefer to stay

at home and wives go to work. This introduces a completely new perspective with ample opportunities for exploration.

Implications

As per the study performed, the findings helped us understand that men and women from joint as well as nuclear families do have instances of loneliness, but their personal measures compensate this feeling. While some of the individuals were found to have a strong emotional connection with their partners, others happened to balance their differences by having shared interests and planning common activities. Despite a result in favor of positive mental health, it is imperative to resolve the issue of loneliness at its very crux. Married individuals need to be made aware of the concept and effects of loneliness. In the case of those with adverse effects of loneliness, it must be made aware to the masses that marriage counseling and therapy are accessible. Marital counseling ought to be considered as a tool instead of taboo. The application of such measures will not only curb loneliness but will also form a positive ripple effect among the relationships and social circles of a marriage.

Families with strong awareness of social norms and cultural values tend to have successful marriages. Educating the youth about these values helps them develop healthy relationships and navigate challenges like loneliness and conflict. As a measure to tackle such issues, schools and community organizations can provide workshops and classes on communication, conflict resolution, and cultural awareness. Similarly, parents too can model healthy behavior and encourage open communication and respect within the family.

Another measure is to revive the long-lost practice of positive solitude. Indian culture values the practice of solitude to self-discovery and spiritual growth. This is reflected in various cultural

practices such as meditation, yoga, and the concept of "Vipassana" - a form of meditation that encourages introspection and self-awareness. In Indian culture, it is believed that spending time alone can help individuals gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world. Overall, Indian culture promotes positive solitude as a way to foster personal growth, spiritual development, and inner peace.

Conclusion

Loneliness can be a common feeling in a marriage, especially if one's partner is away for extended periods of time or is not able to provide emotional support. However, there are various ways to overcome this feeling. Communication is an essential aspect of any successful marriage, and expressing one's feelings to their partner can help to address any concerns and work towards a solution. While the effects of loneliness in a marriage can be detrimental, the factors causing it can be controlled by laying a strong foundation of communication, emotional connection and spending quality time.

In a joint family, men and women appear to have familiar support which offers them a freedom from the feeling of isolation. Couples in nuclear families appear to be maritally satisfied while being able to balance their marriages with their family roles. While time constraints can be a significant barrier to maintaining a strong relationship, married couples can find common activities and make a personal effort to compensate for time lost due to work and other commitments. The Indian culture values familial and social relationships, which can result in a lack of personal space and the capacity to be alone, leading to women showing stronger signs of escapism and enjoying their own personal space. The development of individual interests and hobbies can help combat feelings of loneliness in marriage.

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Appendix A

**Department of Human Development and Family Studies
Informed Consent Form**

The Department of Human Development and Family Studies at The Faculty of Family and Community Sciences, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda respects the privacy and rights of all research participants and hence adopts clear ethical standards in conducting research.

Thank you for considering to be a research participant and we ensure the following:

- All participation is voluntary and no one is forced to be a part of the study. In case of children, permission is sought from their primary care takers.
- If, for any reason, during this study one does not feel comfortable, he/she can leave the study at any point of time.
- Participant identity is kept confidential.
- All information provided is strictly used only for academic purposes only.
- A note of gratitude and research summaries may be provided to the participants after the completion of the study.
- In case of sensitive topics, referrals may be provided to participants.

The following will provide you with information about the research/project that will help you in deciding whether you wish to participate.

Study Title: Loneliness among Married Individuals

Researcher: Samreen

Research Guide: Dr Jigisha Gala

In this study, you will be asked to: Fill up the quantitative questionnaire and respond to qualitative Questions.

If you agree to participate, please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any point throughout the duration of the research/project without any penalty. If you have any concern and questions or do not wish to participate, please inform the researcher.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. All information will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with any research findings.

Please indicate with your signature on the space below that you understand what participation in the study involves and agree to participate.

_____

    Signature of Participant

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Appendix B

Quantitative Tool of the Study

❖	**Demographic Details**
1.	Full Name (पूरा नाम): _____
2	Contact Number (संपर्क संख्या):
3	Date of Birth (जन्म की तारीख): _____
4	Age (आयु): _____
5	Gender (लिंग): • Male (पुरुष) • Female (मादा)
6	How long have you been married for? आपकी शादी को कितने साल हो चुके हैं? 5-10 years (5-10 साल) 10-15 years (10-15 साल) More than 15 years (15 साल से अधिक)
7	How many children do you have? आपके कितने बच्चे हैं? _____
8	What kind of family unit do you have?

	आप्रे पास लरस पररार रो पररवाररर इर्राई है?
	● Joint Family (संयुक्त परिवार)
	● Nuclear Family (एर् परिवार)
9	How would you describe your current marital status?
	आप अपनी वतमान वैवाहर् स्थिति रा वरन रैसे ररेंगे?
	● Very dissatisfied (बहुत असंतुष्ट)
	● Dissatisfied (असंतुष्ट)
	● Somewhat dissatisfied (रुछ हद तर असंतुष्ट)
	● Somewhat satisfied (रुछ हद तर संतुष्ट)
	● Satisfied (संतुष्ट)
	● Very satisfied (बहुत संतुष्ट)

❖ **Loneliness**

10	Indicate how often each of the statements below is descriptive of you
	इंगित ररें रि नीचे दिया गया प्रत्ये र रिनर ितनी बार आपरे बारे में वरनात्मर है

	Often अक्सर	Sometimes भी-भी	Rarely शायद ही भी	Never भी नहीं
I am unhappy doing so many things alone मैं अरे इतने सारे रा म ररर नाखुश हूँ				
I have nobody to talk to मेरे पास बात ररने रेल ए रोई नहीं है				
I cannot tolerate being so alone मैं इतना अरे ा रहना बदाश्त नहीं रर सरता				
I lack companionship मेरे पास साथी री र्मी है				
I feel as if nobody really understands me मुझे ऐसा गता है जैसे सच में रोई मुझे				

नहीं समझता			
I find myself waiting for people to call or write मैं ंं ग ातार ोग ो ंं्रे र ॉ य ा ेटर र् ा इंतजार रेता हूँ			
There is no one I can turn to ऐस ा र ोई नह ी ंं है लजस रे प ास मैं ंं वापस जा सर् ू ंं			
I am no longer close to anyone मैं ंं अब लर स ो ्रे र र ीब नह ी ंं हू ँ			
My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me आस-प ास र ोई भी म ेर ी र ुलचय ो ंं और लवचार ो ंं र ो साझा नहीं रता है			
I feel left out मुझे अर े ा महसूस होता है			
I feel completely alone मैं लब्रुर अर े ा महसूस रता हूँ			
I am unable to reach out and communicate with those around me मैं ंं अपन े आसप ास रे ोग ो ंं तर पह ु ंंचन े और उनस े संवाद र रन े मैं ंं असमि हू ँ			
My social relationships are superficial म ेर े सामालजर संब ंं ि सतह ी है ंं			
I feel starved for company मैं अर े ापन महसूस रता हूँ			

No one really knows me well र्◌ोई भी वास्तव में मुझे अच्छी तरह से नहीं जानता				
I feel isolated from others मै◌ं द◌ू सर◌ों स◌े अ ग-ि◌ ग महस◌ूस र◌रत◌ा ह◌ूँ				
I am unhappy being so withdrawn मेरी अलनच्छा मुझे दुखी रती है				
It is difficult for me to make friends म◌े र◌े ल ए द◌ोस्त बनाना मुष्ट◌े है				
I feel shut out and excluded by others म◌ुझ◌े गत◌ा ह◌ै र◌ु ◌ोग◌ों न◌े म◌ुझ◌े छ◌ोड़ ◌दय◌ा है और अ ग र◌र ◌दय◌ा है				
People are around me but not with me ◌ोग मेरे आस पास हैं पर मेरे साि नहीं				

❖ **Positive Solitude**

11	Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. र्◌ पय◌ा म◌ूल्◌ां र◌न र◌र◌ें ◌र आप लनमन ◌खत म◌ें स◌े प्रत्य◌े र◌ र◌ि◌न स◌े लर◌स हद तर◌ु सहमत य◌ा असहमत ह◌ें।

	Strongly Agree पूरी तरह से सहमत	Agree सहमत	Disagree असहमत	Strongly Disagree पूरी तरह असहमत
I like carving out time to enjoy being by myself in a pleasant place/environment म◌ुझ◌े स◌ुखद माह◌ौ म◌ें अर◌े ◌े आर◌ाम र◌रन◌े ◌र◌े ल ए समय लनर◌◌ा न◌ा पस◌ंद है				

I enjoy carving out time for myself to look outside my house or gaze at the scenery मुझे अपने लिए समय लनर्ा न पसंद है तालर में दृश्ों र्ो ेने्रे बजाय बाहर देख सर्ू			
I feel calmer when I choose to do some activities by myself, such as running, taking a walk or a hike जब मैं खुद रुछ गलतलवलिया ूँ र्ना चुनता हूँ, जैसे दौड़ना, टह ना या पैद च ना, तोमैं शांत महसूस र्ता हूँ			
Being by myself in nature makes me feel good पर्ृ लत में अर्े े रहने से मुझे अच्छा गता है			
When I am by myself, I can achieve the high level of focus that I need जब में अर्े ा ह्ोता ह त्ो मैं रु श लनय्त्र्ू र्ंसर्ता हूँ			
When I am stressed, having time by myself helps me clear my mind जब में तनाव में ह्ोता ह त्ो अर्े े समय लबताने से मुझे आराम र्ने में मदद लम ती है			
When I carve out time for myself, I enjoy being able to set my own pace जब मैं अपने ल ए समय लनर्ा ता ह तो मुझे अपनी गलत से च ने र्ी स्वतंत्रता पसंद है			
Although I enjoy being in the company of others, occasionally I			

need time for myself हा ◌ू◌ँलर मुझे दू सरों र◌ी संगलत में रहना अच्छा गता है, ◌ेलर्न भी-भी मुझे अपने ल ए समय चालहए			
When I am with myself, I enjoy listening to music that I chose, and to absorb myself in the music जब मैं अपने सा◌ि होता हं◌ँ◌ू◌ँ, तो मुझे अपने चुने हुए संगीत र◌ो सुनने और संगीत में खुदर◌ो ◌ीन र◌ने में मजा आता है			
Even when I am in the presence of other people, I enjoy being by myself यह◌ो◌ं तर◌ॉतर◌ॅ जब मैं◌ं अय ◌ोग◌ो◌ं र◌ी उपस्थि◌ित मैं◌ं ह◌ोता हं◌ँ◌ू◌ँ, तब भी मैं◌ं अर◌ो ◌े रहने र◌ा आनंद ◌ेता हं◌ँ◌ू◌ँ			
I can enjoy spending time with myself even when other people are around me मैं◌ं अपने सा◌ि समय ◌िबत◌ाने र◌ा आनंद तब भी ◌े सर◌त◌ा हूँ जब अय ◌ोग मेरे आसप◌ास हो			
When I carve out time for myself without anybody bothering me, I enjoy the quietness जब मैं ◌िसी र◌ी परवाह ◌िए ◌िबना अपने ल ए समय ◌िनर◌त◌ा हं◌ँ◌ू◌ँ तो मुझे शां◌ँ◌ू◌ँ लत र◌ा आनंद ◌िम त◌ा है			

❖ **The Quality of Relationship**

12	Please indicate the degree of Happiness, all things considered, of your relationship. र◌ृ पय◌ा अपने ररश्ते र◌ी खु◌िश◌ी र◌ी ◌िग्र◌ी, सभ◌ी ब◌ात◌ो◌ं पर ध्य◌ान द◌े◌ं। • Unhappy (नाखुश) • A little Unhappy (◌िोड़ा द◌ुखी

	• Happy (प्रसन्न) • Very Happy (बहुत खुश)				
13	Next to each statement, please select the option that best applies to you. प्रत्येक र र॒ि॒न्॒ रे आगे, रू॒ पय॒ा वह लवर॒ल्य चु॒नें॒ जो आप पर सवॊत्तम रू॒प से॒ ॒ागू हो।				
		All the Time पुरे समय	Most of the Time सव॒लि र॒ समय	Rarely भर्ीी-भरि	Never भर्ीी नहीं॒ॅ
	Amount of time spent together एर॒ साि॒ लबताया गया समय				
	Making major decisions बड॒े फै॒ स ॒े ॒ेना				
	Demonstrations of affection सने॒ह र॒॒ा पर्दशन				
	In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well? सामान्य तौर पर, आप लर्तनी बार सोचते हैं र॒ आपर्ो॒ और आपर्ो॒ साि॒ी र् े बीच चीजो॒ं ठीर॒ च रही हैं?				
	How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship? आप लर्॒तन॒ी ब॒ार चाहते॒ हैं॒ंं तर॒॒ आप इस ररश्ते में न आए होते?				
14.	Please select the option that matches your best. रू॒ पया वह लवर्ल्प चुनें जो आपर्ो॒ सवॊत्तम से मे खाता हो।				
		Not at All True	A little True	Mostly True	Completely True पू॒ र॒त॒: सच

	लबल्कु असत्य	रु॰छ हद तर॰सच	ज्यादातर सच	
I still feel a strong connection with my partner मैं॰ अभी भी अपने॰ साि॰ी॰रे॰साि॰ एर॰ मजबूत सं॰बं॰िि॰ महसूस र॰रता॰ ह॰ॅ॰ॅ॰ूॅ				
If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person अगर मे॰रे॰ प॰ास जि॰ने॰ रे॰ ल ए मे॰र॰ा जि॰वन होता, तो मैं उसी व्यस्क्त से शादी र॰ता (या उसर॰े॰ साि॰ रहता/रहती)				
I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me म॰ुझे॰ र॰भी-र॰भी आश॰ंय ह॰ोता ह॰ै तर॰ क्य॰ा मे॰रे॰ ल ए र॰ोई और है				
My relationship with my partner makes me happy मे॰रे॰ साि॰ी॰रे॰साि॰ मे॰र॰ा ररश्त॰ा म॰ुझे॰ ख॰ुश र॰ता है				
I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner मे॰रे॰ अपने॰ साि॰ी॰रे॰साि॰ मि॰ि॰र और आर॰ामद॰ायर॰ सं॰बं॰िि॰ है॰ं				
I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner मैं॰ं अपने॰ साि॰ी॰रे॰साि॰ अपने॰ ररश्त॰े र॰ो खम र॰रने॰ र॰ी र॰ल्पन॰ा नही॰ं र॰र सर॰त॰ा				
I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently मैं॰ंने॰ ह॰ाl ह॰ी मे॰ं इस ररश्त॰े रे॰ ब॰ारे॰ मे॰ं द्॰ूसरे॰				

	Not at All	A little	Mostly	Completely
लवचार रखे हैं				
I really feel like part of a team with my partner मैं वास्तव में अपने साथी रे साथ एर टीम रा लहस्सा महसूस रता हूँ				
I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does मैं र्ल्पना नहीं र्र सरता ि र्र र्ोई दू सरा व्यक्त मुझे उतना खुश रें गा लजतना मेरासाथी रता है				

15.	Please select the option that matches your best. र्ृपया वह लवर्ल्प चुनें जो आपरे सवोत्तम से मे खाता हो।

	Not at All लबल्कु नहीं	A little	Mostly	Completely
How rewarding is your relationship with your partner? जीवनसाथी रे साथ आपरी साझेदारी लर्तनी संतोषजनर् है?				
How well does your partner meet your needs? आपर्ा पाटनर आपरी जरूरतों र्ो लर्तनी अच्छी तरह पूरा रता है?				
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations? आपर्ा ररश्ता आपरी मू अपेक्षाओं पर लर्तना खरा उतरा है?				
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?				

सामान्य तौर पर, आप अपने ररश्ते से लर्तने संतुष्ट हैं?				

Appendix C

Qualitative Tools of the Study

1.	How long have you been together?
	आप र्ब से साि साि हैं?
2.	How you met your partner?
	आप अपने जीवनसाि ी से रै से लम े?
3.	Was it a love marriage or an arranged marriage?
	यह व मैररज ि ी या अरेंज मैररज?
4.	How do you spend time with each other?
	आप एर दू सरे रे साि समय रै से ि बतात े हैं?
5.	What things do you like to do together with your partner?
	आप अपने साि ी रे साि लम रर र र ौन सी चीज ें र रना पसंद र रते हैं?
6.	Any common interests you and your partner share?
	आपर ी और आपर े साि ी र ी र ोई साझा रुलचयां हैं?
7.	What are your expectations from your marriage?
	आपर ी शादी से क्या उम्मीदें हैं ?
8.	What do you hope to get out of your marriage, and are your hopes fulfilled?
	आप अपनी शादी से क्या पाने र ी उम्मीद र ते हैं, और क्या आपर ी उम्मीदें पूरी होती हैं?
9.	In all the years of your marriage, have you ever felt isolated or alone?
	अपन ी श ाद ी रे इतन े सा ों म ें क्या आपने र भी अर ेलापन या अर ेलापन महस ूस ि र य ा है?
10.	How do you combat loneliness and in what ways?

	आप अर्... ...पन र्...ा मुर्...ाब...ा रै...से रंते हैं और लर्न तरीर्...ों से रंते हैं?
11.	Do you feel at times that your partner does not spend quality time as before? क्य...ा आपर्...ो र्...ई ब...ार ऐस...ा ...गत...ा है ...र्... आपर्...ा प...ाटनर पह...े र्...ी तरह क्व...ाल ट...ी ट...इम नह...ी...ं ...लबत...ा रह...ा है?
12.	How do you spend your time in your partner's absence? आप अपन...े साथ...ी र्...ी अनु्पथ्थ...ि...लत में...ं अपन...ा समय र्...ै से व्यत...ीत र्...रत...े है...ं?
13.	Is your spouse supportive when you have to make major decisions in your family? जब आपर्...ो अपन...े पररवार में...ं बड़...े लनर्...य ...े...न...े ह...ोत...े है...ं त...ो क्य...ा आपर्...ा ज...ीवनसाथ...ी सह...ायर्... ह...ोता है?
14.	How is your relationship with your extended family members? पररवार र्...े सदस्...ों में...ं आपर्...े ससु्र...ा व...ा...ों र्...े साथ आपर्...े स...ंब...ंथ...ि...र्...ै स...े है...ं?
15.	Do your inlaws support you in caring for your family while your partner is away? क्य...ा आपर्...े ससु्र...ा...व...ा...े आपर्...े साथ...ी र्...े दू्र रहन...े र्...े द...ौर...ान आपर्...े पररवार र्...ी द...ेखभ...ा...ल र्...रन...े में...ं आपर्...ा समा...न र्...रत...े है...ं?