Social support associated with marriage decision and its relationship to marital adjustment among married women in Sultanate of Oman

Ahmad MJ O Alfawair¹, Ali Hamaidia², and ASMA SAIF SALIM AL FUDHAILI¹

¹University of Nizwa
²University of Setif 2

Abstract

The theoretical importance lies in the significance of the studied topic and the sample used. This research has not been extensively studied in many Arab environments, especially in the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, it will provide a coherent theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the relationship between the study variables and provide an analytical view of the reality of problems resulting from poor marital decision-making and its relationship to marital adjustment. Furthermore, this research provides an educational and scientific benefit by adding new literature and theoretical information related to its variables, collecting this information, and making it available to researchers and interested parties. Despite the numerous studies in the Arab world in the field of social support and marital adjustment, the field of social support related to the decision-making of marriage is still limited in the local community due to the lack of research, except for rare cases (to the best knowledge of the researchers).

Introduction

Marriage is considered the most important social system because it is the system that brings together men and women and upon which rights and duties are built. It also gives the relationship between the two parties a strong moral sanctity. It is a human system that satisfies needs and achieves reproduction, and emotional participation between the couple is strengthened to preserve the gender and ensure the continuity of humanity. Values, principles, and ethics are adopted and strengthened by it, and it gives individuals a sense of stability and belonging.

Marriage, in fact, is a decision-making process that can leave a person confused as they ask themselves what criteria they should use to choose a life partner and what factors they should consider in making this choice (Al-Sa’ati, 1981).

Therefore, making the right choice of a life partner is the cornerstone for a successful marriage that is free of problems and obstacles that hinder marital life and progress (Wesos, 2017). It contributes to the success
or failure of the nature of the marriage, as well as the psychological health and psychological compatibility of both partners (Al-Qaisi, 2015).

Marital choice is a social behavior that is not only determined by individual desires but also by societal criteria (Salama, 2018). Relevant literature on the topic of marriage confirms that the decision to marry is a family decision, and several parties outside the family may participate in making it, although sometimes the individual is given the freedom to choose (Kradsha and Al-Madilwi, 2019).

Regardless of the method of choosing a partner, whether it is through family or personal choice, the individual is faced with two possibilities. Either the individual chooses a life partner who meets their needs and psychological, intellectual, and social makeup, and who is compatible with the personality and needs of the other party. In this case, their marriage will be happy and comfortable, in addition to supporting their psychological health and ability to face the challenges of life and fulfill the requirements of married and family life. On the other hand, they may fail in this, and their poor choice may be the main cause of divorce or family breakdown (Kahila and Saada, 2016).

Social support also affects decision-making. The support provided to individuals through their interactions in social relationships and groups they belong to plays a crucial role in decision-making. Liberman suggests that "social support is a more limited concept than the concept of social network. Social support is estimated by people's understanding of their social networks, which includes individuals they trust and rely on in their relationships" (Zahouq, 2013, p. 3).

A study by Ali (2001) emphasized the importance of social and emotional support from the family in making marital choices, in order for the marriage to succeed, continue, and lead to marital harmony and satisfaction. According to Al-Khuli (2011, p.190), marital harmony is "the relative liberation from conflict, and agreement between the spouses on the basic issues related to their life together and participation in joint activities and emotional exchange." Hamel (1997) also emphasizes the importance of social and emotional support that families provide to their children through their marital choices and their contribution to predicting marital harmony. Marital harmony is the ability of both spouses to live with each other and with the requirements of marriage, and it can be identified through their methods of achieving their goals in marriage, facing marital problems, expressing their emotions and feelings, and satisfying their needs through interacting with each other (Morsi, 1999).

From the perspective of researchers, social support related to making marital decisions is essential and an important pillar for building a successful marriage and a cohesive family. Especially since our religion always guides us to the best ways when we are confused about any matter in our lives, including the saying: "Seek counsel from Allah and consult with His servants." This is why the prayer of Istikhara (Guidance prayer) was recommended. It is well-known that Islamic life is filled with consultation and shura in the simplest activities of life, let alone building the most important institution in society, which is the family. Social support in making marital decisions is one of the most important rights of those who are about to get married, especially within the family and friends’ circle. Therefore, researchers see that contributing to highlighting this issue is a strong motivation for conducting this study.

Social support is an integrated and comprehensive process, and every individual in society needs it at all stages of their life, as it plays an important role in their mental and physical health. It can provide protection, restore and enhance self-confidence, enable satisfaction with oneself and with life. Naturally, social support related to making marital decisions is one of the most important types of social support that children need when making a decisive decision such as marriage. Despite the many social changes that Arab societies are undergoing and many children gaining a lot of independence in their personal choices and future directions, many families still insist on intervening in their children’s most important life decisions, such as choosing a life partner, based on family principles that set conditions. The consequences of these decisions can be carried by children throughout their lives and can have devastating effects on them and their children, forgetting that for marital harmony to be achieved, it must be built on mental and emotional foundations that contribute to its continuity. The freedom to choose in marriage is an effective means of achieving marital harmony, and
parents are not required to do more than provide support, guidance, and direction to their children to help them make the right decision about marriage.

Marriage is one of the most important social systems and has the strongest impact on the life of the individual and society. It is the legitimate link between genders, and it is the only way to ensure the health and safety of social conditions and the survival of the human race. It elevates relations between men and women to a level of legitimacy and determines those relationships in a manner that is compatible with human values. Through marriage, families are formed, which are the basic unit in all societies. Many scientific studies confirm that choosing a life partner is the first and most influential step in the efficiency of family formation, which in turn affects the efficiency of society. Therefore, this choice is the main social influencer in society (Al-Balhan, 2008).

Indeed, choosing a life partner is the first stage of marriage after considering it, and it is an important step in building the foundations of a healthy marital life. It is the litmus test of the success or failure of marriage and its compatibility. The process of marital choice consists of three sub-processes: thinking about marriage, searching for a suitable partner, and making the decision to propose or accept the proposal (Wanugi, 2014).

In most cases, choosing a life partner is not a random process, but involves a set of procedures that are related to the culture of the society and are influenced by personal vision and social standards. This applies to both males and females when they declare their acceptance or rejection of the other person. The methods of marital choice vary according to the culture of each society. In some societies, the family acts as an agent for marriage, where the spouse is chosen for the children without consulting them, such as in Bedouin, rural, and traditional societies. In other societies, the individual makes the decision of choosing a partner without consulting their family, such as in urban societies (Al-Sayed, 2015, p.23).

Indeed, social support also influences the decision-making process. The support provided to the individual through their social relationships and groups they belong to plays an important role in decision-making. Liberman points out that "social support is a much narrower concept than the concept of social networks, where social support in its estimation depends on individuals’ knowledge of their social networks as frames that include those individuals whom they trust and rely on their relationships" (Zahouq, 2013, p.3).

Sharon Brehm and Saul Kassin emphasize the importance of the diversity of social support patterns (family and friends) in the process of making the decision to marry for both genders. This is to ensure that a good choice is made for a life partner based on compatibility in social and educational levels. Olson also stresses that successful marriage requires social support from the family in making the right decision in choosing a life partner, free of conflicts between spouses, characterized by stability and continuity, defining roles for each of them, satisfying needs, bringing goals and expectations closer together (Ali, 2001).

Indeed, the results of Kauthar Ibrahim Rizk’s study in 1989 showed a relation between making a good choice for a life partner and the involvement of these female students’ families in the decision-making process (Ali, 2005).

The Omani society is considered to be of the conservative Eastern societies, characterized by its traditional structures and conservative social structures that support the marriage system, especially for females who are often viewed as elements that do not guarantee the continuity of the family name and the preservation of its properties. Their continued singleness is seen as a losing investment. The social specificity, cultural heritage, and prevailing values of the Omani society seem to have played a major role in reinforcing traditional marriage patterns and their continued prevalence. However, the nature of social, economic, and cultural transformations that have affected the society and their speed have contributed to the increase in the emergence of the Omani family as a specialized social and functional unit, which has had a decisive impact on the situations, roles, and status of its members. This has increased their financial independence, liberated them from many aspects of traditional control and the domination of social traditions and their authority, which has had a significant impact on their attitudes towards prevailing traditional marriage patterns in society (Al-Karadsha and Al-Madhlowi, 2019, p.22). Therefore, these changes that have occurred in the Omani family have provided them with a greater contribution to decision-making within the family, such
as decisions related to marriage patterns and forms, where the traditional process of marriage selection is no longer used, which involves the intervention of multiple parties from parents, relatives, or acquaintances. Instead, it has become automatic and relies on self-motivations that highlight the functions of free choice and selection, which are classified as modern attitudes and responses that have begun to emerge in the attitudes and tendencies of individuals towards all the characteristics of the prevailing marriage patterns and considerations in society (Al-Karadsha and Al-Madhlowi, 2019).

**Study Problem**

The decision to choose a spouse is considered one of the most important and dangerous decisions in the lives of young men and women, due to the great difficulty that some people perceive in making it. Some people see it as the cornerstone of a successful or unsuccessful marital life in the future. This is because the reasons for choosing a spouse are many and complex and may vary from person to person and from one society to another. These reasons may include legal, religious, age-related, class-related, and mood-related factors (Ali, 2005).

The results of many previous studies have indicated that marital incompatibility and subsequent divorce are primarily due to the failure of the spouses to make appropriate partner choices before marriage (AbdulSattar, 2015). Looking at the reality of divorce in the Sultanate of Oman according to the statistics of marriage and divorce in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries for the year 2016, we note that there has been an increase in the number of registered divorce cases in Oman. In 2016, the divorce rate was (3,736) cases, a relative increase of about (36%) compared to 2010, when there were (2,736) cases of divorce. This means that there is an average of ten divorce cases happening in Oman every day, according to statistics from 2016, compared to only seven cases in 2010 (National Center for Statistics and Information, 2019).

Al-Khar’aan (2011) notes that the high divorce rates in their early stages confirm the need for providing counseling and guidance services for new families, whether before or after formation. The need for such services has increased in the present time due to changes in social conditions. Social support was more available in the past, while privacy has become the predominant characteristic now, without sources of social support. Leavy (1983) pointed out that social support may vary according to the life stage that the individual is going through. In childhood, support comes from the family (mother, father, and siblings), while in adolescence, it comes from groups of friends and family. In adulthood, social support is represented by the partner in addition to work relationships and children (Makhaimer, 1997).

Ali’s study (2001) confirmed the importance of social support from the family in making the right decision for marriage and participating in partner selection to achieve marital adjustment.

The results of the study by Beach and Tesser (1993) showed a correlational relationship between family-supported marriage decisions and marital adjustment and satisfaction.

Archer and Liroyed (1982) also confirmed that marital happiness and compatibility are closely related to making good partner choices through social and emotional support from the family (Ali, 2005).

Indeed, the results of Al-Khar’aan’s study (2011) showed a statistically significant positive correlation between marital satisfaction and social support. The study also found that marital satisfaction can be predicted based on sources of social support, such as family, friends, and the spouse.

The results of Al-Kholi’s study (2005) revealed a positive relationship between social support and the dimensions of marital adjustment, including marital choice, emotional maturity, family and social relationships, and sexual compatibility.

The results of Machey and Brien’s study (1995) showed that the compatibility of husbands and wives in the early years of marriage stems from the social and emotional support provided by parents in making a positive decision for marriage and choosing a good life partner with equality in social and age levels (Ali, 2005).
The results of Lauer et al.’s study (1990) showed that the variables that couples identified as important for their marriage were marrying someone they love and enjoy being with, commitment, good humor, consensus on different issues such as goals and purposes in life, friends, good partner choice with family involvement, and social and emotional support from family.

Moreover, Pierce et al.’s study (1991) revealed a correlational relationship between marital satisfaction and compatibility resulting from the availability of social and emotional support from their families (Ali, 2001).

Researchers clearly emphasize the importance of providing social support related to the decision to get married from family and friends for those approaching marriage. The importance of choosing a good life partner is the first and most important pillar for building a successful marriage and an effective family in society.

From the above, it is evident that previous Western studies have agreed on the importance of the social support received by married women in making the decision to get married in raising the level of marital adjustment. However, through a review of Arab and local studies in the field of marital relationships, there have been no studies that have addressed the social support related to the decision to get married and its relationship with marital adjustment, except for one study by Ali (2001).

Feeling the necessity of this topic and its importance in providing a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of social support related to the decision to get married and its associated variables, the current study addressed the social support related to the decision to get married and its relationship with marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate in light of some variables by answering the main question: What is the relationship between social support related to the decision to get married and marital adjustment among a sample of married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate?

**Study Questions**

1. What is the level of social support related to the decision to get married among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate?
2. What is the level of marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate?
3. Is there a correlational relationship between social support related to the decision to get married and marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate?

**Study Aims**

1. Define the level of social support related to the decision to get married among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate.
2. Determine the level of marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate.
3. Identify the correlational nature between social support related to the decision to get married and marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate.

**Study Importance**

**Firstly: Theoretical Importance**

The theoretical importance lies in the significance of the studied topic and the sample used. This research has not been extensively studied in many Arab environments, especially in the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, it will provide a coherent theoretical framework for understanding the nature of the relationship between the study variables and provide an analytical view of the reality of problems resulting from poor marital decision-making and its relationship to marital adjustment. Furthermore, this research provides an educational and scientific benefit by adding new literature and theoretical information related to its variables, collecting this information, and making it available to researchers and interested parties. Despite the numerous studies in the Arab world in the field of social support and marital adjustment, the field of social support related to the decision-making of marriage is still limited in the local community due to the lack of research, except for rare cases (to the best knowledge of the researchers).
Secondly: Practical Importance

The practical importance of this study lies in the fact that its results and recommendations can provide practical insight into the process of social support related to the decision to get married and its relationship with marital adjustment in the context of contemporary social changes. This can help families raise awareness among their daughters about the importance of making the right choice for marriage and providing social support to their children who are about to make a critical and important decision such as marriage. In addition, the results of this research can be beneficial to experts in the field of marriage counseling in developing counseling programs and courses to achieve marital adjustment and guide those who are about to get married on the importance of making rational and objective choices that consider individual behavior and preferences, as well as preserving the values, customs, and traditions of society. Furthermore, the study can provide tools for measuring psychometric characteristics that are applicable in the Omani environment.

Study Terminology

Social support Associated with the Marriage Decision

According to Ali (2001), social support related to marital decision-making is defined as “positive and effective participation of the family in their children’s decision-making process for marriage and choosing the right partner to achieve marital adjustment” (p.79).

The social support associated with the marriage decision is theoretically defined as:

The wife’s feeling of the extent of the availability of effective social support, provided by family and friends in all its moral and informational forms, during her marital decision-making process, which makes her feel competent and satisfied and helps her achieve marital adjustment.

Operationally, it can be defined as the degree to which married women respond to the items of the social support scale related to marital decision-making.

Marital Adjustment

Lock and Wallace (1959) were among the first scholars to define marital adjustment. According to their definition, marital adjustment is “the adoption by both the husband and wife of the idea of sharing with each other and accepting the basic values in their common living and relationship.”

It is defined as “success in choosing the appropriate spouse, continuing in marital life, entering into it, mutual love between spouses, sexual satisfaction, bearing the responsibilities of married life, ability to solve problems, marital stability, marital satisfaction and happiness.” Marital adjustment depends on the couples’ ability to deal with the social, material, and health problems they may face, and to work towards achieving harmony and mutual love. (Desouki, 1986, p. 26)

Theoretically, marital adjustment is defined as one of the fundamental components and important pillars that fulfill the psychological and social needs of both spouses, bringing them closer in terms of goals, expectations, and values, and supporting the factors of a successful marriage, leading to the continuity of marital life.

Operationally, it can be defined as the degree to which married women respond to the items of the marital adjustment scale.

Previous studies

In 2017, Al-Rawahi conducted a study on the problems faced by married female master’s students at the University of Nizwa, and its relationship to social support and psychological health of a sample of married master’s students at the university. The study sample consisted of 105 female students, and the researcher used her own scale to measure the problems faced by the married Master’s students, the Social Support Scale by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988) translated by the researcher, as well as the Psychological Health Scale by Ahmed Abdelkhalik (2011).
The results showed a moderate level of problems faced by the students, with low frequency, and a high level of social support and psychological health. The study also revealed multiple correlational relationships between study variables, with no statistically significant differences between the problems faced by the students, social support, and psychological health based on variables such as the number of children, age, source of funding, spouse’s educational qualification, and years of marriage. The results also showed differences in the dimensions of the social support scale in terms of spousal and in-law support, in favor of total discharge. The study concluded that the social support scale explains 28% of the variation in the problems faced by the female students.

The aim of Al-Aajam’s (2013) study was to investigate the relationship between psychological immunity and social support among students at Diyala University. The researcher followed a descriptive-analytical approach, and the study sample consisted of 400 male and female students. The researcher used her own scales to measure psychological immunity and social support. The results showed that students enjoy social support, and there were statistically significant differences in the degree of social support between males and females, in favor of females. There were no statistically significant differences in the degree of social support between humanities and science majors.

Al-Khawli’s (2005) study aimed to explore the relationship between social support and marital adjustment in newly formed families, from a social work perspective. The researcher used a social survey method, and the study sample consisted of 20 married couples with children, aged between 22-43 years, from guidance and family counseling offices in Kafr El-Sheikh Governorate. The researcher used Rawya Hussein’s (1986) marital adjustment scale and the social support scale developed by Barrera and Ainiay. The results showed a positive relationship between social support and marital adjustment dimensions, including marital choice, emotional maturity, family compatibility and social relationships, and sexual compatibility. The study also found that the relationship between emotional support and marital adjustment is based on personal relationships to help couples understand each other based on cohabitation.

The aim of Ali’s (1997) study was to investigate the relationship between social support and coping with stressful life events as perceived by married working women. The study sample consisted of two groups: the experimental group, which included 50 married women who were supported by social support from family and work community, and the control group, which included 50 married working women who were not supported by social support from family or work community. The women’s ages ranged from 30-45 years. The study used the social support scale developed by Sarason et al. (1983), which was translated into Arabic by Mohamed Mahrous El-Shenawy and Sami Mahmoud Abubieh, as well as the coping strategies and illness checklist. The results showed statistically significant differences between the two groups in coping strategies for stressful life events and the incidence of psychological disorders. There were also statistically significant differences between married working women with high social support and those with low social support in the following dimensions: working through the event, looking at other attitudes and activities, social relationships, and self-efficacy development, in favor of the group with high social support.

The study conducted by El-Shenawy and Abdulrahman (1994) aimed to evaluate the contribution of some variables to the adjustment of university students to their academic life. The variables included extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, social approval, social support quantity, social support satisfaction, self-esteem, and four dimensions of adjustment: academic adjustment, social adjustment, emotional adjustment, and university adjustment. The study included 115 male and female students from different departments and levels at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University. The study used the Eisenbek personality questionnaire, the social support scale developed by El-Shenawy and Abu Bieh, the university adjustment scale developed by El-Shenawy and Badari, and the Coppers Smith self-esteem scale translated by El-Damati and El-Shenawy. The results showed a positive statistically significant relationship between social support and social adjustment. There was also a positive significant relationship between social support and extraversion. Individuals with high levels of social support had a high degree of self-esteem, and those with high levels of extraversion had many people providing them with support. The results also showed that as scores on the psychoticism dimension increased, social support quantity and satisfaction also increased.
The study conducted by Beach and Tesser (1993) titled "Marital decision making and its relation to marital adjustment: Self-evaluation" aimed to investigate the relationship between marital decision-making, family support, and marital satisfaction and compatibility. The sample consisted of 90 married couples from Georgia. The results showed a significant relationship between family supported marital decision-making and marital satisfaction and compatibility. The study found that individuals who received family support in making their decision to get married had higher levels of marital satisfaction and compatibility.

The study conducted by Arrar and Abdullah (2021) aimed to assess the level of marital adjustment among married and separated individuals in Jerusalem and Hebron in Palestine. The sample consisted of 293 couples, and the results showed that the overall level of marital adjustment was moderate. The study found that the variables that most significantly predicted marital adjustment were number of marriages, educational level of the spouse, and home ownership. The results also showed statistically significant differences in marital adjustment based on the city (Jerusalem, Hebron), marital status (married, divorced), home ownership, number of marriages, educational level, and nature of work, but no significant differences were found based on gender, method of choosing a life partner, or income level.

The study by Al-Maqbalia (2020) aimed to investigate the relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital adjustment among a sample of married individuals in the Al-Buraimi governorate in Oman. The sample consisted of 540 couples, and the researcher used Arnout’s (2013) scale of conflict resolution styles and Hendrick’s (1988) scale of marital adjustment. The results showed that the integration style was the most used style among the sample, followed by compromise, commitment, avoidance, and control. The study found a high level of marital adjustment, and a statistically significant relationship was found between conflict resolution styles (integration, compromise, commitment) and marital adjustment. The results also revealed statistically significant differences in conflict resolution styles (control, avoidance) based on age, favoring married individuals under the age of 30, and significant differences in the integration and compromise dimensions based on the number of years of marriage (2-5 years for integration and compromise, 6-10 years for commitment), but no significant differences were found based on gender or number of children. The study also found statistically significant differences in marital adjustment based on gender (favoring males) and number of years of marriage (2-5 years). No significant differences were found based on age or number of children.

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between marital adjustment and the criteria for choosing a life partner. The sample consisted of 123 families in the Makkah region, and the researcher used a descriptive-analytical method, as well as public data questionnaire, marital adjustment questionnaire, and life partner selection criteria questionnaire. The results showed that the level of marital adjustment was high in 30.9% of cases, while it was average in 41.5% of cases, and low in 27.6% of cases. There was a positive correlation between the life partner selection criteria and the marital adjustment, meaning that the more criteria were considered, such as religious, social, economic, personal, scientific, and occupational criteria, the higher the marital adjustment was in terms of good relationship and communication between spouses, sexual satisfaction, taking on marital responsibilities, and problem-solving.

In another study by Awawdeh (2019), the relationship between marital skills and marital satisfaction among newly married women in Ramallah and Al-Bireh was investigated. The researcher used a descriptive-correlational method, and the sample consisted of 10,065 participants. The results showed that the total score of marital skills was high, while the score of marital satisfaction was average. There were no significant differences in marital skills based on age, but there were significant differences based on education level. There was also a statistically significant negative correlation between marital skills and marital satisfaction, with marital skills accounting for 33.2% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Regression analysis showed that marital skills significantly predicted marital satisfaction.

The study conducted by Ibrahim (2018) aimed to determine the levels of emotional expression and their relationship with marital adjustment among Jordanian women. The study sample consisted of 80 wives, and the researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach. The researcher used a scale for emotional expression and a scale for marital adjustment, both of which were developed by the researcher. The results showed...
that the levels of emotional expression and marital adjustment were high, and there were no statistically significant differences in the total score of the emotional expression and marital adjustment scales according to variables such as age, number of years of marriage, number of children, and monthly income.

The goal of the study conducted by Al-Qadi (2016) was to identify the relationship between marital skills and marital adjustment among newlywed women in Amman. The study sample consisted of 173 married women selected through convenience sampling. The researcher used scales for marital skills and marital adjustment that she developed. The results showed a statistically significant negative correlation between possessing marital skills and marital adjustment. The results also showed a high level of marital adjustment in all dimensions, and statistically significant differences in the means of different age groups in possessing marital skills and marital adjustment, but no statistically significant differences in possessing marital skills and marital adjustment according to educational qualifications and the wife's occupation.

The study conducted by Al-Sayed (2015) aimed to identify the criteria for choosing a life partner and their impact on achieving marital adjustment, and to identify the most common ways of choosing a life partner, as well as the differences between husbands and wives according to demographic variables. The study sample consisted of 642 husbands and 358 wives from Saudi Arabia, and the researcher used a marital adjustment scale that he developed. The results showed that the level of marital adjustment was low for 16.5% of the sample, high for 19.6% of the sample, and average for 63%. The results also showed statistically significant differences in the level of marital adjustment attributed to gender, and there were also differences in marital adjustment attributed to educational qualifications, with those with higher education having higher levels of marital adjustment.

The study conducted by Khlasi (2015) aimed to identify the attitudes of couples towards marital adjustment. The study sample consisted of 119 individuals from the province of Annaba, specifically from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Baji Mokhtar University. The researcher used a descriptive approach and a marital adjustment scale that he developed. The results showed that the sample individuals lived in marital adjustment, were satisfied with their marital life, and had positive attitudes towards the eight dimensions of marital adjustment, which are general satisfaction with marriage, emotional communication, communication to solve problems, sexual life, roles within the family, financial aspects, relationship with parents, and child rearing.

A study by Al-Balawi (2015) aimed to determine the level of the Big Five personality traits’ ability to predict marital adjustment among married women in the Tabuk region, as well as the possibility of differences in the study sample attributed to the following variables: duration of marriage, age, educational level, and economic level. The study sample consisted of 180 married women, and the researcher used the correlational descriptive method, the Personal Data Sheet, the marital adjustment Scale developed by Faraj and Abdullah (1999) and translated by Al-Ansari (1997), and the Big Five Personality Traits Scale by Royet (2007). The results showed a high level of marital adjustment, and there was a significant correlation between the study variables. There were statistically significant differences in the study sample’s attitudes based on job type and educational level, but there were no statistically significant differences in attitudes based on duration of marriage and age.

Another study by Al-Zafiri and Al-Ani (2014) aimed to determine the levels of marital satisfaction and their relationship with job satisfaction among working women in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as to identify the impact of a set of demographic variables on satisfaction levels (educational level, years of experience, monthly salary, age, and number of children). The study also aimed to predict levels of job satisfaction based on levels of marital satisfaction. The study sample consisted of 330 working women, and the researchers used their own scales to measure job satisfaction and marital satisfaction. The results showed a high level of marital satisfaction and an average level of job satisfaction. There were statistically significant differences in marital satisfaction levels attributed to monthly salary and educational level, in favor of those with higher salaries and higher degrees, respectively. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between marital satisfaction and the number of children, but no significant differences in job satisfaction levels based on educational level or monthly salary, and no significant correlation between job satisfaction and either the
number of children or years of experience.

The study of Al-Hinai (2013) examines some of the factors that contribute to marital discord, as perceived by members of reconciliation committees and some hesitant individuals in the governorate of Muscat. To conduct the study, two samples were selected: the first sample consisted of 12 members of reconciliation committees, while the second sample consisted of 15 families from the governorate of Muscat. The researcher used a scale of marital discord from the perspective of members of reconciliation committees and some married individuals who were hesitant to use such committees. The results showed that the factors contributing to marital discord as estimated by committee members were ranked as follows: personal, emotional, organizational, and sexual. On the other hand, the factors as estimated by married individuals were ranked as follows: emotional, organizational, personal, and sexual.

Similarly, the study of Al-Tebawi (2012) aimed to investigate marital adjustment and its relationship with work-related stress. The study also aimed to examine the correlation between marital adjustment and the following variables: number of children, educational level, duration of marriage, and gender. The study sample consisted of 245 married employees of Benghazi University. The researcher used the marital adjustment scale developed by Osama Abdel Razek (2003) and the work-related stress scale developed by Abu Salah Abdel Qader (2004). The results showed that the level of marital adjustment and its dimensions were high, and there were no statistically significant differences between marital adjustment and variables such as educational level, gender, duration of marriage, and number of children.

The study of Samadi and Al-Jahwari (2011) aimed to assess the level of marital adjustment among a sample of employees in the health and education sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. The study also aimed to determine the impact of some variables on the level of marital adjustment. The study sample consisted of 492 individuals, including 152 married male employees and 430 married female employees. The researchers used a marital adjustment scale that they developed. The results showed that the area of emotional-psychological compatibility ranked first, followed by family compatibility, both of which were within the level of "strong agreement" among employees in the health sector. On the other hand, family compatibility ranked first, followed by intellectual compatibility, both of which were within the level of "strong agreement" among employees in the education sector.

The survey study conducted by Kinnunen and Feldt (2004) aimed to investigate the role of economic pressure on marital adjustment. The study sample consisted of 608 Finnish couples, and a binary analysis was conducted using the Conger model and colleagues. The results showed that poor economic conditions increase psychological distress, and psychological distress, in turn, has a negative impact on marital adjustment. The study also found a direct correlation between male unemployment and marital adjustment among women, as wives expressed a lack of marital adjustment with poor or unemployed husbands.

In 2008, the study of Al-Jamali examined the impact of age, duration of marriage, and having children on marital compatibility. The sample consisted of 163 couples (81 husbands and 81 wives) randomly selected from government institutions in Muscat, Oman, with ages ranging from 25 to 45 years old. The researcher used her own marital adjustmentscale and found no statistically significant differences in marital adjustment based on gender. However, there were statistically significant differences in marital adjustment based on age, favoring older couples, while marital adjustment was not affected by the duration of marriage or having children.

Similarly, in 2006, the study of Jaballah examined the relationship between marital adjustment and its relationship with selection criteria, as well as other variables for married couples in Darfur. The sample consisted of 240 participants representing 120 couples, and the researcher used the descriptive correlation method. The marital adjustment was measured using the marital adjustment scale designed by Mohamed Bayoumi Khalil and modified by Suleiman Ali Ahmed to suit the Sudanese environment, as well as the selection criteria scale designed by the researcher. The results showed no significant correlation between marital adjustment and variables such as partner selection, age difference, duration of marriage, spouse’s education level, household income level, engagement period, and whether the couple had children or not.
However, there was a positive correlation between marital adjustment and the behavior dimension, spouse selection criteria, emotional dimension, and wife’s education level. There were also differences in marital adjustment between husbands and wives in the intellectual dimension, favoring husbands.

The study by Ali (2001) aimed to confirm the role of social support from the family in making a positive decision for marriage and participating in choosing a spouse to achieve marital compatibility. The study sample consisted of two groups: the first group consisted of 50 married workers who were supported by social and emotional support from their families in making the decision to marry, while the second group consisted of 50 married workers who were not supported by social and emotional support from their families in making the decision to marry. They were selected from the following governorates: Eastern, Qalyubia, and Menoufia, with ages ranging from 25 to 42 years old. In this study, the researcher used the social support scale developed by Edwin Sarason et al. (1983) and adapted to the Egyptian environment by Mohamed Mahrous El-Shenawy and Sami Abu-Biyyeh. The decision-making scale was developed by Saif Al-Din Abdoun, the marital relationship assessment scale was developed by Hamilton Mc Cubbin and Barbara Blum Dable, and the marital adjustment scale was also developed by Hamilton Mc Cubbin and Barbara Blum Dable, and all were adapted to the Egyptian environment by the researcher. The study results showed statistically significant differences between the two groups in the following dimensions: positive decision-making, positive ongoing marital relationship, and marital compatibility.

The scope of the study
This study is defined as follows:

- **Objective boundaries**: The social support related to making the decision to marry and its relationship to marital adjustment in the South Al Batinah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman.
- **Time boundaries**: Academic year 2020/2021.
- **Spatial boundaries**: Sultanate of Oman, South Al Batinah Governorate.
- **Human boundaries**: Represented by the sample of married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate on which the study was conducted.

research methodology
Based on the problem of the study and its research questions, the descriptive correlational method was used due to its suitability for the nature of the current study. This method studies the phenomenon as it is in reality, describes it accurately, and expresses it both descriptively and quantitatively.

Study population:
The study population consists of all married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate during the period of the study, which was in December 2020. To estimate the size of the original population, the number of households in the governorate was determined based on the 2010 census conducted by the National Center for Statistics and Information, which was 29,346. To this number, the number of new marriage certificates issued during the ten years from 2010 to 2019 was added, and the number of new divorce certificates during the same years was subtracted from the result. This resulted in a total of 56,643 married individuals in the South Al Batinah Governorate. Then, the total number of married individuals was divided by two to obtain the number of married women in the governorate, which was 28,321.

Study sample:
The primary study sample was selected by the convenient method, by distributing an electronic link, and consisted of 830 married women from the South Al Batinah Governorate. Therefore, the study sample represents 2.9% of the estimated original population.

Study Tools
The following tools were used in this study:
The Social Support Scale Related to Decision Making (prepared by the researchers) was used after reviewing the theoretical literature and previous studies (Al-Khawli, 2005; Al-Dosari, 2020; Al-Hindawi, 2011; Khayrah, 2017; Diab, 2006; Abd Salah, 2019; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet & Farley, 1988). The face validity, item validity, and reliability coefficient of the scale were verified. All items of the Social Support Scale Related to Decision Making about marriage were found to have a high and statistically significant correlation coefficient at the level of significance (0.01) and (0.05), indicating an appropriate correlation coefficient for the items. Furthermore, all dimensions of the scale were significantly correlated with the total score at the level of significance (0.01), with correlation values ranging from (0.817-0.865) for the dimensions, indicating good scale validity. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the Social Support Scale Related to Decision Making about marriage was (0.955) for the family dimension, (0.967) for the friends dimension, and (0.955) for the overall scale, indicating high and appropriate reliability for the purposes of the study. The final version of the scale consisted of (25) items distributed across two dimensions: (family dimension and friends’ dimension).

The Marital adjustment Scale (2020) in its Arabic version was used, which was translated from the original scale by Hendrick (1988). The scale is a modified version of the widely used Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and consists of (7) items. The validity and item validity of the Marital adjustment Scale were verified, and there was consensus on the appropriateness of the items. The correlation coefficient for the items ranged from (0.609-0.872), and all items of the scale were found to have an appropriate correlation coefficient. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated, and it was (0.89), indicating appropriate reliability for the purposes of the study.

Study Results

Firstly: Presenting the results related to the first question and interpreting it, which was stated as follows:

What is the level of social support related to decision making about marriage among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the study sample’s estimates regarding the level of social support related to decision making about marriage among a sample of married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate were extracted.

Table (1) shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the level of social support related to decision making about marriage.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Arithmetic Mean</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>Family Dimension</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>Friends Dimension</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) shows that the level of social support related to decision making about marriage was (high) on the overall scale with an arithmetic mean of (4.11) and a standard deviation of (1.05). As for the level of social support related to decision making about marriage at the dimension level, the family dimension had a (high) level with an arithmetic mean of (4.65) and a standard deviation of (1.13), while the friends’ dimension had a (moderate) level with an arithmetic mean of (3.42) and a standard deviation of (1.60).

These results can be attributed to the girl receiving a significant amount of social support when making the decision to get married, which includes (receiving help and support, feeling comfortable, having confidence in her decisions and actions, being explained the drawbacks of emotions and stress during the decision-making process).
process, receiving information, advice, modifying concepts about marriage, listening, sharing concerns and fears, respecting the decision, being satisfied and content with any decision made, feeling important and entitled to make the choice, understanding situations in a realistic and objective way, and remaining calm and relaxed under stress) from the family, and (having a special friend to turn to, standing by her, talking to her when facing problems, feeling cared for, directing her towards the right behavior, speaking frankly and without sensitivity about seeking their advice, providing appropriate support when in a difficult psychological state, seeking advice from older friends, providing previous experiences, and giving advice and suggestions) from friends.

This social support is clearly evident in Omani society, which is characterized by strong bonds, social cohesion, and mutual support. Its social system is characterized by a type of freedom and flexibility, which provides more opportunities for social cooperation and support (Al-Jamali, 2008). Therefore, the level of social support from the family was high.

The study results indicate that the level of social support from friends was moderate, indicating that family ties are deeper than friendships, especially when it comes to sensitive and important issues in an individual’s life, such as marriage. It is known that the family plays a crucial role towards their children by providing them with emotional comfort, a sense of security, and social stability. They also help them solve their personal and public problems, and work towards making their children well-balanced personalities by instilling love, respect, and appreciation in their hearts and developing their inner confidence, which enhances their value within the family. Leavy (1983) pointed out that the role of social support depends on the individual’s confidence in the depth of the relationship between him/her and the sources of this support, whether it is from family, friends, or peer groups.

The current study results are in agreement with previous studies that investigated the variable of social support without linking it to marriage decision-making, such as Al-Rawahi’s study (2017), Haurieh’s study (2014), and Al-Ajmi’s study (2013), which showed a high level of social support.

**Secondly: Presenting the results related to the second question and interpreting it,** which states:

What is the level of marital adjustment among married women in South Al Batinah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations were extracted to estimate the sample’s level of marital adjustment among a sample of married women in South Al Batinah Governorate.

Table (2) shows the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the level of the items of the marital adjustment scale and for the scale.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Arithmetic Mean</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>To what extent does your life partner meet your needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>In general, how satisfied you with your marital relationship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>How good is the quality of your relationship compared?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>How often have you wished that you had not married at all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>To what extent did your marital relationship match your expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>How much do you love your life partner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>How big do you estimate the problems in your relationship?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>Overall score</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*contradictory phrases
Table (2) shows that the level of marital adjustment among a sample of married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate was (high), with an arithmetic mean of (3.98), and a standard deviation of (0.85). Paragraph (6) which reads "(How much do you love your life partner?)” ranked first with a (very high) level, with an arithmetic mean of (4.42) and a standard deviation of (0.93). Paragraph (5) which reads "(To what extent did your marital relationship match your expectations before marriage?)” ranked last with an (average) level, with an arithmetic mean of (3.40) and a standard deviation of (1.15).

The high level of marital adjustment can be attributed to the availability of some factors that lead to marital compatibility, including understanding the personal characteristics of the life partner, and the influence of previous experiences on the marital relationship of both partners. Children often form their expectations of marriage from their parents’ experience, and the proximity in age between the spouses, as well as the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs, the commitment of partners to religious teachings and following its provisions, especially those related to the rights of spouses and their way of dealing with each other, intellectual, cultural, and educational proximity, good economic level, and proper marital selection.

The results are attributed to the nature of Omani society, which is concerned with achieving family integration, stability, and protection from disintegration, conflicts, and family disputes. Omani society also values building marital relationships based on love, harmony, and compatibility, which contributes to the establishment of happy families with a healthy environment for raising children. This interpretation is supported by Al-Dhafri and Al-Ani (2014) who explain that the high level of marital adjustment reflects the level of family coherence in Omani society, which prioritizes building families in a healthy way that helps achieve marital harmony and provides a stable and healthy family environment for proper parental upbringing of children.

The results show that paragraph 6, which asks "How much do you love your life partner?” came in first place, indicating a high degree of emotional exchange and closeness, feelings of affection, love, appreciation, respect, psychological and emotional attachment between spouses, which provides reassurance, comfort, and stability between the two poles of marriage. Good communication between spouses is one of the most important factors in marital happiness, as the results show that intimate emotional communication is associated with higher levels of satisfaction and marital adjustment and is a fundamental factor for the success of the marriage (Jean, 2016). Fatima’s study (2019) indicated that wives who are treated with kindness, acceptance, and respect by their husbands have a higher level of marital adjustment compared to wives who are treated with harshness and violence. In cases of emotional deprivation, the interaction between spouses may be negative, leading to disharmony and marital incompatibility.

The results of this study are consistent with the study by Al-Maqbaliya (2020), as well as the results of the study by Al-Hinaiya (2013), which indicated that the emotional factor is the primary factor leading to marital incompatibility as perceived by the married couples. The study by Al-Samadi and Al-Jahwari (2011) found that emotional and psychological compatibility was ranked first among healthcare workers in Oman, with a percentage of (61.6%).

On the other hand, paragraph 5, which asks "To what extent did your marital relationship match your expectations before marriage?” was ranked last. This highlights the importance of having realistic expectations for both spouses to achieve closeness and develop positive expectations, as confirmed by the theory of cognitive dissonance (Yemina, 2015). The results of this study are consistent with the study by Al-Maqbaliya (2020).

The results of the study are also consistent with the studies by Al-Ibrahim (2018), Al-Qadi (2016), Khalasi (2015), Al-Balawi (2015), Al-Dhafri and Al-Ani (2014), and Al-Tebawi (2012), which all showed a high level of marital adjustment among the study sample. However, the results differed from the study by Arrar and Abdullah (2021), which showed that the overall degree of marital adjustment was average, and the study by Awaoda (2019), which showed that the level of marital satisfaction was average. The study by Al-Sayed (2015) showed that the level of marital adjustment was low for (16.5%) of the sample, high for (19.6%), and average for (63%). The study by Qamra (2019) showed that the level of marital adjustment was high for (30.9%) of the sample, while the level of average marital adjustment represented (41.5%).
Thirdly: presenting the results related to the third question and interpreting it, which stated the following:

Is there a correlational relationship between social support related to making the decision to marry and marital adjustment among married women in the South Al Batinah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman?

To answer this question, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as shown in Table (3).

Table 3

Pearson correlation coefficient for the social support scale related to making the decision to marry and marital compatibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total score of marital adjustment scale</th>
<th>Dimensions of social support related to marriage decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0.478</strong></td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>Overall score of social support related to marriage decision-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistically significant at a significance level of 0.01**.

Table 3 indicates the presence of a statistically significant positive correlation at a significance level of (0.01) between the total score of the social support scale related to the decision to marry and the total score of marital compatibility, as well as between the dimensions of the social support scale related to the decision to marry (family, friends) and the total score of marital adjustment among the study sample.

The previous result shows a positive relationship between social support during the decision to marry and marital adjustment among the study sample. This means that a higher level of social support during the decision to marry is accompanied by a higher level of marital compatibility, and vice versa. This relationship is logical and consistent with the results of previous studies and theoretical literature. Social support has a positive effect on life satisfaction in general and marital adjustment in particular, as confirmed by El-Shenawy and Abdelrahman (1994), who found that increasing the volume and quantity of social support leads to an individual’s sense of satisfaction with life and compatibility with their surroundings. A study by Ali (2001) also emphasized the importance of emotional and social support from family in making marital decisions in order to succeed, thrive, and lead to marital adjustment and satisfaction.

This can be attributed to the fact that a girl who receives support from those around her when making the decision to marry is happier and more satisfied than those who are deprived of that support or receive it in a limited way. This makes her feel valued, increases her positive self-esteem, and generates a sense of happiness and satisfaction with life in general, and marital satisfaction and compatibility in particular. This interpretation is supported by Al-Khar’an’s (2011) statement that social support has a positive and effective impact on life satisfaction in general, and therefore on marital satisfaction and compatibility in particular.

Furthermore, this relationship leads to a recall of what was mentioned in the introduction of the study that social support during the decision to marry has a direct impact on marital compatibility. Archer and Lioyd (1982) emphasized that marital happiness and compatibility are closely related to making the right decision for a life partner through social and emotional support from the family (Ali, 2005). The study by Al-Kholi (2005) revealed a positive relationship between social support and the dimensions of marital compatibility, including marital choice, emotional maturity, family compatibility, social relationships, and sexual compatibility. The results of Pierce et al.’s (1991) study also showed a correlational relationship between the enjoyment of marital satisfaction and compatibility among couples and the availability of social and emotional support from their families (Ali, 2001). The support of friends is also important, as they can provide some forms of social support such as cognitive and material support. The presence of a loyal friend is extremely important and has an impact on raising the level of satisfaction and marital adjustment among
wives. Humans, by nature, cannot do without a loyal friend who confides in them and relieves the pressures they face in their lives (El-Shanawi & Abdel-Rahman, 1994).

In addition, the social support that an individual receives from those around them reduces the intensity of pressure on them in order to reach a feeling of happiness and satisfaction. It is regarded as a set of guidance and counseling elements that are provided to the individual when needed, making them feel valued and self-appreciated, which makes them feel cared for, loved, and a sense of belonging to a social network. As a result, they feel that their life has a different meaning (Ali, 2005). Additionally, social support confirms one’s personality through their sense of support and assistance from those around them. It is an important source of psychological and social security that individuals need, helping them to cope with pressures in their lives (Al-Namlah, 2015).

The results of the study agree with most of the studies that have examined the relationship between the variables, including Al-Khar’an’s (2011) study, Al-Kholi’s (2005) study, Ali’s (2001) study, and Beach and Tesser’s (1993) study, which showed a correlational relationship between social support and marital compatibility.

Recommendations and Suggestions:

- Design guidance and training programs to raise awareness among those who are considering marriage about the importance of making the decision to marry and its impact on marital compatibility.
- Raise awareness about the importance of providing social support related to marriage decision-making from those around them, especially parents, which may contribute to raising their level of marital compatibility.
- Raise awareness about the importance of providing social support related to marriage decision-making for all age groups.
- Conduct further studies on social support related to marriage decision-making and its relationship with marital adjustment according to other classification variables such as the educational level of the girl, family size, birth order, and selection method.
- Conduct a similar study on samples of married men to provide a more comprehensive picture of the relationship.
- Conduct the current study on larger communities.
- Study social support related to marriage decision-making in light of contemporary social, cultural, and economic changes.

References