

Marital compatibility and its role in family stability

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Abstract:

Successful marital compatibility is achieved by resolving understanding, aligning interests, exchanging respect, and maintaining equality in the assessment of family issues. It is also associated with stability in personal characteristics such as the willingness to give up a challenging stance in discussions, patience in seeking advice, the ability to avoid subjugating and humiliating others, as well as love, agreement and good relations between spouses and other family members. The psychological and social security felt by the wife plays an important role in ensuring happiness and marital compatibility. It ensures family stability, which is the focus of this article by highlighting the role of marital compatibility in family stability and supporting it with a field study on couples' attitudes towards contraceptive use.

Keywords: marital compatibility, family stability, compatibility indicators, compatibility determinants.

Introduction:

Marital compatibility refers to the level of acceptance in the marital relationship and is a result of the nature of mutual interactions between spouses. These interactions include various aspects such as the expression of emotional feelings towards the other party and respect for them and their families, trust in each other, interest in maintaining the relationship, and the degree of similarity in values, ideas and habits. It also includes agreement on parenting styles, family budget allocation and the satisfaction of sexual needs within the relationship.

First, defining terms:

1. Definition of marital compatibility:

In sociology, compatibility refers to the process of reconciliation between competing or conflicting parties, whether individuals or groups. It is also used to indicate changes in attitudes, habits and values transmitted from one generation to another, and the concept of social compatibility can be applied to social education¹.

The concept of marital compatibility implies relative freedom from conflict and relative agreement between husband and wife on common life issues. It also involves engaging in common activities and sharing emotions², with both spouses having the ability to resolve conflicts consistently. Marital compatibility is the result of interaction between the spouses and the appropriate choice of marriage, readiness for and commitment to married life, mutual love between the spouses, sexual satisfaction, and the assumption of responsibilities in married life³. A wife's appreciation of her husband's efforts to provide stability and economic security for the family, and a husband's appreciation of his wife's work in the home, are strongly associated with marital happiness⁴. Marital compatibility involves the development of a range of interactions between the parties that lead to a sense of emotional and physical intimacy for each party.

2. Family stability:

Family stability refers to a family relationship based on continuous interaction among all family members, providing children with the necessary social, cultural, economic and religious resources to meet their needs at different stages of growth. This relationship is characterised by love, democracy and cooperation among family members in the management of their family affairs, thus supporting human relationships and achieving a high level of cohesion and closeness within the family. Family stability is the ability of the family to fulfil all its roles and responsibilities in an environment characterised by cohesion, cooperation and democracy in its interactions, enabling it to face various problems and disturbances and to find solutions and

¹- Institute for Family Development. Marital Compatibility, p. 3

²- Sanaa Khawli. Family and Family Life, Dar al-Nahda, Beirut, 1984, p. 210.

³- Hassan Mustafa Abdel-Moati. The Family and Children's Problems, Dar al-Sahab for Publishing and Distribution, Cairo, 2008, 2nd edition, p. 23.

⁴- Zainab Fasouli. Factors of Marital Stability, Doctoral thesis in Family and Population Sociology, University of Algiers 2, Algeria, 2012-2013, p. 124.

preventive measures¹.

3. Understanding:

It refers to shared expectations and the knowledge that people have about each other when they share certain expectations². Procedurally, it reflects the spouses' awareness of the role of discussion and participation in making mutual and shared decisions about their reproductive lives.

4. Consent:

Consensus refers to points of agreement between individuals interested in a common issue or position. It may include a set of values, beliefs and attitudes held by members of a particular culture that constitute a mutually agreed framework. It also implies solidarity and participation in shared values and goals³. Procedurally, it involves reaching a shared and mutually satisfactory compromise between spouses regarding their reproductive life planning.

Second - Indicators of marital compatibility:

1. Pre-marital indicators:

Kir Patrick refers to pre-marital factors that are often associated with the success of couples, including the success of the parents' marriage, a sufficient engagement period, appropriate sexual knowledge in childhood, personal happiness in childhood, method of spouse selection, readiness for marriage during the engagement period, religious beliefs, level of education, prestigious social status, marriage at an appropriate age (preferably after 25), and good relationships with parents during childhood.

2. Post-marital indicators:

Locke summarised the laws of marital compatibility as follows:

- Marital happiness is associated with compatibility, and divorce is an expression of lack of compatibility.
- Separation between spouses is merely a slow accumulation of successive conflicts.
- Compatibility depends on the growth of love and empathy and the growth of common interests.
- It involves common activities, similar positions, belief in common values and respect for each other's personalities.
- It requires compatibility with each other's families.
- Willingness to accept marital responsibilities and the consequences of family life⁴.

Third - Determinants of marital compatibility and its role in family stability:

1. Spouses' family background:

The influence of each partner's family background has a clear impact on compatibility with the other partner. Family background is a primary source of social learning, including patterns of relationships, behaviour and role expectations, as well as attitudes, beliefs and behaviours associated with self and others. However, the characteristics of both husband and wife are not solely derived from the family side, as there are many experiences and social relationships that modify and structure some of the attitudes, values and behaviours derived from family models. Therefore, any experience of interaction with society has a significant impact on the experience of the marital relationship and interaction with the partner.

2. The developmental tasks of marriage:

Mennchin refers to the responsibilities and demands that each new family places on couples, which he calls developmental tasks. These tasks include:

- Marital communication and the growth of communication patterns and interactions between the parties.
- Fulfilling marital and family roles and responsibilities as expected by the other party.
- Mutual support and the creation of appropriate family conditions for each party to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Striving between the parties, accepting each other's opinions, showing empathy through words and actions, and appreciating each other's position and circumstances.
- The growth of self-will in both parties to obey, protect and preserve each other.
- The ability of both parties to balance their personal needs, work requirements and family demands.

¹- Samah Maammar, Lakhder Ben Sahel. Family Stability and its Requirements (Marital Compatibility as a Model), Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, Volume 11, Issue 2, Algeria, 2020, p. 120.

Mohammed Atef Gheit. Dictionary of Sociology, Dar al-Ma'arif al-Jami'iyya, Cairo, 1989, 2nd edition, p. 457.

²- Mohammed Atef Gheit. Dictionary of Sociology, Dar al-Ma'arif al-Jami'iyya, Cairo, 1989, 2nd edition, p. 457.

³- Same reference, p. 76.

⁴- Same reference, pp. 126-127.

- Understanding between spouses, unity of purpose, shared ways of thinking and common interests for the benefit of the family.
- Integration: Each party complements the deficiencies of the other, which contributes to the stability of the family.

3. Family rules and relationship patterns:

Patterns of interaction between spouses can develop throughout their lives, which can lead to sensitivity and avoidance of conflict. There may be an inability to discuss sensitive issues for fear of confrontation or unacceptable reactions. As a result, certain issues become off limits, and the list of these issues may grow over time.

On the other hand, establishing rules between spouses leads to an intimate relationship with a life partner and increases its stability. These rules include mutual trust without complaint. Some scholars refer to marital rules as contracts or agreements.

4. Responsibility and division of labour:

In order to create a suitable atmosphere within the family, couples need to understand and agree on the division of roles and responsibilities between them. Usually, couples approach this task from the cultural perspective of each role, in addition to their family background.

Such attitudes towards responsibilities and division of labour can become a source of conflict between spouses if they have different expectations of their roles¹. Conflict between spouses can arise when one of them wants to change the expected roles. For example, at the beginning of the marriage, the wife may accept the dominance of the husband in decision-making, and any attempt to change this situation may lead to conflict between the spouses².

5. Finances:

The way in which couples achieve mutual satisfaction in financial management is closely related to marital compatibility. In many families, money is a source of conflict because it represents more than a means of exchange for survival. It symbolises power, success, progress and well-being³. Conflicts may arise because of insufficient economic resources, poor financial management, disagreements about spending, especially when the wife works and does not contribute to expenses, and when spouses' expectations about sharing the financial burden are not met. However, this factor can also have the opposite effect, as the husband may become closer to his wife because he realises that he cannot afford to remarry due to his low income, which forces him to adapt to the situation⁴.

6. Reproductive decisions within the family:

This refers to decisions related to discussion and understanding between spouses about reproductive decisions, participation in reproductive decisions within the family, husband's agreement to use contraceptive methods and wife's encouragement to family planning. Such decisions and their attitudes reflect improving and facilitating the relationship between spouses by increasing knowledge, avoiding close and unwanted births, and other factors. This approach includes:

- Agreement and understanding between spouses about the desired number of children in the family.
- Agreement and understanding between spouses about the use of contraceptive methods, including
 - Who decides about such measures.
 - The extent to which the husband encourages the use of these methods.
 - The husband's consent to their use.
- Discussions between spouses about family size and the method used⁵.

Fourth - Analysis of the hypothesis tables:

The higher the level of understanding and agreement between spouses, the greater the tendency to use family planning methods.

In our study we used both qualitative and quantitative methods, which require different approaches. The

¹ - Hassan Mustafa Abdel-Moati. See above, pp. 23-26 by permission.

² - Najia Mamesh. Family Structure and Fertility, Doctoral Thesis in Demographic Sociology, University of Algiers 2, 2013-2014, p. 150.

³ - Hassan Mustafa Abdel-Moati. Previous reference, pp. 28-29.

⁴ - Najia Mamesh. Previous reference, p. 151.

⁵ - Muneer Abdullah Kradasha. Population Science (Social Demography), Modern Books World, Irbid, 2010, 1st edition, p. 119.

qualitative method is primarily aimed at understanding the phenomenon under study. As for the quantitative method with multivariate analysis, it aims primarily to measure the phenomenon under study.

The sample size was 300 families, based on the conviction that having a sufficient number of elements is enough to make the necessary comparisons between the study variables¹.

The population of interest in our study includes all couples of childbearing age (15-49 years) in the wilayat (provinces) of Blida and Medea. In the absence of a sampling frame, i.e. the number of Algerian couples consisting of husbands and wives of childbearing age living in the wilayat of Blida and Medea, we used non-random (purposive) sampling.

Our fieldwork covered the wilayat of Blida and Medea, where 102 questionnaires were completed from Blida and 198 from Medea. The places where these questionnaires were completed were not specified. Some of them were completed in a paediatrician's office, others with the help of students who gave them to the families. Another part was distributed directly to the families. Regarding the person who completed the questionnaire, in some cases both spouses completed it, while in others either the husband or the wife completed it.

In order to analyse the tables of this hypothesis, we tested the following independent variable:

- Spouses' attitudes towards the use of family planning methods.

And we related it to the following dependent variables:

- First use
- Desired number of children
- Reasons for using these methods
- Current number of living children

1- Couples' attitudes towards the use of family planning methods at first use

Table No. 01: Distribution of households by spouses' attitudes towards the use of family planning methods at the time of first use

Beginning of Use Spouses' Attitude	Immediately After Marriage		After the First Birth		After the Second Birth		After the Third Birth and More		No Use of Any Method at All		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Both Agree on Use	16	7.7	154	73.7	19	9.1	12	5.7	8	3.08	209	100
Husband agrees, wife disagrees	1	50	1	50								100
Wife agrees, husband disagrees	1	12.5	4	50	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	8	100
Depending on circumstances	2	3	40	60.0	9	13.6	2	3	13	19.7	65	100
Both Disagree on Use	1	6.7	10	66.7			1	6.7	3	20	15	100
Total	21	7	209	69.7	29	9.7	15	5.3	25	8.3	300	100

The data in the table above show that of the 275 families who had previously used a family planning method, 69.7% started using a method for the first time after the first birth, compared to 5.3% who started using a method for the first time after the third birth and beyond. We introduced the spouses' attitudes towards the use of family planning methods as an independent variable to determine its impact on the initiation of the use of these methods, and the results were as follows:

Among couples who agreed to use a family planning method, 73.7% started using it for the first time after the first birth, compared with 3.8% who did not use any method at all.

Among couples in which only the husband agreed to use a method without the wife, 50% started using it immediately after marriage, compared with 50% who started using it after the first birth.

Among couples in which only the wife agreed to use it without the husband, 50% started using it for the first

¹- Maurice Ange. Methodology of Scientific Research in Social Sciences, translated by Bouzid Sahraoui and others, Dar al-Qasba for Publishing, Algeria, 2004, p. 318.

time after the first birth, compared with 12.5% who started using it immediately after marriage. The same percentages apply to those who started using it for the first time after the second birth, after the third birth and beyond, and to those who did not use any method at all.

Among families who thought that consent to use depended on the couple's circumstances, 60.6% started using after the first birth, compared with 3% who started immediately after marriage. The same percentage applies to those who started using after the third birth and beyond.

On the other hand, in families where both spouses did not agree to use family planning methods, 66.7% started using a method for the first time after the first birth, compared to 6.7% who started immediately after marriage. The same percentage applies to those who started using a method after the third birth and beyond.

What we can see from these data is that, regardless of the position of the spouses, the majority of families started using a family planning method for the first time after the first birth, with similar proportions between them. The highest percentage is found in families where both spouses agreed to use. If anything, this shows that couples are aware of the need for dialogue and to reach a common position on their reproductive journey. The value of this agreement is demonstrated by the immediate use of these methods after the birth of the first child, which is usually explained by the desire of the spouses to ensure their ability to conceive.

Another notable observation is the significant proportion of families who started using methods immediately after marriage, with the agreement of both spouses. This is due to the importance of joint decision-making and can be explained by the desire of the spouses to enjoy their married life before taking the step of having children.

It can be concluded that the more the couple agrees on the use of family planning methods, the earlier they start using them. This is indicated by the moderate correlation coefficient of 0.33, which indicates a moderate correlation between the variables.

2. The spouses' position on the use of family planning methods and the desired number of children.

Table 02: Shows the distribution of families according to the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods and the desired number of children.

Number of Desired Children	1 (Desired) 2 Child		3-4 Children Children		5+ Children Children		Did Not Disclose		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Both Agree on Use	33	15.8	132	63.2	36	17.2	8	3.8	209	100
Husband agrees, wife disagrees	-	-	1	50	-	-	1	50	2	100
Wife agrees, husband disagrees	2	25	6	75	-	-	-	-	8	100
Depending on circumstances	11	16.7	40	60.6	11	16.7	4	6.1	66	100
Both Disagree on Use	2	13.3	9	60	4	26.7	-	-	15	100
Total	48	16	188	62.7	51	17	13	4.3	300	100

Based on the data presented in this table, it appears that the general trend is centred on families who want to have 3-4 children, which accounts for 62.7% of the families, while 4.3% did not specify the desired number of children.

Taking the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods as an independent variable to determine its impact on the desired number of children, we found that 63.2% of families in which both spouses agreed to use a family planning method wanted to have 3-4 children, compared to 3.8% who did not specify the desired number.

In cases where only the husband agreed to use a method without the wife, 50% of these families wanted to have 3-4 children, while 50% did not specify the desired number.

On the other hand, among the families where only the wife agreed to use a method without the husband, 75% of them wanted to have 3-4 children, while 25% wanted to have 1-2 children.

As for the families who thought that the agreement to use a method depended on the couple's circumstances, 60.6% of them wanted to have 3-4 children, while 6.1% did not specify the desired number.

As for the families in which both spouses did not agree to use family planning methods, 60% of them wanted to have 3-4 children, while 13.3% wanted to have 1-2 children.

Our analysis of these data shows that the majority of families wanted to have 3-4 children, regardless of the position of the spouses. This indicates a convergence between families in determining the number of children they would like to have.

From this we can deduce a relationship between the position of the spouses and the desired number of children. When the coefficient of concordance is calculated, its value of 0.25 indicates a moderate concordance between the variables.

3. The spouses' position on the use of family planning methods and the current number of living children.

Table 03: Shows the distribution of families according to the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods and the current number of living children.

Number of Living Children	Without Children		1 (Desired) 2 Child		3-4 Children		5+ Children		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Spouses' Attitude										
Both Agree on Use	11	5.3	103	49.3	62	29.7	33	15.8	209	100
Husband agrees, wife disagrees	-	-	2	100	-	-	-	-	2	100
Wife agrees, husband disagrees	1	12.5	5	62.5	2	25	-	-	8	100
Depending on circumstances	4	6.1	30	45.5	18	27.3	14	21.2	66	100
Both Disagree on Use	-	-	7	46.7	3	20	5	33.3	15	100
Total	16	5.3	147	49	85	28.3	52	17.4	300	100

Based on the statistical analysis of this table, it appears that the general trend of the table is in the category of families whose current number of children is between 1-2 children, which represents 49% of them, compared to 5.3% who have not yet had children.

Continuing to consider the previous variable as an independent variable, we have linked it to the current number of children in order to determine the existence of a relationship between them. The results are as follows:

- 49.3% of the families in which both spouses agreed to use a family planning method had a current number of children between 1 and 2, compared to 5.3% who had not yet had any children.
- 100% of families in which the husband agreed to use a method without the wife had a current number of children between 1-2 children.
- 62.5% of families in which the wife agreed to use a method without the husband had a current number of children between 1 and 2, compared with 12.5% who had not yet given birth.
- 45.5% of families in which the wife agreed to use a method without the husband had a current number of children between 1 and 2, compared with 6.1% who had not yet had any children.
- 46.7% of the families in which both spouses did not agree to use family planning methods had a current number of children between 1-2 children, compared to 20% who had a current number of children between 3-4 children.

It is clear from the above data that the majority of families have a current number of children between 1 and 2, regardless of the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods. These proportions are moderate and spread across the remaining categories of children.

This can be explained by the fact that families with a recent history of childbirth still have a desire to have children because they have not reached the desired number of children, which was previously set by the majority of families at between 3 and 4 children.

On the other hand, families with a long history of childbearing may be satisfied with their current number of children.

4. The spouses' position on the use of family planning methods with the intention of using them in the future.

Table 04: Shows the distribution of families according to the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods and their intention to use them in the future.

Intent to Use in the Future	Intend to Use a Method		No Intent to Use Any Method		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Spouses' Attitude						
Both Agree on Use	24	63.2	14	36.8	38	100
Husband agrees, wife disagrees	-	-	1	100	1	100
Wife agrees, husband disagrees	3	75	1	25	4	100
Depending on circumstances	18	54.5	15	45.5	33	100
Both Disagree on Use	4	33.3	8	66.7	12	100
Total	49	55.7	39	44.3	188	100

From the data in the table above, it can be seen that 55.7% of the families have the intention to use a family planning method in the future, compared to 44.3% who do not have the intention to use any of these methods.

When we introduced the spouses' position on the use of family planning methods as an independent variable to determine its impact on the intention to use a family planning method in the future, the results were as follows:

- In families where both spouses agreed to use a family planning method, 63.2% expressed an intention to use a method in the future, while 36.8% had no intention to use a method in the future.
- In families where the husband agreed to use a method without the wife, all did not intend to use it in the future.
- However, in families where the wife agreed to use a method without the husband, 75% expressed an intention to use a method in the future, compared with 25% who had no intention of using it in the future.
- In families where consent to use should be based on the couple's circumstances, 54.5% expressed an intention to use a method in the future, compared with 45.5% who did not have this intention.
- On the other hand, in families where both spouses did not agree to use a family planning method, 66.7% did not intend to use any of these methods in the future, compared to 33.3% who did intend to use it in the future.

According to these data, a significant percentage of families expressed their intention to use a family planning method in the future. This includes families where both spouses agreed to use it, as well as families where the wife agreed to use it without the husband, and families where both spouses agreed to use it if certain conditions were met.

On the other hand, there is a proportion of these families who expressed no intention of using any family planning method in the future. This includes families where the husband agreed to use it without the wife, and families where both spouses did not agree to use it.

It is worth noting that the goals of projects and plans are reflected in the changes that occur in social systems, values, individuals' perspectives on life and their attitudes towards it, including matters related to reproduction. This includes behaviours aimed at balancing economic conditions and the number of children, so that society can achieve the desired challenges and create a form of social adaptation.

With regard to the existence of a relationship between these two variables, we calculated Cramer's correlation coefficient, which was found to be 0.21, indicating a relationship between the variables.

Conclusion:

Based on the above, marital compatibility is considered one of the most important factors for a happy life and family formation. It represents the ability of spouses to adapt to the circumstances and challenges of married life. This relationship is characterised by stability and compliance with social norms thanks to marital compatibility, which leads to the continuation of married life and successful family stability. Achieving this is one of the fundamental pillars of the psychological well-being of spouses, as it contributes to the fulfilment of their emotional and material needs and increases the psychological and social security felt by the wife. It plays an important role in the happiness of all family members. This was further reinforced and confirmed by the field study on understanding, agreement, dialogue and shared decision making by both spouses regarding the use of contraceptive methods.

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