

# A Study on, Tolerance Role in Marital Satisfaction

**Hira Shahid, Warda Shahid**

<sup>1</sup>Student, Department of Psychology Hazara University Mansehra, Khyber Puktunkhwa Pakistan  
Email: [paracadrium@gmail.com](mailto:paracadrium@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Student, Department of Psychology Hazara University, Manserha, Khyber Puktunkhwa Pakistan  
E-mail: [wardamalik43@gmail.com](mailto:wardamalik43@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*Purpose of the present study was to investigate the role of tolerance in marital satisfaction. A positive relation between the two variables was hypothesized. The study sample consisted 200 spouses chosen through convenient sampling technique. The objective of the study is to measure the relationship between tolerance and marital satisfaction. Another objective of the study is to measure the level of tolerance with respect to gender differences. Tolerance for Disagreement Scale and ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale along with demographic sheet were administered to the spouses for data gathering. Alpha reliability coefficient for EMS was 0.779 and for TFDS was 0.726. The Pearson correlation coefficient showed that there was a significant positive correlation between tolerance and marital satisfaction. T-test analysis shown that gender differences were found amongst spouses in the context of tolerance. On the basis of results study recommends that different professionals including teachers, clinicians and counselors have to play their part in this regard to train couples how to develop tolerance in their marital relation.*

**Key Words:** Spouses, Marital Satisfaction and Tolerance.

## Introduction

Marriage is the most intimate and persistent of all close relationships for many people. In life marriage is the biggest decision. John J. Robinson in his book *Of Suchness* gives the following advice on love, sex and married life. "Be careful and discreet; it is much easier to get married than unmarried. If you have the right mate, it's heavenly; but if not, you live in a twenty-four-hour daily hell that clings constantly to you; it can be one of the bitterest things in life. Life is indeed strange" (cited by, Dhammananda, 2005). Marriage is a blessing but many people make it a curse due to lack of tolerance and understanding. Marriage relationship is an eternal bond that brings happiness and blessings for both partners (Alex, 2011).

## Marital Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a variable which is measured as an individual feature. With the position to what was stated, marital satisfaction is in fact an optimistic and fair approach which is overcome by the couple from the parts of a marital life. Marital satisfaction is one of the major features examined in unification with newly married couples. Marital satisfaction was defined as "an individual's subjective assessment of the

general nature of marriage” (Gelles, 1995) that reveals the individual’s level of expectations towards marriage (Bahr & Gelles, 1989).

Researchers of marital satisfaction experienced numerous difficulties, containing the subjective nature of its concept. According to Propene and Whitehead (1999) for many people in modern-day society marriage is no longer a social structure prevailing for the purpose of successful nurture of children (Smock, 2000). Now it’s seen more as an intimate relationship in which close friendship and sexual intimacy of couples are the most cherished dimensions. Satisfaction of partners and sexual regularity, as well as wife’s perception of her attractiveness had optimistic influence on marital satisfaction of both partners (Meltzer & McNulty, 2010). Dysfunctional and unsatisfying marital relations have absolutely negative effects on both partners and children (Amato, 2000; Booth & Amato, 2001; Perrone, Webb & Blalock, 2005) and reduce their life satisfaction (Salvatore & Sastre, 2001).

### **Gottman Theory of Marital Satisfaction**

Gottman’s (1999) scientifically validated theory of marriage, which is based on a long span of 25 years longitudinal research. As a result, it is proved to be one of leading theories on the study of marital satisfaction. Theory of Gottman (1999) tells that positive interaction and friendship is the key aspect of marital satisfaction and anticipates the marital stability with the passage of time.

The theoretical framework of this valuable study is not to foretell divorce but to anticipate marital stability and

especially, marital satisfaction. The ratio is 5:1 positive to negative interactions is essential for marital stability (Gottman, 1999). He defines marital stability as a satisfying marital relationship which is not interrupted by separation or divorce. He says that the most important finding was that more positive affect was only variable that predicted both marital stability and happiness.

In the theory of Gottman (1999), there is a process of “Sentiment override” in couples. He says that sentimental override can either be positive or negative. Negative sentiment override is meant that people have a chip on their shoulders. These type of partners are hyper vigilant who are looking for analysis by their partners. Positive sentiment override is meant that even negatively by the partner is taken positively as it provides information rather than as a personal attack. Positive sentimental override creates environment condition in which the partners are more tolerant and accommodation of each other whereas negative sentiment override creates perception that one’s better half will behave negatively.

Likewise, O’leary and Smith (1999) advert to this phenomenon as cognitive attributional correlates of marital satisfaction. These writers state that distress couples are less likely to construe positive behaviours objectively from their wives as positive and likelier to construe the intention of their wife’s statements more negatively than they were to be meant. As matched undistressed couples, disgruntled wives make aspirations that cast the behavior of their partners in a negative perspective and these aspirations in twist

influence marital satisfaction negatively (Bradbury and Finchan, 1990).

Satisfaction is behavioral variable so it is reflected as individual feature. Infact, marital satisfaction is a positive, pleasant and pleasing attitude which the couple owned as part of connubial life. In conclusion, it is to be mentioned that various under mentioned factors have been discovered to be efficacious for marital satisfaction such as marriage age, marriage duration, children, sexual issue, financial issue, educational stability, relatives and acquaintances, religious beliefs, personality traits, the ability to understand the partner, communication skills, spare time, and commitment (Winch & Spainer, 1974). Marriage and family researchers have always been in search for satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors for marriage. The researchers have been striving since long to find out the maladaptation factors in conflicting families. In recent past, researchers have focused on obvious inter and intrapersonal factors of communication of happy, pleased and satisfied life instead of insisting upon maladaptation variables. Preoccupied husbands would display more provocative engagement and less distancing affect (Bebcock, 2000) because of their intolerance of distance in relationships. Tolerance contributes when people are going through a rough period of their marital life.

### **Tolerance**

To tolerate or put up with differences is tolerance. Tolerance may also represent a “let’s agree to disagree” stance when it comes to controversial issues. It does not mean that one has to accept or embrace words, deeds or ideas that are against his

beliefs and values. Simply it means that on any matter one should agrees to pay respect and give values to his or her feelings. When opinions were expressed by both parties, and it is clear that no one like to change position, agreeing to disagree is often the most friendly and amiable outcome (Kalra, 2011).

Many people start learning two virtues i.e. tolerance and acceptance during teenage. These values when absorbed and imbibed in one’s character, greatly helps in passing through rough periods of married life (Kalra, 2011).

### **How to Practice Tolerance in Marriage**

Tolerance in a marriage is something that many people experience and learn when they get married (Markson, 2006).

Humor is the key to tolerance. When one can get married then there will be many situations when he do not understand his wife and become frustrated with her. It is not something to be worried about and it raises doubtful feelings which are entirely normal. When one can living in such a close sector with other person then this is something which is natural to happen. When such a situation occurs there are many ways to deal with it. One can tell his wife exactly how he is feeling but what he is feeling actually at that moment is anger which will pass quickly. When he experience anger due to frustration this is because he is not practicing enough patients in prevailing situations. One should not tolerate his wife but it is significant to remember that we all mistakes in some or the other way. If he do not practice this type of understanding then he is not in a right situation of marriage to be. When

something goes wrong in one's relationship or something unexpected happens, it is a situation when the exhibition of patience is needed. One should take advantage from such situations as opportunities and cope with them sagaciously (Markson, 2006).

Tolerance and patience are two assets that should be adept in a marriage life. It is not matter how much one can love his wife, the time always comes in life when patience and character may pass through test. Marriage is a relationship which needs a great deal of effort and compromise and marriage cannot work without the effort of both wife and husband (Markson, 2006).

Gentry (2010) states that in a marriage, no one should ever tolerate any of the following: violence, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse, infidelity. Karmayogi (n.d.) rendered ten level of harmony: opposition, conflict, domination, reaction, judgment, compromise, tolerance, appreciation, freedom, and complementarity. He said about that disagreements are mild and rare and never soften the strong bond of positive feelings between couples. Partners may not always amply agree or praise each other but they have learned to accept and become tolerant of their differences.

Nickerson (2011) says that complaining is the easiest thing in the world... tolerance and creativity to solve a problem is something worth talking about. However, it should not dampen the essence and the solid tie of positivity you share. Mates may not always explain each other but the quicker they learn to admit and become tolerant of their differences, the smoother their marriage life becomes (Kalra, 2011).

Maccrosky and Richmond (1992) individual can tolerate before he or she understands the existence of conflict in a relationship. Simple definition of tolerance is "one's capacity for or the patience of knowing and respecting the beliefs of others, and the ability to tolerate hardship and pain". In associating with the relationship of couples tolerance is always a factor that continuously affects the couples. It is not said much about the word itself because it implies a negative impression. The other reason is that most of the time tolerance is misconceived as a sacrifice for a relationship to work. However, these small sacrifices can most of the time results in break ups because the tolerance level of a person has already touched its limits (Choacharles, 2009).

It is significant for twosome to take notice that each one has the responsibility to recognize how your partner feels towards your habits, gestures and acts because it is one the most important aspect for relationship to last. Twosome must get rid of thoughts and thinking the idea "if he or she cannot accept who I am, it means that we are not destined to exist with each other.

Relationships have joys as well as responsibilities on your end of partnership you must always be happy and responsible about the things that are happening inside your relationship. If only both of the parties in a relationship would think this way then issue of tolerance would always be resolved which results to a relationship that it would last a lifetime (Choacharles, 2000). Marriage is not for babies; marriage is discipline; it is a responsibility that demands sacrifice,

tolerance, fortitude, determination and assurance (Duru, 2013).

### Literature Review

Amato, Johson, and Rogers (2003) depicted marital quality as a multi-dimensional construction rather than the subjective rating of a spouse as a level of satisfaction with in a marriage. They separated marital quality into three different dimensions such as: reports of spouse happiness within the marriage, frequency of shared time together and thoughts or actions which may lead to divorce.

For observing the relationship between marital characteristics, marital interaction processes, and marital satisfaction two hundred and one participants were taken. To see the effect on marital satisfaction in their first marriage took numerous inventories measuring marital characteristics and processes. Six processes were seen to be significant when facilitated by three latent factors (love, loyalty, and shared values) and two moderating variables (length of marriage and gender) (Author unknown, 2004).

The development of research based on cross sectional and longitudinal findings points out that after a decrease in marital satisfaction in midlife marriages become progressively positive as the partners move into old age (Brubaker, Guilford & Bengston, 1979, Levenson et al., 1993).

Illig's examination assessed or controlled for marital satisfaction. Given the actual possibility that couples differed in marital satisfaction in their age groups, whether the reported findings were characteristic of different age groups, of happy or unhappy

marriages, or of both is impossible to know (Illig's as cited in Carstensen et al., (1995).

Happy couples having marital stability and satisfaction were more probable to utilize listening skills, agree, approve, assent, use laughter and humor (Fisher, Giblin, & Hoopes, 1982; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1991). Individuals who get marry during at least in to their 20s are anticipated to enjoy greater marital satisfaction and marital stability (Tzeng, 1992).

Acitelli (1992) conducted interviews with almost forty two couples and discovered that spouses talked more about their relationships as compared to their husbands. Marital satisfaction of wives was positively related with the degree of husband relationship talk during the interviews. Marital satisfaction of husbands are associated to the relationship of wife so the findings suggest that gender role of norms and relationship prospects are dissimilar for spouses and for husbands and it leads to subsequent dissimilarities in marital quality. Research of Clements and Swensen (2000) point out that as compared to women, men report higher levels of marital satisfaction.

The effect of the continuance of marriage on marital satisfaction has not been confirmed but some research points out that marital satisfaction decreases over the first ten to twenty years of marriage and the step up again in late adulthood and retirement (Steinmetz, Clavan, & Stein, 1990).

Nonetheless, a well-documented fact about marriage is that marital relationships have a strong inclination to decline in satisfaction over the first twenty years of the marriage. The most

newly married couples state very high satisfaction and any change from that point would likely to be in a down direction (Broderick, 1988).

A longitudinal study launched by Houston et al., (1986) figured out a significant diminution in reported marital satisfaction during the first year of marriage and a study by Glenn (1989) examined that marital satisfaction as pointed by the percentage of people who arrogate their marriages are very happy declines constantly for at least the first ten years and perhaps for twenty years or longer (Glenn, 1990). The level of marital satisfaction does not remain invariant throughout long term marriages (Amato, Johson, & Rogers, 2003).

Heaton and Blake (1999) intimated that spouses were more concentrated are yielded greater importance to relationship so their views on marital satisfaction are more accurate and concise.

Attitudes, values and the age of people to get married are also the indicators of marital satisfaction (Amato, Johnson & Rogers, 2003; Smock, 2004). Marital satisfaction is also linked with environmental factors such as: employment, finances, illness and a network of couple support (Sokolski & Hendrick, 1999).

The consequence of marital unhappiness of parents can impact the life of trajectory of their children negatively. The time and sequence of transitional events of life has a significant effect on the quality of intimate relationships and betterment of persons (Amato & Booth, 2001; Wolfinger, 2003).

The most cardinal internal variables which affect marital

satisfaction are conflict perseverance skills and developing and maintaining close and warm relationship within a marriage. In order to maintain high levels of satisfaction both conflict perseverance and intimacy within a relationship is needed (Houston, 2000). Conflict perseverance skills have been described as essential requirement for maintaining high levels of marital satisfaction because the manner in which relationship problems are settled one of the most authentic and dependable sings of relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2004).

Marital satisfaction is closely related to marital adjustment, marital happiness and effecting marital stability, marital satisfaction thus becomes a subjective reality. If there is no marital satisfaction then it can lead to tattered relations, tethered understanding. Shattered dreams and withered and ruined lives (Khetarpal, 2010).

Tolerance in a marriage is something which most of people long to experience and learn when they get married to their spouse. Tolerance does not mean that you have to put endure with your spouse, it means that time often when you need to be patient and not to choose argue when it is not essential (Markson, 2006).

The assumed similarity of interpersonal dimensions shows that females in the high couple adjustment group were better able to anticipate the awfulizing of wives, low frustration of tolerance and self-worth beliefs as compared to females of low adjustment group (Moller & Merwe, 1997).

Generally, men are considered as the pillar of the family so they care more about the external assets such as wealth

and power. Men also inclined to be more sociable and responsive but less flexible or tolerant than wives. Husbands and wives did not show important difference in their satisfaction in either sample (Luo et al., 2008).

Tolerance can pay a lot when people seafaring through a rough period of their life. pastors of 295 selected by Robert (1983), Seventh-day Adventist churches in the United States and Canada, outcomes revealed that more than two thirds of the pastors are fairly unrelated from their wives, yet more than three fourths are on higher degree in marital adjustment revealing an scarce flexibility, tolerance, and ability to adapt.

Tolerance, adaptability and flexibility, it is recognized by couples in successful marriages that people are different in the way think and behave their habits, values, attributes and the way they do various things. It is also recognized by them that life is not static, conditions, situations and circumstances alter and are eager to modify to these changes. A measure of emotional maturity is required by this (Ross 2009).

Tolerance plays a very effective role in peace and compatibility of life. A factor with such an effect on its solidity and presence is difficult to find (Hoseinzade as cited in Jazy (2011).

When someone can cultivate the aptitude or have a talent to tolerate when his partners departs from what he hoped, he will be able to lessen the amount of time he feel anger and detached from his spouse (Watson, 2010).

Some skills like mystification, anchoring, forgiveness, exemptions, quid pro quo, blaming, second-order change, joking, contrary behavior, conflict

organization are achieved by tolerance and emphases on contrary role play and strength points (Hoseinzade as cited in Jazy (2011).

Communication with spouse, pay attention to the reason why partner stresses on acting in a certain fashion. One will be able to accept partner's behavior betterly when one can understand the underlying apprehension that initiates a certain behavior in his partner and show tolerance for those things that are not satisfactory (Sawant, 2013).

Jazy (2012) investigated that training tolerance through Islamic approach increases marital intimacy ( $p < 0.01$ ). Religious element plays a strong role in marital satisfaction; according to verses of Holy Quran tolerance has a strong role in marital satisfaction. As the spouses in the present study were Muslims and tolerance is derived from religion, and it may help them to tolerate everything in marital conflict, leave everything to Allah and be contented in life and marital relationship.

Couple relations and life hitches need high tolerance. It is narrated by Holy Prophet (peace be upon him): a man who tolerates his wife's bad behavior and ignores it for the sake of Allah Almighty will be salaried as gratified (HorrAmeli as cited in Jazy (2011).

In marital relationship tolerance is another important aspect that is ignored mostly. It's a magical factor, it can be helpful to enjoy little moments of happiness in a successful marital life and also helps to strengthen marital relationship. It is a fast world of to tolerate each other's minute mistakes

which in turn generate bigger hitches in their relationship (Alex, 2011).

Following are vital branches to be perceived and adept by all people in marriage patience, tolerance and understanding (Dhammananda, 2005).

At the start of married life and marriage relationship, it is possible that one may find it bit difficult to handle with each other's plus and minus points, however with the passage of time things get better and settles down in marital relationships, only if one can accept his/her partner's minus points with tolerance (Alex, 2011).

## Methodology

### Objectives

The objectives of the study were as following:

1. To measure the level of tolerance among the spouses.
2. To find out the relationship between tolerance and marital satisfaction.

### Hypotheses

1. Tolerance is positively correlated with marital satisfaction.
2. There is difference between male and female spouses on tolerance.

### Sample

The study sample consisted of 200 participants. Sample of 200 spouses (Husbands =100, Wives =100) were selected through convenient sampling technique. These spouses were selected from different areas including rural and urban of Khyber Phaktunkhwa. The age

range of the participants was from 20 years to 50 years and their marital duration is from one year to thirty years. Sample contains both professional and non-professional couples which were from joint and nuclear family.

### Instrument

**Tolerance for Disagreement Scale (TFDS)** Teven and McCroskey (1998) developed the TFDS comprised 20 items and for future researches they recommended items 5, 8, 13, 16 and 20 to be deleted. It is revised form of the original tolerance for disagreement scale developed by Knutson, McCroskey, Kuntson, and Hunt (1979) in which respondent rated on a seven-point, likert type scale. In this revised form respondent rated on five-point scale, including 1 as strongly disagree, 2 as disagree, 3 as undecided, 4 as agree, 5 as strongly agree. The coefficient alpha reliability is (0.90). The same scale was adopted for this study with 15 items. The reliability was found and result indicated that Alpha Reliability of the TFDS scale with present sample is 0.726.

**ENRICH Marital Satisfaction (EMS)** Scale established by Olson and Fowers (1993) scale contains 15 items. Participants respond to each item using a 5-point scale, containing 1 as "strongly disagree," 2 as "disagree," 3 as "undecided," 4 as "agree," and 5 as "strongly agree". The negative and positive scores of items are shown through negative and positive signs on the left of each item. Test-retest reliability of scale is (0.86). Same scale was implemented in this study. The reliability was found and result showed

that Alpha Reliability of the scale with present sample is 0.779.

**Procedure**

The sample of the study was taken from the different areas of Khyber Phaktunkhwa. For data collection sample were approached personally and questionnaires were handover them. Instructions were given to the sample and asked them before any response go through the instructions first and fill up the questionnaires without leaving any statement as per his/her own feelings. They were assured that information provided by them only be used for research purpose. Participants were fully cooperated.

**Results**

The Study is on the role of tolerance in marital satisfaction. Alpha reliability of the scales was determined to check the internal consistency of the scores. SPSS-16 was used for analysis.

**Table 1**

Alpha Reliability coefficient of EMS and TFDS (N=200)

Scale	N	Items	M	SD	Reliability
EMS	200	15	55.43	7.98	.779
TFDS	200	15	49.81	6.21	.726

Note. EMS = ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale; TFDS = Tolerance of Disagreement Scale.

The results in table 1 clearly exhibit that calculated reliability of ENRICH Marital Satisfaction (EMS) Scale and Tolerance for Disagreement (TFDS) is 0.779 and 0.726 respectively which shows that all scales are reliable to measure marital satisfaction and tolerance of spouses.

**Table 2**

Correlation between Tolerance and Marital Satisfaction (N = 200)

Measures	1	2	M	SD
1. T	-	0.24**	49.81	6.21
2. MS	0.24**	-	55.42	7.98

Note. T = Tolerance; MS = Marital Satisfaction.

df= 198, \*\*p<.01

Table 3 shows that there is positive correlation between tolerance and marital satisfaction of spouses (r = 0.24\*\*, p < 0.01). The findings confirm the hypothesis stating that there is a positive correlation between tolerance and marital satisfaction of spouses.

**Table 3**

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-scores of Tolerance of male and female (N=200)

Scale	Female (n=100)		Male (n=100)		T	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
T	49.62	6.34	46.80	6.01	2.06	.001

Note. SSEIT = Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test.

df= 198, \*\*p<.01

The results of table 3 show that there is a significant difference in a level of tolerance between male and female spouses, result indicating that female spouses scored significantly higher as compared to the male spouses.

**Discussion**

The current study was based on two objectives; to measure the level of tolerance among the spouses and to find out the relationship between tolerance and marital satisfaction. Sample of 200 spouses were used for this study. Study findings show that tolerance is positively correlated with marital satisfaction and has gender differences in this respect.

It was hypothesized in the study that there is a high correlation between tolerance and marital satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported as ( $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Previous researches have supported that tolerance can contribute a lot when people sailing through a rough period of their life. Robert (1983) discoveries exposed that more than two thirds of the pastors are pretty disparate from their wives, however more than three fourths level high on marital adjustment illuminating an infrequent flexibility, tolerance, and capability to familiarize.

Support also comes from the study of Watson (2010) according to the study one can cultivate the capability to tolerate when his partner diverges from what he anticipated, he'll be able to decrease the quantity of time he texture angry and aloof from his spouse. Ross (2009) recognized that adaptability, flexibility and tolerance - Spouses in fruitful marriages identify that people diverge in the way they think and their approaches, morals, behaviors and ways of doing things.

Support comes from the work of Sawant (2013) according to him one will be capable to admit spouse's behavior betterly when one can understand the underlying apprehension that initiates a certain behavior in his partner and show tolerance for those things that are not satisfactory. The results supported by Alex (2011) pointed out that marital relationship tolerance is another important aspect that is ignored mostly. It's a magical factor, it can be helpful to enjoy little moments of happiness in a successful marital life and also helps to strengthen marital relationship. It is a fast world of evolution, changes and

because of load of heavy work and busy agendas, partner ignored to tolerate each other's minute mistakes which in turn generate bigger hitches in their relationship. At the start of married life and marriage relationship, it is possible that one may find it bit difficult to handle with each other's plus and minus points, however with the passage of time things get better and settles down in marital relationships, only if one can accept his/her partner's minus points with tolerance (Alex, 2011). Jazy (2012) investigated that training tolerance through Islamic approach increases marital intimacy ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Religious element plays a strong role in marital satisfaction; according to verses of Holy Quran tolerance has a strong role in marital satisfaction. As the spouses in the present study were Muslims and tolerance is derived from religion, and it may help them to tolerate everything in marital conflict, leave everything to Allah and be contented in life and marital relationship.

In the second hypothesis of the study it was assumed that there is significant difference between male and female spouses on tolerance. The t-test was figured to find out the significance of difference between male and female on tolerance. The result shows that females scored higher than males ( $t = 2.06$ ,  $**p < .01$ ), female spouses scored significantly higher as compared to the male spouses due to significant difference with mean scores of female spouses ( $M = 49.62$ ;  $SD = 6.34$ ) and male spouses ( $M = 46.80$ ,  $SD = 6.01$ ).

The findings of present study is also related to the study of Luo et al. (2008) they found that men also inclined to be more sociable and responsive but

less flexible and tolerant than wives. The result supported by Ondicho (2013) women show high level of tolerance in their marital relationship to accept any amount of mistreatment to shelter their selves from any type of stigma and harm.

Support also comes from the work of Admin (2011) he stated tolerance is respect, acceptance and obligation of the rich variety of our world's cultures, he explain marital relation with the example of butterfly and gray bird where she valued all the decisions of gray. In conclusion, to learn tolerance as the most vital aspect in any relation especially in marriage.

**Recomendation**

1. It is recommended that special training workshops be held.
2. Counseling services be expanded by making counseling centers. Couples should be taught skills to increase their expression of tolerance.
3. Those researches which have been done on tolerance are very few and limited. So, more work has to be done in this area.

**Conclusion**

The present study was conducted to explore the relationship between tolerance and marital satisfaction. It is concluded that, there is a positive correlation between tolerance and marital satisfaction. It is also concluded that there is difference between male and female spouses on tolerance; wives are more tolerated in their marital lives as compared to husbands.

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