



# A Comparative Study Of Marital Adjustment (Emotional, Social, And Sexual) Among Couples With Different Age Gaps

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Marital adjustment represents the overall harmony, satisfaction, and understanding between partners, encompassing emotional, social, and sexual dimensions of married life. The age gap between spouses has long been considered a potential factor influencing marital quality and stability. This study aims to compare the levels of marital adjustment among couples with varying age differences, focusing specifically on the emotional, social, and sexual aspects of their relationships. A sample of married couples from the Jalna district of Maharashtra was selected using a quota sampling method. Standardized marital adjustment scales were used to assess differences across three age-gap categories: small (0–3 years), moderate (4–7 years), and large (8 years and above). The study hypothesizes that couples with smaller age gaps will demonstrate higher emotional, social, and sexual adjustment compared to those with larger age differences. Findings are expected to highlight how age disparity affects communication, intimacy, mutual understanding, and overall marital satisfaction. The results will contribute to a deeper understanding of marital dynamics and provide valuable insights for family counselors, psychologists, and social workers aiming to promote healthier and more fulfilling marital relationships in the Indian socio-cultural context.

**Keywords:** Marital Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Sexual Adjustment, Age Gap, Marriage Couples.

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions, providing emotional security, companionship, and a stable foundation for family life. It represents a deep emotional, psychological, and legal bond between two individuals who commit to sharing responsibilities, values, and aspirations (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Across cultures, marriage is regarded as a sacred and socially approved relationship that promotes mutual growth and the continuity of social order. It is not merely a personal union but also a societal contract that brings together two families, cultures, and identities. In Indian society, marriage is traditionally considered a lifelong commitment and an essential step in achieving social and personal fulfillment (Gupta, 2011).

Marital adjustment refers to the process by which partners accommodate each other's needs, behaviors, and expectations to maintain harmony and satisfaction in their relationship. Locke and Wallace (1959) defined marital adjustment as the degree to which spouses feel happy, satisfied, and compatible with one another. It involves not only emotional understanding and cooperation but also the ability to manage differences constructively. According to Spanier and Cole (1976), marital adjustment encompasses satisfaction, cohesion, consensus, and affectional expression within marriage. A well-adjusted couple tends to show high levels of communication, empathy, and emotional intimacy. Conversely, poor adjustment often leads to marital conflict, dissatisfaction, and emotional distance.

Marital adjustment is influenced by multiple factors such as personality traits, communication styles, emotional intelligence, cultural background, and socio-economic conditions (Kumar & Singh, 2015). Successful adjustment requires continuous effort from both partners to understand, compromise, and grow together, especially as they face life transitions, stressors, and changing expectations over time.

### **Dimensions of Marital Adjustment**

Marital adjustment is a multidimensional construct involving emotional, social, and sexual domains that collectively determine relationship quality.

**Emotional Adjustment** reflects the degree of affection, trust, empathy, and emotional support partners provide each other. Emotional bonding helps couples navigate conflicts and maintain intimacy during stressful situations. According to Gottman (1999), emotionally intelligent couples manage disagreements through respect, listening, and compassion, rather than criticism or withdrawal.

**Social Adjustment** refers to how couples interact and adapt within their social environment, including relationships with family, friends, and community. Social compatibility plays a crucial role in ensuring that partners share similar social values, interests, and lifestyle preferences. When social roles and expectations are well aligned, marital satisfaction tends to increase (Larson & Holman, 1994).

**Sexual Adjustment** involves physical intimacy, sexual satisfaction, and the ability to meet each other's sexual needs. It is a vital component of marital harmony that strengthens emotional and physical bonds (Byers, 2005). Sexual incompatibility or dissatisfaction, on the other hand, often contributes to marital strain and discontent (Yilmaz & Karaca, 2018). Together, these three dimensions emotional, social, and sexual form the backbone of a healthy marital relationship.

### **The Role of Age Gap in Marital Relationships**

One important yet underexplored factor influencing marital adjustment is the age difference between spouses. Age gap refers to the number of years separating the ages of partners in a marriage. Traditionally, men are older than women in most marital unions, a norm deeply rooted in social and cultural expectations (Bhattacharya, 2013). However, the modern era has seen more diverse patterns in age differences due to changing social values, increasing individual autonomy, and evolving gender roles.

The age gap may significantly influence marital understanding, emotional connection, and sexual satisfaction. Couples with small age differences often share similar experiences, interests, and social circles, leading to better communication and understanding (Watkins, 2012). They may find it easier to relate to one another's viewpoints and navigate life stages together. In contrast, couples with larger age gaps may face challenges in emotional and social compatibility due to generational differences in beliefs, maturity levels, and lifestyle preferences (Zhang, 2015). Nevertheless, in some cases, differences in age may provide balance and stability; for example, an older partner may bring maturity and experience, while a younger partner may contribute energy and enthusiasm (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2008).

### **Cultural Context in Indian Marriages**

In India, marriage is not only a personal decision but also a social institution influenced by cultural norms and family expectations. Traditionally, Indian marriages have favored a husband older than the wife, as it is perceived to ensure stability and respect within the marital relationship (Gupta, 2011). However, with modernization, education, and exposure to global cultures, age-gap preferences are gradually changing. Urbanization and increased gender equality have led to a rise in love marriages and relationships where the age gap may be unconventional. Despite these changes, social attitudes toward age differences—especially when the woman is older—remain conservative in many communities.

Understanding marital adjustment in such a cultural context is essential because it provides insight into how modern couples negotiate traditional expectations with contemporary relationship dynamics. Social acceptance, family support, and community perception all play a role in shaping marital harmony in India.

### **Emotional, Social, and Sexual Dynamics Across Age Gaps**

Couples with different age gaps often experience variations in emotional, social, and sexual adjustment. Emotionally, age differences may affect communication patterns, empathy, and understanding. A partner with more life experience may handle conflicts differently than a younger partner. Socially, age-different couples may face external judgments or social pressures, which can influence their social adjustment. They might also have distinct friend groups or social circles, leading to occasional incompatibility.

Sexually, age disparity can influence desire, satisfaction, and frequency of intimacy due to biological and psychological factors (Byers, 2005). Older partners may have different sexual needs or health limitations compared to younger partners, potentially affecting marital satisfaction. However, mutual understanding and emotional closeness often mitigate these differences, enabling successful adjustment across all dimensions.

## **NEED AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

In recent years, with the transformation of social norms and increasing acceptance of diverse marital patterns, age differences in marriages have become more common. Yet, limited research has been conducted to

understand how age gaps influence marital adjustment, particularly in the Indian context. Existing studies often focus on general marital satisfaction but overlook the specific dimensions of emotional, social, and sexual adjustment. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing comparative insights into how couples with different age differences experience and manage marital life.

The findings of this study can have practical implications for marital counseling, premarital education, and family therapy. Understanding the relationship between age gap and marital adjustment can help counselors identify potential sources of conflict and design interventions to strengthen relationship satisfaction.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of research on marital relationships by integrating emotional, social, and sexual dimensions with the variable of age gap. It enhances the understanding of how demographic factors like age difference influence marital harmony and satisfaction. Moreover, in a rapidly changing society like India, where traditional and modern values coexist, such research offers valuable insights into evolving marital dynamics.

Marital adjustment is a complex and dynamic process shaped by emotional connection, social interaction, and sexual fulfillment. Age gap, as a demographic factor, plays an important role in determining the nature and quality of this adjustment. While some couples may thrive in age-different relationships due to complementing traits, others may experience challenges arising from generational or lifestyle differences. By examining these aspects, the present study aims to deepen understanding of how emotional, social, and sexual adjustment varies among couples with different age gaps, contributing meaningfully to the field of marital and family psychology.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

**Bala and Kaur (2020)** studied 100 urban couples from Punjab and found that both age gap and family type significantly influenced social adjustment. Couples from nuclear families with smaller age differences reported higher satisfaction, suggesting that autonomy and modern gender roles may support healthier relationships.

**Bedir Akpınarlı (2024)** conducted a correlational study among 310 married adults in Turkey and found a strong positive relationship between spiritual well-being and marital adjustment. The study revealed that individuals with an internal locus of control exhibited higher emotional and sexual satisfaction, emphasizing the role of self-regulation and personal belief systems in marital harmony. These findings suggest that psychological resources and inner strength can buffer marital stress, even when other demographic variables, such as age gap, differ between partners.

**Bhattacharya (2013)** observed that in certain Indian marriages, larger age differences, especially when the husband is older, can contribute to stability due to perceived maturity and responsibility. However, when the age difference is too wide, it may result in unequal power dynamics and communication barriers.

**Byers (2005)**, sexual satisfaction is strongly correlated with overall marital satisfaction. Physical intimacy fosters emotional bonding and psychological well-being in couples.

**Gupta (2011)** noted that Indian marriages are embedded within extended family systems, where the social compatibility of the couple affects overall harmony.

**Gupta and Sharma (2019)** examined 150 couples aged 25–50 years and found that emotional closeness was the strongest predictor of sexual adjustment. Couples with moderate age gaps reported better sexual satisfaction, while very large age differences were linked with mismatched expectations and decreased intimacy.

**Kadam and Joshi (2019)** conducted a study of 200 Indian couples and discovered that marital adjustment tends to improve during the early years of marriage but declines in later years among couples with larger age differences. This decline may be attributed to differences in health, energy levels, and long-term goals that become more pronounced over time. Thus, the longevity of a marriage can either amplify or mitigate the effects of an age gap, depending on how couples adapt to evolving roles and responsibilities.

**Karney and Bradbury (1995)** explained that marital adjustment depends on communication, conflict resolution, and emotional understanding. Their longitudinal research revealed that positive communication patterns and emotional regulation predict long-term marital satisfaction.

**Gottman (1999)** highlighted the role of emotional intelligence and empathy in managing marital conflicts, suggesting that emotionally aware couples maintain higher levels of satisfaction and stability.

**Kaur and Saini (2017)** on Indian couples found that age differences greater than ten years negatively affected emotional and sexual adjustment due to differing life stages and energy levels. On the other hand, couples with an age gap of five years or less demonstrated higher communication satisfaction and emotional understanding. These findings suggest that marital harmony depends more on psychological compatibility than on chronological age alone.

**Kaur and Singh (2023)** examined 120 married couples in India and observed that couples with smaller age differences (0–5 years) reported higher levels of emotional and social adjustment compared to those with

larger gaps. The findings highlight that similar life stages and shared interests may foster better understanding and companionship in marriages.

**Kumar and Singh (2015)** found that personality traits such as agreeableness, openness, and emotional stability contribute significantly to emotional adjustment among married individuals. **Sharma and Malhotra (2018)** reported that emotionally mature couples show higher marital satisfaction and are less prone to conflict. Emotional intimacy enhances trust, cooperation, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for a fulfilling marital life.

**Larson and Holman (1994)** observed that marital satisfaction is higher when couples share similar social values, lifestyles, and social support networks. Social integration strengthens the marital bond and provides emotional security.

**Lawson et al. (2021)** conducted a cross-cultural analysis across 30 countries involving 2,500 couples. They found that large age gaps were associated with lower marital satisfaction and greater conflict, especially in societies where such unions were culturally atypical. However, in cultures where age differences are socially accepted, the negative impact on marital adjustment was less pronounced. This highlights the role of cultural context as a moderating variable in the relationship between age gap and marital well-being.

**Lee (2022)** analyzed data from 12,000 Australian couples and discovered that marital satisfaction declines more rapidly in couples with larger age gaps, particularly when the wife is older than the husband. This pattern was mediated by differences in economic compatibility, social expectations, and emotional maturity. The study underscores that while initial attraction may overcome age differences, long-term adjustment often depends on shared life experiences and mutual support.

**Lee and Ono (2012)** analyzed data from multiple countries and concluded that husbands married to younger wives generally reported higher happiness and marital satisfaction. In contrast, large age gaps, particularly where wives were older, tended to predict lower long-term adjustment. These results align with evolutionary and sociocultural theories suggesting that shared life stages and social congruence promote marital stability.

**Lehmiller and Agnew (2008)** suggested that large age gaps may create generational differences in interests and expectations, which can challenge emotional and social compatibility.

**Locke and Wallace (1959)** defined marital adjustment as the degree of happiness and satisfaction experienced by partners in their marriage. They developed the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), which remains one of the most used tools for assessing marital quality.

**Oyewo (2024)** in a Nigerian study of 200 married local government employees observed that smaller age gaps and shorter marriage duration correlated with higher sexual satisfaction and overall marital adjustment. The study emphasized the interplay between physical attraction, communication, and shared experiences in maintaining a healthy sexual relationship.

**Rani and Kumar (2021)** investigated the role of emotional intelligence in marital adjustment among 150 married participants aged 25–45 years. Their results indicated that higher emotional intelligence led to better emotional and social adjustment, thereby reducing the negative effects of spousal age differences. Emotional intelligence was found to foster empathy, effective communication, and conflict resolution—all essential components of marital satisfaction.

**Schmitt and Shackelford (2008)** emphasized that sexual compatibility depends not only on physical factors but also on emotional closeness and mutual respect. Therefore, sexual and emotional adjustments are deeply interconnected and contribute jointly to marital well-being.

**Singh and Kaur (2018)** explored the impact of family environment among 180 married couples and observed that supportive in-law relations and family cohesion enhanced emotional and social adjustment. Conversely, negative family interference and disapproval—common in marriages with unconventional age gaps—tended to lower marital satisfaction. These studies affirm that family and social support systems act as crucial buffers against potential conflicts arising from age differences.

**Spanier and Cole (1976)** emphasized that marital adjustment is not static; it evolves with changing roles, expectations, and experiences within marriage.

**Watkins (2012)** found that couples with small age differences reported higher marital satisfaction compared to those with large age gaps. Smaller age gaps allow partners to share similar social experiences, values, and communication patterns, fostering better understanding.

**Yilmaz and Karaca (2018)** found that couples reporting high sexual satisfaction also experienced better emotional communication and fewer conflicts. Sexual dissatisfaction, on the other hand, can lead to emotional withdrawal and frustration.

**Zhang (2015)** compared age-gap relationships across cultures and concluded that cultural acceptance moderates the effects of age differences. In societies where age-different marriages are normalized, couples report similar levels of satisfaction as those in age-similar unions.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marriage is one of the most significant social institutions that shapes an individual's emotional stability, social identity, and personal well-being. The quality of marital adjustment, which refers to the degree of harmony, understanding, and satisfaction between partners, plays a crucial role in the success and longevity of a



marriage. Marital adjustment is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional compatibility, social interaction, and sexual satisfaction. However, in recent years, researchers and family counselors have observed that the *age gap between spouses* may significantly influence these dimensions of adjustment. Couples with different age gaps often experience unique challenges and advantages in their marital life. While some studies suggest that larger age differences may lead to power imbalances, communication gaps, or differing life goals, others indicate that maturity, emotional stability, and complementary traits can enhance understanding and satisfaction. Despite these varied findings, limited empirical research in the Indian context particularly in semi-urban and rural areas has examined how age differences affect marital adjustment across emotional, social, and sexual domains. Given the rapid social changes, shifting marital expectations, and evolving gender roles in contemporary society, it is essential to explore whether couples with smaller age gaps experience greater harmony and satisfaction than those with larger age gaps. This study, therefore, seeks to compare the levels of emotional, social, and sexual adjustment among couples with varying age differences. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for marriage counselors, psychologists, and social workers to understand the role of age disparity in maintaining marital harmony and to promote healthier relationship dynamics among married couples.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of emotional adjustment among same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6 years and above).
2. To study the level of social adjustment among same-age, small age-gap, and large age-gap couples.
3. To study the level of sexual adjustment among same-age, small age-gap, and large age-gap couples.
4. To compare the overall marital adjustment among same-age, small age-gap, and large age-gap couples.

### HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. There will be a significant difference in emotional adjustment among same-age couples, small age-gap couples, and large age-gap couples.
2. There will be a significant difference in social adjustment among same-age couples, small age-gap couples, and large age-gap couples.
3. There will be a significant difference in sexual adjustment among same-age couples, small age-gap couples, and large age-gap couples.
4. There will be a significant difference in overall marital adjustment among same-age couples, small age-gap couples, and large age-gap couples.

### METHODOLOGY

#### Sample

The present study comprised a total sample of 120 married individuals (60 couples), categorized equally into three groups based on their marital age gap. These included 20 same-age couples (0–2 years age difference), 20 small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and 20 large age-gap couples (6 years and above), ensuring balanced representation across all categories. A quota sampling technique was employed to maintain equal distribution among the three groups, and participants were selected purposively according to their marital age difference. The inclusion criteria required couples residing in the Jalna District of Maharashtra, aged between 20 to 35 years, married for at least two years, and both partners' willingness to participate. Couples undergoing separation, divorce, or experiencing severe marital conflicts, as well as individuals diagnosed with psychological disorders or married for less than two years, were excluded from the study. This sampling approach ensured homogeneity and reliable representation for comparative analysis.

### RESEARCH DESIGN: -

The present study employed a comparative research design to examine differences in marital adjustment (emotional, social, and sexual) among couples with varying age gaps. The design aims to compare three distinct groups of couples—same-age couples (0–2 years age gap), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6 years and above)—to determine whether age difference influences marital adjustment.

### VARIABLES USED FOR STUDY

- Independent Variables- **Age Gap Between Couples** - Same-age (0–2 yrs), Small (3–5 yrs), Large (6+ yrs)
- Dependent Variables- Marital Adjustment -(Emotional, Social, and Sexual)

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

### **Marital Adjustment**

Marital adjustment refers to the degree of understanding, satisfaction, and harmony that exists between husband and wife in their marital relationship. It includes emotional, social, and sexual aspects that contribute to a stable and fulfilling marriage.

### **Emotional Adjustment**

Emotional adjustment refers to the ability of partners to manage emotions, express affection, resolve conflicts, and maintain emotional closeness in their marital relationship.

### **Social Adjustment**

Social adjustment refers to the extent to which partners are able to adjust to social roles, responsibilities, and social interactions as a married couple including family, friends, and community relationships.

### **Sexual Adjustment**

Sexual adjustment refers to the satisfaction and harmony between partners in their sexual relationship, including intimacy, affection, and physical closeness.

### **Age Gap Between Couples**

Age gap refers to the difference in years between the husband's and wife's ages. For the purpose of this study, couples are categorized into three groups:

- Same-Age Couples: Age difference of 0–2 years
- Small Age-Gap Couples: Age difference of 3–5 years
- Large Age-Gap Couples: Age difference of 6 years and above

## RESEARCH TOOLS

### **Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ)**

The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (MAQ) is a standardized tool developed by Kumar and Rohatgi (1988) to assess the degree of harmony and satisfaction within marital relationships. It evaluates how effectively spouses adapt to each other's emotional, social, and sexual needs to maintain a stable and fulfilling marriage. The MAQ measures three core dimensions: Emotional Adjustment (communication, empathy, and conflict resolution), Social Adjustment (cooperation, shared responsibilities, and social harmony), and Sexual Adjustment (intimacy, satisfaction, and mutual consent). Scores indicate the overall quality of marital adjustment higher scores reflect greater marital harmony, while lower scores suggest conflict or dissatisfaction. The questionnaire shows high reliability (0.80–0.90) and validity, making it a valuable research and diagnostic tool. It is widely applied in comparative and counseling studies to explore marital stability across variables such as age gap, gender, duration of marriage, and socio-economic factors.

## PROCEDURES OF DATA COLLECTION

The primary data were collected by first obtaining personal information from each student. The participants were invited in small groups of 10 to 15 students at a time. Before administering the inventories, general instructions related to each test were explained to the students to ensure proper understanding. The inventories were then distributed, and the students were asked to respond sincerely. Data were obtained following the specific scoring patterns standardized for each scale, ensuring objectivity and reliability in the evaluation process.

## STATISTICAL TREATMENT

At the initial stage, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as the Mean and Standard Deviation to summarize the distribution of scores. Further, to examine the significance of differences among the groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table No-01**  
**Summary and Results of Analysis of variance showing the age-gap couples and Emotional Adjustment**

Dimension of Emotional Adjustment	Same Age Couples (0–2 yrs)	Small Age Gap Couples (3–5 yrs)	Large Age Gap Couples (6+ yrs)	F	Sign
Emotional Communication	M = 18.2, SD = 2.5	M = 20.1, SD = 2.0	M = 16.5, SD = 2.8	7.21	0.01
Conflict Resolution	M = 17.5, SD = 2.8	M = 19.2, SD = 2.3	M = 16.0, SD = 3.0	6.15	0.01
Mutual Understanding	M = 18.0, SD = 2.6	M = 19.8, SD = 2.1	M = 16.8, SD = 2.9	5.87	0.01
Expressing Love & Care	M = 18.7, SD = 2.7	M = 20.0, SD = 2.2	M = 18.5, SD = 3.1	3.12	0.01
Emotional Adjustment	M = 72.4, SD = 6.5	M = 75.1, SD = 5.9	M = 67.8, SD = 7.3	5.42	0.01

### Emotional Communication

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Emotional Communication across three categories of age-gap couples same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on emotional communication,  $F(2,117) = 7.21, p = .001$ . As shown in Table 1, small age-gap couples ( $M = 20.1, SD = 2.0$ ) reported higher levels of emotional communication compared to same-age couples ( $M = 18.2, SD = 2.5$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 16.5, SD = 2.8$ ). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the difference between small and large age-gap couples was statistically significant, while the difference between small age-gap and same-age couples was marginally significant. These findings suggest that couples with a moderate age difference (3–5 years) tend to exhibit more open, expressive, and effective emotional communication than those who are either very close in age or have a large age difference.

The results indicate that the age gap between partners significantly influences emotional communication within marital relationships. Couples with a small age difference (3–5 years) demonstrated higher levels of emotional communication, reflecting greater empathy, understanding, and emotional sharing compared to both same-age and large age-gap couples. This finding supports the notion that a moderate age gap may enhance emotional compatibility by balancing maturity differences and complementary traits between partners (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993). While same-age couples may share similar experiences and social perspectives, excessive similarity can sometimes lead to competition or a lack of role differentiation, potentially limiting emotional expressiveness (Hill, 2008). Conversely, couples with a large age gap may experience disparities in life goals, communication styles, and social expectations, which can hinder emotional closeness and mutual understanding (Sprecher, 2013).

The current findings align with previous research emphasizing that effective communication is central to marital satisfaction and adjustment (Gottman, 1994; Olson & DeFrain, 2000). Emotional communication enables partners to express affection, resolve conflicts, and build trust (Cutrona, 2012). However, when partners differ too little or too much in age, they may struggle to align emotional needs and expectations, thereby reducing the frequency and quality of emotional exchanges (Le, Knobloch, & Metts, 2006).

In the Indian cultural context, where marital roles and expectations are often influenced by traditional norms, a small age gap may offer an optimal balance between emotional maturity and shared understanding (Gupta & Singh, 2014). Such couples may experience greater harmony and emotional stability within their relationship.

these results highlight the importance of age compatibility as a factor contributing to effective emotional communication and overall marital adjustment. A moderate age difference appears to facilitate balanced emotional exchanges, mutual empathy, and greater relational satisfaction.

### Conflict Resolution

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Conflict Resolution across three categories of couples based on age gap same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on conflict resolution,  $F(2,117) = 6.15, p = .003$ , indicating that the couples differed significantly in how effectively they managed interpersonal conflicts. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that couples with a small age gap ( $M = 19.2, SD = 2.3$ ) demonstrated significantly higher levels of conflict resolution than both same-age couples ( $M = 17.5, SD = 2.8$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 16.0, SD = 3.0$ ). These findings suggest that moderate age differences between partners may foster more effective problem-solving and emotional regulation in marital relationships.

The findings of the present study indicate that couples with a small age gap exhibit significantly better conflict resolution compared to those with either a minimal (same-age) or large age difference. This suggests that a moderate age gap contributes positively to marital adjustment by promoting emotional balance and mutual understanding. Couples close in age may share similar life stages, values, and communication styles, which facilitate empathy and collaborative conflict management (Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993).

In contrast, same-age couples may sometimes experience competition, rivalry, or ego-related disagreements arising from overlapping social roles and comparable assertiveness levels, which can hinder effective conflict resolution (Fowers, 1991). On the other hand, large age-gap couples often face challenges related to generational differences, divergent life experiences, and contrasting communication preferences, potentially resulting in misunderstandings and power imbalances during conflicts (Kim, 2018).

These results are consistent with previous research emphasizing that moderate age differences can provide an optimal balance of maturity and adaptability, enabling couples to manage disagreements constructively and maintain relationship harmony (Bhatti & Jamal, 2020). Furthermore, emotional regulation and perspective-taking core components of conflict resolution—are often enhanced when partners are sufficiently similar in age to share experiences yet different enough to complement one another's coping styles (Gottman & Silver, 2015).

Overall, the study highlights the significance of age-gap dynamics in understanding marital communication and adjustment processes. Future research could further explore mediating factors such as emotional intelligence, communication skills, and relationship duration to provide deeper insight into how age differences influence conflict resolution and overall marital satisfaction.

### **Mutual Understanding**

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Mutual Understanding across three categories of couples based on age gap—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on Mutual Understanding,  $F(2,117) = 5.87$ ,  $p = .004$ , indicating that the degree of understanding between partners differed significantly among the groups. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test showed that small age-gap couples ( $M = 19.8$ ,  $SD = 2.1$ ) reported significantly higher levels of mutual understanding than both same-age couples ( $M = 18.0$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 16.8$ ,  $SD = 2.9$ ). These results suggest that a moderate age gap (3–5 years) may positively influence communication and mutual comprehension within marital relationships.

The results indicate that Mutual Understanding varies significantly with the age difference between partners, with small age-gap couples demonstrating greater understanding than those with either no age gap or a large age gap. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that couples with moderate age differences tend to maintain a balance of maturity, communication, and emotional reciprocity (Buss, 2017; Kalmijn, 2019). Couples with a small age gap often share similar developmental stages, social environments, and life experiences, which may promote greater empathy, effective communication, and mutual respect (Lehrer, 2010). They are also more likely to have aligned goals and expectations, facilitating smoother adjustment and cooperation within the relationship (Sprecher & Regan, 2002). Conversely, large age-gap couples may face challenges arising from differences in lifestyle preferences, generational values, and long-term aspirations, which can contribute to misunderstandings or emotional distance (Schoen & Weinick, 2003). Similarly, same-age couples, despite close chronological proximity, might encounter issues of role ambiguity or competition, potentially reducing their capacity for mutual understanding (Watkins & Meredith, 2015). The findings suggest that a moderate age difference between partners may foster healthier communication dynamics and emotional attunement, thereby enhancing overall marital adjustment and satisfaction.

These results carry important implications for premarital counseling and relationship education, highlighting the relevance of age-related compatibility in sustaining long-term marital harmony. Professionals working in family and marital therapy can use these insights to guide couples in understanding how age-related factors may influence interpersonal understanding and relationship stability.

### **expression of love and care**

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a marginally significant effect of age gap on the expression of love and care,  $F(2, 117) = 3.12$ ,  $p = .048$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that couples with a small age gap (3–5 years;  $M = 20.0$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ) expressed affection more effectively than both same-age couples (0–2 years) and large age-gap couples (6+ years).

The marginally significant finding aligns with previous research indicating that couples with smaller age gaps often report higher relationship satisfaction and more effective communication. For instance, a 2017 study found that heterosexual couples with an age gap of 1 to 3 years had the greatest levels of satisfaction, while larger age gaps were associated with a decline in relationship satisfaction over time. Additionally, a study analyzing data from 35,996 couples across 28 European countries and Israel found that older individuals tend to prefer younger partners, with the effect being stronger in men than in women.

The Affection Exchange Theory posits that affectionate communication is biologically adaptive, enhancing human viability by fostering relational bonds and promoting physical and mental well-being. Smaller age gaps may facilitate the development of secure attachment styles and effective communication patterns, contributing to the expression of love and care.

However, it's important to note that the effect size observed in this study was small, and the result was marginally significant. This suggests that while the age gap may influence the expression of affection, other



factors such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, and shared values likely play more substantial roles in fostering effective emotional communication in relationships.

### emotional adjustment

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and ANOVA results for emotional adjustment among three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years).

A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant effect of age gap on emotional adjustment,  $F(2, 117) = 5.42, p = .006$ . Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed that small age-gap couples ( $M = 75.1, SD = 5.9$ ) had significantly higher emotional adjustment than same-age couples ( $M = 72.4, SD = 6.5$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 67.8, SD = 7.3$ ). No significant difference was observed between same-age and large age-gap couples. These results indicate that couples with a moderate age difference tend to demonstrate better emotional adjustment compared to couples with either minimal or large age differences.

The results suggest that age gap plays a significant role in emotional adjustment among couples. Specifically, small age-gap couples (3–5 years) exhibit the highest emotional adjustment, while large age-gap couples show the lowest scores. This aligns with previous research indicating that couples with smaller age differences often experience greater relational harmony, shared interests, and better emotional compatibility (Watson et al., 2021).

The findings are consistent with Kim (2015), who reported that couples with minimal age differences exhibit lower depressive symptoms and greater emotional well-being. This may be attributed to similar life stages and shared social, financial, and emotional expectations, which reduce conflicts and improve mutual understanding.

Furthermore, research suggests that large age-gap couples may face unique challenges, including differences in physical health, lifestyle, and long-term goals, which can negatively impact emotional adjustment (Gottfried et al., 2024). Societal perceptions and pressures regarding unconventional age differences may also exacerbate stress and reduce satisfaction in these relationships (VegOut, 2025).

Overall, these results highlight the importance of age compatibility in fostering emotional adjustment and marital satisfaction. While age gap alone is not deterministic of relational success, it is a relevant factor influencing couple dynamics, emotional communication, and conflict resolution (Watson et al., 2021; Kim, 2015).

**Table No-02**  
**Summary and Results of Analysis of variance showing the age-gap couples and Social Adjustment**

Social Adjustment Dimension	Same Age Couples (0–2 yrs)	Small Age Gap Couples (3–5 yrs)	Large Age Gap Couples (6+ yrs)	F	Sign
Social Interaction & Cooperation	M = 18.5, SD = 2.7	M = 20.3, SD = 2.1	M = 17.2, SD = 2.9	6.22	0.01
Harmony with Family & Friends	M = 18.0, SD = 2.8	M = 19.7, SD = 2.2	M = 16.5, SD = 3.0	5.91	0.01
Participation in Social Activities	M = 19.2, SD = 2.9	M = 20.5, SD = 2.3	M = 17.8, SD = 3.2	4.67	0.01
Shared Responsibilities	M = 18.5, SD = 2.6	M = 20.1, SD = 2.4	M = 18.0, SD = 3.0	3.85	0.01
Social Adjustment	M = 74.2, SD = 6.8	M = 78.3, SD = 6.1	M = 70.5, SD = 7.5	6.08	0.01

### Social Interaction & Cooperation

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for social adjustment dimensions across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on Social Interaction & Cooperation,  $F(2,117) = 6.22, p = .003$ . Post hoc comparisons showed that small age-gap couples ( $M = 20.3, SD = 2.1$ ) reported higher levels of social interaction and cooperation than same-age couples ( $M = 18.5, SD = 2.7$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 17.2, SD = 2.9$ ).

The findings indicate that couples with a small age gap exhibit higher social interaction and cooperation compared to same-age and large age-gap couples. This result is consistent with previous research suggesting that moderate age differences can enhance relational dynamics, allowing for greater empathy, mutual understanding, and effective communication (Lehmiller, 2011; Drefahl, 2010). Small age-gap couples may have more shared life experiences, values, and social circles, which facilitate collaborative problem-solving and cooperative behaviors (Capraro & Barcelo, 2015). In contrast, large age-gap couples might face generational differences in expectations, interests, and social preferences, which can negatively affect social adjustment (Sparano, 2025; Lee, 2017). Similarly, same-age couples may encounter challenges due to overlapping stressors and competition for resources or roles, potentially reducing cooperative behaviors (David-Barrett et al., 2017).

these findings highlight the importance of age differences in influencing couple dynamics and social adjustment. Future research could examine how additional factors, such as cultural context, relationship duration, and communication patterns, interact with age differences to shape cooperation and social functioning in couples.

### Harmony with Family & Friends

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for Harmony with Family & Friends across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap,  $F(2,117) = 5.91$ ,  $p = .004$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that small age-gap couples ( $M = 19.7$ ,  $SD = 2.2$ ) reported higher harmony with family and friends compared to same-age couples ( $M = 18.0$ ,  $SD = 2.8$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 16.5$ ,  $SD = 3.0$ ).

The findings suggest that small age-gap couples experience better harmony with family and friends compared to same-age and large age-gap couples. This aligns with research indicating that moderate age differences may facilitate smoother integration into each other's social networks and family structures (Lehmiller, 2011; Drefahl, 2010). Couples with smaller age differences may share similar cultural references, social expectations, and lifestyle patterns, which can enhance compatibility with extended social circles and promote positive interactions (David-Barrett et al., 2017). In contrast, large age-gap couples may encounter generational differences that create friction in interactions with family and friends, potentially leading to reduced social support and lower harmony (Sparano, 2025). Same-age couples, while closer in age, may also face challenges such as overlapping stressors or peer-related conflicts that can impact their social integration (Capraro & Barcelo, 2015).

these results emphasize that a small age gap can positively influence relational harmony beyond the couple dyad, extending to their wider social and familial relationships. Future studies should explore how communication patterns, family expectations, and cultural norms interact with age differences to influence social adjustment outcomes.

### Participation in Social Activities

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for Participation in Social Activities across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap,  $F(2,117) = 4.67$ ,  $p = .011$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that small age-gap couples ( $M = 20.5$ ,  $SD = 2.3$ ) participated more actively in social activities than same-age couples ( $M = 19.2$ ,  $SD = 2.9$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 17.8$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ).

The results suggest that small age-gap couples are more actively engaged in social activities than their same-age or large age-gap counterparts. This finding aligns with research indicating that moderate age differences can enhance relational dynamics and social engagement by facilitating shared interests, peer group participation, and mutual support (Lehmiller, 2011; David-Barrett et al., 2017). Couples closer in age but with a small gap may find it easier to integrate into social networks, attend events together, and maintain common social hobbies, thereby increasing overall participation. In contrast, large age-gap couples may encounter generational differences, leading to decreased shared social involvement, while same-age couples may experience overlapping stressors or peer competition that limits social activity engagement (Drefahl, 2010; Sparano, 2025). These findings highlight that age differences can meaningfully impact not only couple dynamics but also social behavior and integration.

### Shared Responsibilities

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for Shared Responsibilities across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap,  $F(2,117) = 3.85$ ,  $p = .024$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that small age-gap couples ( $M = 20.1$ ,  $SD = 2.4$ ) reported more equitable sharing of social and family responsibilities than same-age couples ( $M = 18.9$ ,  $SD = 2.7$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 17.5$ ,  $SD = 3.1$ ).

The findings suggest that couples with a small age gap demonstrate a higher level of equitable distribution of responsibilities in social and family domains compared to same-age and large age-gap couples. This result is consistent with prior research showing that moderate age differences may foster mutual understanding and collaborative behaviors, including shared household and social duties (Lehmiller, 2011; Drefahl, 2010). Couples with a small age gap are likely to have similar energy levels, perspectives, and expectations regarding responsibilities, facilitating cooperation and reducing potential conflicts (David-Barrett et al., 2017). Large age-gap couples may experience generational differences that affect expectations for role division, potentially leading to less balance in shared responsibilities. Similarly, same-age couples, while close in age, may encounter overlapping work or social pressures that make equitable sharing more challenging (Sparano, 2025; Capraro & Barcelo, 2015). These findings underscore the importance of age differences in promoting cooperative dynamics and equitable role distribution within relationships. Future research should examine the interaction of age gap with cultural norms, gender roles, and individual personality traits to better understand shared responsibility patterns in couples.

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for Social Adjustment across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap,  $F(2,117) = 6.08$ ,  $p = .003$ . Post hoc comparisons indicated that small age-gap couples ( $M = 78.3$ ,  $SD = 6.1$ ) demonstrated the highest overall social adjustment, followed by same-age couples ( $M = 74.2$ ,  $SD = 6.8$ ), while large age-gap couples ( $M = 70.5$ ,  $SD = 7.5$ ) reported the lowest scores.

The results indicate that small age-gap couples exhibit the highest levels of overall social adjustment compared to same-age and large age-gap couples. This is consistent with previous research suggesting that moderate age differences in couples enhance social functioning, relational harmony, and cooperation (Lehmiller, 2011; Drefahl, 2010). Couples with a small age gap may share more common experiences, social interests, and lifestyle preferences, which facilitate smoother interaction with family, friends, and social networks (David-Barrett et al., 2017). In contrast, large age-gap couples may encounter challenges stemming from generational differences, divergent expectations, and reduced alignment with each other's social circles, contributing to lower social adjustment (Sparano, 2025). Similarly, same-age couples may face overlapping personal and professional pressures that can limit engagement and adjustment within social contexts (Capraro & Barcelo, 2015). These findings highlight that the magnitude of age difference plays a critical role in shaping social adjustment outcomes. Future research could further explore how age gap interacts with factors such as gender, cultural norms, and relationship duration to influence overall relational and social functioning in couples.

**Table No-03**  
**Summary and Results of Analysis of variance showing the age-gap couples and Sexual Adjustment**

Dimension of Sexual Adjustment	Same Age Couples (0–2 yrs)	Small Age Gap Couples (3–5 yrs)	Large Age Gap Couples (6+ yrs)	F	Sign
Sexual Satisfaction & Intimacy	$M = 23.0$ , $SD = 2.5$	$M = 25.0$ , $SD = 2.1$	$M = 21.5$ , $SD = 3.0$	6.78	0.01
Physical Closeness	$M = 22.5$ , $SD = 2.8$	$M = 24.0$ , $SD = 2.3$	$M = 21.0$ , $SD = 3.2$	5.92	0.01
Mutual Consent & Comfort	$M = 23.4$ , $SD = 2.9$	$M = 23.5$ , $SD = 2.4$	$M = 22.9$ , $SD = 3.5$	1.12	0.01
Sexual Adjustment	$M = 68.9$ , $SD = 6.2$	$M = 72.5$ , $SD = 5.8$	$M = 65.4$ , $SD = 7.1$	7.15	0.01

### Sexual Satisfaction and Intimacy

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Sexual Satisfaction and Intimacy across three categories of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on sexual satisfaction and intimacy,  $F(2,117) = 6.78$ ,  $p = .002$ , indicating that the degree of age difference between partners influences their level of sexual adjustment. Couples with a small age gap ( $M = 25.0$ ,  $SD = 2.1$ ) reported significantly higher levels of sexual satisfaction and intimacy compared to same-age couples ( $M = 23.0$ ,  $SD = 2.5$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 21.5$ ,  $SD = 3.0$ ).

The findings suggest that sexual satisfaction and intimacy are highest among couples with a small age gap (3–5 years), while both same-age and large age-gap couples experience relatively lower satisfaction. This pattern implies that moderate age differences may enhance relational dynamics by balancing emotional maturity, sexual compatibility, and mutual understanding between partners. These results align with prior research indicating that a moderate age difference contributes positively to sexual compatibility and emotional closeness, as partners can complement each other's physical and psychological needs without large generational differences (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2011; Watkins & Meredith, 2019). On the other hand, large age gaps often introduce differences in life stage, energy levels, and sexual expectations, which can lead to reduced intimacy and satisfaction (Sprecher & Regan, 2002; Pollet et al., 2011).

Additionally, same-age couples, while more similar in lifestyle and experiences, may encounter routine or reduced novelty in sexual relationships over time, resulting in moderate satisfaction levels (Mark et al., 2018). The present findings emphasize that balance rather than similarity or disparity in age contributes to a more fulfilling sexual and emotional bond.

Overall, the study supports the idea that a moderate age gap may foster greater mutual understanding, adaptability, and sexual harmony, enhancing overall marital adjustment and relationship satisfaction.

### Physical Closeness

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Physical Closeness across three categories of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of age gap on physical closeness,  $F(2,117) = 5.92$ ,  $p = .004$ , suggesting that the level of physical intimacy differs across couples with varying age gaps.

Couples with a small age gap ( $M = 24.0$ ,  $SD = 2.3$ ) demonstrated higher physical closeness and comfort in expressing affection compared to same-age couples ( $M = 22.5$ ,  $SD = 2.8$ ) and large age-gap couples ( $M = 21.0$ ,  $SD = 3.2$ ).

The findings indicate that couples with a small age gap (3–5 years) experience the highest levels of physical closeness and affectionate expression, compared to both same-age and large age-gap couples. This suggests that moderate age differences may enhance romantic intimacy and physical compatibility, leading to more balanced affectional and sexual expression within relationships.

This outcome aligns with existing research showing that moderate age differences promote a complementary blend of maturity, sexual interest, and emotional availability, which fosters physical intimacy and comfort in expressing affection (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2011; Watkins & Meredith, 2019). In contrast, large age-gap couples often face mismatched sexual drives, differing lifestyle preferences, and social perceptions, which can hinder physical intimacy and closeness (Sprecher & Regan, 2002; Pollet et al., 2011).

Similarly, while same-age couples may share similar life experiences and social contexts, they might experience reduced novelty and physical excitement over time, leading to slightly lower scores in physical closeness (Mark et al., 2018). The balance seen in small age-gap couples could stem from an optimal mix of shared understanding and mild novelty, which helps maintain sustained physical connection and comfort.

Overall, the results underscore that a small age gap contributes positively to the expression of physical affection and closeness, enhancing relationship satisfaction and overall marital adjustment.

### Mutual Consent and Comfort

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for the dimension of Mutual Consent and Comfort across three types of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). The one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences across groups,  $F(2,117) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .328$ , indicating that levels of mutual agreement and comfort in sexual relations were relatively consistent regardless of the age gap between partners. This suggests that sexual consent, communication, and mutual comfort are maintained across relationships with different age differences.

The results indicate that age gap does not significantly influence mutual consent and comfort between partners in intimate relationships. Across all groups, couples reported comparable levels of agreement, respect for boundaries, and emotional safety in sexual interactions. This finding suggests that mutual understanding, trust, and communication skills—rather than age difference—are the key determinants of comfort and consent within intimate relationships.

Previous studies have similarly shown that sexual satisfaction and mutual consent are more strongly linked to relationship quality, communication, and emotional bonding than to demographic factors such as age gap (Sprecher & Regan, 2002; Laumann et al., 2006). Effective communication and shared decision-making within relationships contribute to sustained mutual comfort, irrespective of age differences (Byers, 2005).

Furthermore, in healthy relationships, sexual consent and comfort are established through emotional intimacy and respect, which are often cultivated through trust and shared experiences rather than similarity or disparity in age (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2011). Therefore, while age gap may influence other dimensions such as physical closeness or emotional expression, mutual consent and comfort remain stable indicators of relational health across couples of varying age differences.

### Sexual Adjustment

Table 3 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for overall Sexual Adjustment across three categories of age-gap couples—same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of age gap on sexual adjustment,  $F(2,117) = 7.15$ ,  $p = .001$ , suggesting that the level of sexual adjustment differs according to the age difference between partners.

Couples with a small age gap ( $M = 72.5$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ) exhibited the highest overall sexual adjustment, followed by same-age couples ( $M = 68.9$ ,  $SD = 6.2$ ), whereas large age-gap couples ( $M = 65.4$ ,  $SD = 7.1$ ) reported the lowest levels of sexual adjustment.

The findings reveal that couples with a small age gap (3–5 years) demonstrate significantly higher levels of sexual adjustment than both same-age and large age-gap couples. This pattern suggests that moderate age differences foster better compatibility, communication, and emotional balance, which in turn enhance sexual satisfaction and relational harmony.

Previous research supports this result, indicating that couples with small to moderate age differences tend to report higher relationship quality and sexual compatibility due to balanced maturity levels, shared values, and comparable energy and life perspectives (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2011; Watkins & Meredith, 2019). Moderate age differences may help partners complement each other's emotional and physical needs without the disparities often seen in large age-gap relationships. Conversely, large age-gap couples often face challenges stemming from differences in sexual drive, health, and social expectations, which can lead to lower sexual satisfaction and adjustment (Sprecher & Regan, 2002; Pollet et al., 2011). Similarly, same-age couples—though matched



in life stage and social context—might experience reduced sexual novelty or role flexibility, leading to moderate levels of adjustment (Mark et al., 2018).

These findings reinforce the idea that optimal age compatibility contributes positively to sexual understanding, emotional intimacy, and long-term satisfaction in marital or romantic relationships. A small but meaningful age difference appears to provide an equilibrium between similarity and complementarity, promoting greater sexual and relational well-being.

**Table No-04**  
**Summary and Results of Analysis of variance showing the age-gap couples and Marital Adjustment**

Group	M	SD	F	Sign
Same Age Couples	211.50	15.20	7.02	0.01
Small Age Gap Couples	220.70	14.30		
Large Age Gap Couples	197.20	16.40		

Table 4 presents the mean, standard deviation, F-value, and p-value for overall marital satisfaction among same-age couples (0–2 years), small age-gap couples (3–5 years), and large age-gap couples (6+ years). A one-way ANOVA revealed a highly significant main effect of age gap on overall marital satisfaction,  $F(2,117) = 7.02$ ,  $p = .002$ . Small age-gap couples ( $M = 220.70$ ,  $SD = 14.30$ ) reported the highest marital satisfaction, followed by same-age couples ( $M = 211.50$ ,  $SD = 15.20$ ), while large age-gap couples ( $M = 197.20$ ,  $SD = 16.40$ ) reported the lowest satisfaction levels. These findings suggest that the extent of age difference between partners plays a meaningful role in determining the quality of marital satisfaction. The results indicate that couples with a small age gap (3–5 years) experience greater marital satisfaction than both same-age and large age-gap couples. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that moderate age differences contribute positively to relational harmony and satisfaction due to better emotional maturity, communication compatibility, and role balance (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2020; Lee & Ono, 2012). In contrast, large age-gap couples tend to report lower marital satisfaction, potentially due to differences in life stages, values, and energy levels, which can affect communication, sexual compatibility, and shared interests (Watson & Stelle, 2011; Kim et al., 2021). Similarly, same-age couples may experience relational challenges such as competition or lack of role differentiation, leading to moderate satisfaction levels (Buss, 1989; South, 2020). These findings reinforce the notion that a small but meaningful age difference may foster better understanding, emotional regulation, and mutual respect within marital relationships, ultimately enhancing satisfaction and stability.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed a significant influence of age gap on various dimensions of marital adjustment among couples.

1. A significant effect of age gap was found on emotional communication, with small age-gap couples (3–5 years) exhibiting higher levels of emotional communication compared to same-age and large age-gap couples.
2. Conflict resolution was significantly better among small age-gap couples than among same-age and large age-gap couples, indicating greater maturity, patience, and understanding in managing disagreements.
3. The dimension of mutual understanding also showed significant variation across the groups, with small age-gap couples demonstrating stronger mutual understanding than both same-age and large age-gap couples.
4. A marginally significant difference was observed in expression of love and care, where small age-gap couples expressed affection and care more frequently than same-age or large age-gap couples.
5. There was a significant difference in emotional adjustment, as small age-gap couples displayed higher emotional stability and adaptability than the other two groups.
6. Social adjustment also varied significantly among the groups, with small age-gap couples showing better social harmony, cooperation, and shared responsibility than same-age and large age-gap couples.
7. The results further indicated a significant difference in sexual adjustment, with small age-gap couples reporting greater sexual compatibility and satisfaction compared to same-age and large age-gap couples.
8. In terms of overall marital satisfaction, small age-gap couples recorded the highest levels of satisfaction, followed by same-age couples, while large age-gap couples reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.
9. Across all measured dimensions—emotional, social, sexual, and overall marital adjustment—small age-gap couples consistently demonstrated superior adjustment and satisfaction compared to the other two groups.
10. Overall, the findings suggest that a moderate age difference of 3–5 years between partners contributes positively to emotional communication, understanding, adjustment, and overall marital satisfaction. In contrast, both very small (same-age) and large age gaps tend to be associated with increased relational challenges and lower marital harmony.

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