



Personality Traits in Marriage Relationship between Muslim and Santal Couples in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Personality traits in marriage relationship conceptualized as autonomy, aggression, conformity, conflict-orientation, & compromise are culturally constructed that may vary across the cultures, or subcultures within a given society. This study further explores and compares personality traits in marital relationship for practical implications between Muslim and Santal communities in Bangladesh. For this research purpose we selected 200 couples (120 couples for Muslim and 80 couples for Santal) using purposive sampling from Rajshahi city, Bangladesh and interviewed through structural questionnaire. The results of Independent Samples t-test revealed that there were significant differences in personality traits in marital relationship: autonomy, aggression, conflict-orientation, and compromise except conformity between the communities' couples in the study area of Bangladesh. The findings may have implications in further research and family social work practice with the communities' couples in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Marriage Relationship, Muslim & Santal Couple, Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the decade personality theories and its related cross-cultural studies suggest that cultural patterns of a community, or a society shape, preserve, and transmit personality traits conceptualized as autonomy, aggression, conformity, conflict, and compromise (Kornadt, Echensberger, and Emminghaus, 1980; Mead, 1950). These personality traits reflected in marital relationship not only vary across the societies but also between sub-cultural groups within a given society. For example, about six decades ago Mead (1950) was the pioneer who uncovered cross-cultural variations of men's and women's personality traits in marital relationship in the three tribes: The *Arapesh*, the *Mundugumor*, and the *Tchambuli*. According to Mead, both husband and wife of the *Arapesh* were gentle and much alike. Members of both the sexes were passive, warm, and non-competitive. They were equally likely to initiate sexual relations and equally responsible for the care of their children. In *Mundugumor*, both husband and wife were competitive and independent. They were violent and cannibalistic. Members of both the sexes were expected to be aggressive in their sexual encounters and equally jealous and vengeful. They disliked pregnancy and breast feeding and were not tender toward their daughters. The wives lacked any of the traits was feminine. But in the *Tchambuli*, both husband and wife were opposite. The husbands of *Tchambuli* were given the jobs of shopping and trading. They were nurturing toward children; they liked to gossip, to play the flute, and to spend a lot of time each day choosing clothes and jewelry to wear. On the other hand, wives were domineering, practical, and uninterested in clothes or jewelry; they were the main economic providers for the family.

Kornadt, Echensberger, and Emminghaus (1980) reviewed cross-cultural researches on motivations such as attachment, dependency, aggression, and achievement which were culture-bound, and assumed the trans-cultural validity of hedonistic principle, the influence of certain biological factors and opportunities to experience from the environment. These elements provide a framework that allows for an account of the development of culture-specific motives, and that enable comparison of different cultures via common features. Gergen, Morse, and Gergen (1980) reviewed the cross-

cultural studies relevant to the processes of behavior exchange. In reviewing relevant literatures they examined norms of reciprocity, equity, and resource distribution between men and women in intra-group and inter-groups that were both cross-cultural similarities and differences in social exchange.

In a cross-cultural study Berry (1979a) examined conformity in the seventeen subsistence-level samples that were distributed widely on the independence task and that their scores are related to their position on the eco-cultural dimension. The result of the Pearson correlation between the sample means on the independence task and their scores on the eco-cultural index is .70. And the correlation of coefficient across the individuals is .51 (Berry, et.al., 1992). In another study Hung and Harris (1973) examined conformity cross-culturally between Chinese (N-80) and American (N-80) adults. Among them 20 samples from each country were randomly assigned to each of four experimental conditions. The results showed that Chinese adults conformed more to status manipulation than American adults and American adults were more sensitive to the competence manipulation than Chinese adults. However, the findings suggest significant differences in conformity due to their cultural heritage.

Other cross-cultural studies consistently indicated that some societies and subcultures are more violent and aggressive than others. For example, peoples in *Arapash* of New Guinea, the *Lepchas* of Sikkim, and the *Pigmies* of Central Africa all use weapons to hunt but rarely show any kind of interpersonal aggression. In marked contrast to these groups was the *Gebusi* of New Guinea, who teach their children to be combative and to be emotionally unresponsive to the needs of others and who show a murder rate that is more than 50 times higher than that of any industrialized nation. Subcultures also influence on aggression and antisocial conduct, for example, husbands from lower-income families were more likely than husbands with middle-class rely on physical oppression, aggression, and non compliance to their wives, and thereby modeling these traits they try to suppress it (Shaffer, 1999).

Although previous cross-cultural literature explored, compared, and contributed to the personality traits in family and marriage relationship across the cultures, or sub-cultures, little attention has been paid on comprehensive personality traits in marital relationship in South Asian regions. Another limitation of the previous studies is that there is no cross-cultural practice-oriented literature in family social work from which family social workers may get insight, experience, and practical knowledge when they deal with problems related to the personality traits in marriage relationship. Using empirical data from Bangladesh this study explores and compares personality traits in marital relationship between Muslim and Santal couples. These findings may have practical implications in comparative family social work practice in Bangladesh.

2. THE PRESENT STUDY

Bangladesh is an agrarian economy based rural country where various religious and ethnic communities, such as Muslim and Santal, live in the same geographical conditions side by side, and involve in the historical and social processes for livelihood. The *Muslim* community is the major dominant religious community. Ethnically, Bangladeshi Muslims are a matter of conjecture; physically they are mixture of different stocks, having common ordinary folks with the long traditions of beliefs and ideas. They speak in *Bengali* language with the mixture of *Arabic-Urdu* preference. Religiously, they believe in Islam which includes the oneness of God or Monotheism (*Tawhid*), Holy Qur'an as His Devine laws and principles, Muhammad (sm) as His nominated last Prophet and his *Hadith (Sunnah)* as practices of sayings. A man who believes in Monotheism, Qur'an and Hadith is called Muslim (Levy, 1963; Alam, 1995; Sarker, 1997). On the other hand, the *Santal* community is the largest tribal group of Aborigines. Racially, they belong to *Proto-Australoid* stocks and speak in *Austriac-Mundary*, and sometimes speak in *Bengali* version with the other *Bengali*-speaking people. They believe in several *Bongas*. A man who believes in *Bongas* is called a Santal. The Santal in Bangladesh believe in animism, which includes worships of nature (Ali, 1998; Sultana, 2003). These fundamental belief systems of the two communities may influence personality traits in their respective marriage relationship in urban Bangladesh context.

The social system of both Muslim and Santal community is patri-lineal, patriarchal and patri-local in nature. Traditionally, the communities prefer male domination in all affairs of the community life: women are subordinated and subjugated to men in many areas of human relation (Rabiul, 2006). Although the both communities are male dominated, there are wide cultural variations in gender and marriage relations among them (Uddin, 2006).

The Santal in Bangladesh are very poor. Most of them have no land property and usually live in nuclear family. In this situation, both male and female members of the family work outside the home as paid wage laborers. Economically, both adult men and women and even children are independent. Each of them enjoys freedom and autonomy. So, both husband and wife take part in decision-making process concerning the family affairs. In this community, women have a great influence on their counterpart (Siddique, 1998; Kayes, 1995), although legitimate power remains with the elder males. On the other hand, elderly male members in the Muslim family dominate whole family affairs. Traditionally, aged male as a head of the family can decide all affairs of the family with or without discussion with other members in the family. According to research reports, Muslim women, in some families, have no social identity; they are known in the kinship position as daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother of someone (Sarker, 1997). They are almost dependent on their male partners in their life cycle for livelihood. In this situation, women and other dependent members cannot fully participate in the decision-making process in the family. So, they cannot influence their male partners as the Santal women do (Mannan, 1989). Community cultural background in association with religiosity, economic status, division of labor, gender power relation between men and women, discussed above, may shape different personality traits in marriage relationship. Based on literature in this study we explored the following research questions:

- Are husbands in both the communities more autonomous, aggressive, conflict-oriented than the wives, while wives are more conformity and compromise-oriented in marital relations?
- Are wives in the Muslim community more conformity and compromise-oriented to their husbands, while wives in the Santal community are more autonomous, aggressive and conflict-oriented to their husbands in the marital relations?

3. METHOD

3.1. Study Setting and Sample

This study to explore and compare personality traits in marriage relationships was conducted in Rajshahi metropolitan city from March to June in 2015. Rajshahi metropolitan city with 10 million people was a modernized and educational city wherein two types of community couples: Muslim and Santal were available. Studying our research purpose and questions snowball procedure to select relevant sample for two communities was followed: Based on snowball process 200 couples (e.g., 120 for Muslim & 80 for Santal) who were migrated from rural area to Rajshahi city for their livelihood were selected. Age range of the selected couples was 20-45 years. Most of the migrant *Muslim* men who were currently residents at the city were rickshaw puller, while both the Santal men and women were construction workers. Most of the couples of the communities were illiterate.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The study design used in this study was cross-cultural one which combined both qualitative and quantitative (Subjective and objective) aspects of personality traits (e.g., autonomy, conformity, aggression, conflict and compromise) in marriage relationship between Muslim and Santal couples for valid comparison. These personality aspects of marriage relationship were measured at the nominal/ordinal and ratio scales. For this semi-structural questionnaire was designed and applied with both open- and close-ended questions. The questionnaire applied was pre-tested and according responses of the pre-tested results necessary adjustments were made. We also applied case study technique to explore in-depth data on personality aspects of marriage relationship between the two communities' couples in study setting. The analysis of collected data was carried out by using IBM SPSS version 11.0, especially focusing on descriptive, inter-co relational statistics and Independent Sample T-Test. Presents authors further used case study to replicate quantitative data on personality traits in marital relationship between Muslim and Santal couples in Bangladesh. In so doing, 4 couples from Muslim and Santal communities were selected and intensively interviewed by the authors.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Personality Traits in Marital Relationship

Percentages of personality traits in marital relationships between Muslim and Santal couples at Rajshahi city, Bangladesh present in table 1. Frequency distribution and its percentages reveal that

most of the husbands (66.67%) and only 20.83% of the wives of the Muslim in the study area would maintain and practice autonomy in marital relationship, whereas 25% of the Santal husbands and 18.75% of the Santal wives were autonomous in marriage relationship, but 56.25% of the Santal couples compared to Muslim (12.50%) autonomous in marriage relationships. Although both cultures encourage male aggressive behavior, but female submissive one, that determines male dominance and female submission in family power dilemma, actual behavior suggests that the husbands in the Muslim culture (62.50%) compared to the husbands in the Santal culture (32.50%) were more aggressive in nature. On the other hand, the wives in the Santal culture (31.25%) were more aggressive than the wives in the Muslim culture (20.83%). In both the aggressive category, Santal couples (23.75%) were higher than the Muslim couples (4.17%). Those who were none aggressive conformed to each other. In power relationship females conform more than males. In day-to-day family behavior, especially in marital relationship Muslim wives (62.50%) agree and compromise more than the Muslim husbands (16.67%). On the other hand, we found mixed result in the Santal culture. The husband and wife in the families who disagree with each other are more likely to conflict-oriented. For example, About 50% of the Muslim husbands and 31.25% of the Santal husbands were conflict stricken. But both husband and wife conflict-oriented (37.50%) were higher than that in the Muslim culture (8.33%). The conflict-oriented marriage relationship is the basis of unpleasant, distasteful, unproductive human life and it increases disorganization in human behavior at family level. In order to maintain peaceful life women were more compromise-oriented in the Muslim culture than that in Santal culture (37.50%) with their male partners. In our study area we see that the wives in both the communities compromise with their husband to maintain the bond. One wife aged 35, occupation housewife said: occupation housewife said:

I am fully dependent on husband who dominates me and control me drastically. I never oppose my husband's opinion. He makes decisions in all affairs singly without discussion with me. What will I do.....?

On the other hand, one wife aged 31, occupation housewife+day laborer of the Santal sample deliberately said that I am economically independent, but socially dependent on my husband. So, my husband sometimes discusses with me when he makes an important decision for family life.

Table1. Percentages of Personality Traits in Marital Relationship by Muslim (n=120) and Santal (n=80), Rajshahi City, Bangladesh, 2015

Personality traits in marital relationship	Muslim		Santal	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Autonomy				
Husband only	80	66.67	20	25.00
Wife only	25	20.83	15	18.75
Both of them	15	12.50	45	56.25
Aggression				
Husband only	25	20.83	26	32.50
Wife only	75	62.50	25	31.25
Both of them	5	4.17	19	23.75
None of them	10	8.33	10	12.50
Conformity				
Husband only	75	62.50	8	10.00
Wife only	20	16.67	22	27.50
Both of them	10	8.33	23	28.75
None of them	15	12.50	27	33.75
Conflict Oriented				
Husband only	60	50.00	25	31.25
Wife only	30	25.00	15	18.75
Both of them	10	8.33	30	37.50
None of them	20	16.67	10	12.50
Compromise				
Husband only	20	16.67	10	12.50
Wife only	70	58.33	30	37.50
Both of them	12	10.00	11	13.75
None of them	18	15.00	29	36.25

4.2. Differences in Personality Traits in Marital Relationship

Our earlier descriptive findings (frequency and percentage) suggest that there are some differences in personality traits in marriage relationship between the Muslim and Santal Couples. In order to compare personality traits in marriage relationship we applied *independent sample t-test* find out significant differences in personality traits (autonomy, aggression, conformity, consensus, conflict and compromise) in marriage relationship between Muslim and Santal couples at Rajshahi city, Bangladesh. The findings of *independent sample t-test* suggest that there were significant differences in autonomy (mean= 1.26 for Muslim, 2.60 for Santal), aggression (mean= 1.64 for Muslim, 2.43 for Santal), consensus (mean= 1.89 for Muslim, 1.73 for Santal), conflict (mean= 1.75 for Muslim, 1.33 for Santal) and compromise (mean= 1.39 for Muslim, 2.45 for Santal), because p values of these variables are greater than the observed values (see table 2). In other variable such as conformity is significantly similar between the two communities.

Table2. *Independent Sample t-test for Personality Traits in Marital Relationship by Muslim (n=120) and Santal (n=80), Rajshahi City, Bangladesh, 2015*

Test	Levene’s Test for Homogeneity of Variances				T-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	F	p-value	t	df	p-value
Autonomy	M:1.26 S:2.60	0.74 0.81	2.66	0.10	-8.10	98	0.00*
Aggression	M:1.64 S:2.43	1.12 0.82	2.67	0.10	-3.49	98	0.00*
Conformity	M:1.89 S:1.73	0.47 0.45	2.39	0.12	-1.51	98	0.13
Conflict	M:1.75 S:1.33	0.43 0.48	2.62	0.10	-4.15	85	0.00*
Compromise	M:1.39 S:2.45	0.47 0.69	8.51	0.00*	-2.46	32	0.02*

Note: M=Muslim, S=Santal * p<0 .05

4.3. Relationship of Personality Traits in Marriage Relationship

We also measured and analyzed whether the characteristics of personality traits in marriage relationship between Muslim and Santal couples were significantly related to each other. Table 3 shows data on Pearson’s inter-correlation between autonomy, conformity, aggression, consensus, conflict and compromise between the Muslim and Santal couples. These variables of personality traits in marriage relationship are both positively and negatively correlated with each other. In this respect autonomy was negatively related to aggression, consensus conflict and compromise are positively and negatively inter-correlated with each other that are statistically significant at .05 and .01 percent level at 2-tailed test. However, personality traits in marital relationship were partially correlated with autonomy, aggression, consensus and compromise between the communities.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on cultural construction approach we assumed that personality traits in marriage relationships are culturally constructed that may vary between Muslim and Santal couples in Bangladesh. Using empirical data collected from Muslim and Santal couples from Rajshahi city Bangladesh suggest that husbands than wives in both the communities were more autonomous, aggressive and conflict oriented. In addition, wives in the Santal community were more autonomous, aggressive and conflict oriented than the wives in the Muslim community. Further evidence suggested that Muslim wives were more compromise and conformity oriented than the wives in the Santal community. Relevant theory suggests that personality traits in marital relationship influenced by respective community’s family cultural background, in which the couples are born, developed and that family background they live in after marriage. That is the family background (also family of orientation) in which the husband and wife are socialized before marriage determines their gender status and personality traits that greatly influence marital relationship between the two communities in Bangladesh. In addition to family socio-economic status, the environment the couples live in has much effect on their marital relationship. In order to measure cultural influence on personality traits in marital relationship we use Pearson correlation matrix that shows cultural influence on that relationship.

Table3. *Inter-correlation of Personality Traits in Marital Relationship between Muslim (n=120) and Santal (n=80) Couples, Rajshahi City, Bangladesh, 2015*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Autonomy	1.00				
2. Aggression	.092*	1.00			
3. Conformity	.243**	.351*	1.00		
4. Conflict	-.341	-.153**	.290**	1.00	
5. Compromise	.204*	.214	.451*	.432*	1.00

Note: * p < .05 ** p < .01 (2-tailed test)

On the other hand, conflict and exchange theorists argue that the ways family roles are distributed and specialized between father and mother create women dependency, especially women economic dependency on men. According to them the families are poverty stricken both husband and wife are involved in income generating activities in the subsistent economy. Although both husband and wife do earn for family living, cannot fulfill reciprocal needs. In addition, a mother in this dual earner family plays an earning as well as child socializing, and household chores' roles. These multiple roles not only create strain, stress and pressure in mother, but also transform into relationship between husband and wife. According to them if the outcomes of aggregate roles are not equally distributed creates conflict between husband and wife (Cosser, 1966; Nye, ed. 1983; Biddle and Thomas ed., 1966; Turner, 1999; Piotrkowski, 1979).

The conflict between husband and wife not only raises unrest, insecurity and instability within husband and wife bond and breaks down social order in the family but also transfers it into the children who may be disobedient or deviant. Conflict is one of the aspects of the family relationship. In intimate and emotional relationship, conflict is inevitable. However, the way conflict in the family is removed depends on discussion, negotiation and communication and interaction patterns within the family. The family that is more negotiating and compromising is more integrated and more adaptive (see next section).

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on cultural construction approach and also findings we conclude that personality traits in marriage relationships are culturally constructed that may vary between Muslim and Santal couples in Bangladesh. Using empirical findings suggest that husbands than wives in both the communities were more autonomous, aggressive and conflict oriented. In addition, wives in the Santal community were more autonomous, aggressive and conflict oriented than the wives in the Muslim community. Further evidence suggested that Muslim wives were more compromise and conformity oriented than the wives in the Santal community. The findings have many negative consequences. For example, in marital relationship females agree and compromise more than the male. In our study area we also observe that about 82% of the Muslim and 33% of the Santal are in agreement between husband and wife and the rest are in disagreement. The husband and wife in the families who disagree with each other are in conflict between them. About 24% of the Muslim and 66% of the Santal families are conflict stricken. The conflict in any relationship is the basis of unpleasant, distasteful, unproductive human life and it increases disorganization in human behavior at family level. In order to maintain peaceful life women compromise with their male partners. In our study area we also see that the wives in both the communities compromise with their husband to maintain the bond. The findings of this test suggest that there are significant differences in autonomy, aggression, consensus, conflict and compromise, because p values of these variables are greater than the observed values. In other variable such as conformity is significantly similar between the two communities.

Personality traits in marital relationship are influenced by family cultural background, socioeconomic status, age and sex pattern, gender status and environmental factors. Previous studies measure cultural influence on marital power relationship, using Pearson correlation matrix that shows cultural influence on that relationship. Therefore, future study should analyze how socio-cultural and environmental factors differentially influence personality traits in marital relationships between Muslim and Santal couples in Bangladesh.

Despite this major limitation the findings of the study may be implied to improve personality traits in marriage relationship between Muslim and Santal couples in Bangladesh. Family social work from its

inception deals with marital and family problems. Previous research has shown that some couples after marriage may face marital problems related to traits of autonomy, aggression, conformity, conflict, and compromise in marriage relationship. These traits of marital power may have enormous negative effects on personal (psycho-physical) and marital life. Therefore, family social workers may deal with the couples, especially Santal couples to improve their marital relationships.

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