



# Unveiling the Hidden Roots of Interpersonal Stress Among Young Married Couples in India: A Psychosocial Perspective

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**Abstract:** Marriage is often regarded as one of the most meaningful and transformative milestones in life. It symbolizes love, commitment, companionship, and the hope of building a secure future together. However, for many young married couples in contemporary India, the transition from courtship to marital life is accompanied by increasing interpersonal stress that silently erodes emotional intimacy and relationship satisfaction. Rapid socioeconomic changes, evolving gender roles, financial pressures, technological dependence, changing family structures, and rising expectations have reshaped the institution of marriage, making young couples more vulnerable to psychological and relational conflicts (Fincham & Beach, 2018; Story & Bradbury, 2021).

This review explores the hidden psychosocial determinants of interpersonal stress among young married couples in India by synthesizing contemporary evidence from psychology, family studies, sociology, and public health. The article highlights how individual psychological characteristics, ineffective communication, work-life imbalance, family dynamics, cultural expectations, economic uncertainty, and digital technology collectively influence marital relationships (Falconier et al., 2015; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Furthermore, it discusses the emotional and mental health consequences of prolonged interpersonal stress, including anxiety, depression, marital dissatisfaction, emotional withdrawal, and reduced relationship quality (Rehman et al., 2018; Robles et al., 2014). Understanding these interconnected factors is essential for developing culturally appropriate preventive and therapeutic interventions. The review concludes that strengthening emotional intelligence, communication skills, resilience, family support, and evidence-based psychological interventions can significantly reduce interpersonal stress and promote healthier marital relationships among young Indian couples (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

**Keywords:** Interpersonal stress, young married couples, psychosocial factors, marriage, India, marital adjustment, communication, mental health.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage has long been regarded as the foundation of Indian society, representing not only the union of two individuals but also the coming together of two families, traditions, and lifelong commitments. It is a sacred institution built on love, trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibilities. Young couples often enter marriage with dreams of companionship, emotional security, and a fulfilling future. Yet, as these dreams encounter the realities of daily life, many relationships begin to experience subtle yet persistent interpersonal stress that threatens emotional intimacy and marital harmony (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

Interpersonal stress refers to the psychological tension arising from conflicts, misunderstandings, unmet expectations, ineffective communication, emotional distance, and difficulties in maintaining satisfying interpersonal relationships. Unlike temporary disagreements, persistent interpersonal stress gradually weakens emotional bonds and creates an atmosphere of frustration, loneliness, and dissatisfaction within marriage (Falconier et al., 2015).

India has undergone remarkable social, economic, and cultural transformations during the past two decades. Urbanization, globalization, higher educational aspirations, dual-career families, migration, technological advancement, and changing gender expectations have dramatically altered the nature of marital relationships. While these developments have created numerous opportunities, they have also introduced new psychological challenges that many young couples struggle to manage effectively (Story & Bradbury, 2021).

Today's young married couples often find themselves balancing demanding careers, financial responsibilities, caregiving roles, social expectations, and personal aspirations simultaneously. The pressure to excel professionally while maintaining a harmonious family life frequently results in emotional exhaustion and relational conflict (Williamson et al., 2019). Consequently, interpersonal stress has become one of the most significant yet underrecognized challenges affecting marital well-being among young Indian couples.

## II. A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE ON INTERPERSONAL STRESS

The psychosocial perspective recognizes that human behaviour cannot be understood by examining psychological or social factors in isolation. Instead, marital relationships are shaped through continuous interactions between individual personality characteristics, emotional experiences, family systems, cultural norms, and environmental influences (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

Within marriage, each partner enters the relationship with unique beliefs, childhood experiences, coping styles, communication patterns, and emotional needs. These personal characteristics interact with external circumstances such as financial pressures, occupational demands, family expectations, and societal values. When these interactions become imbalanced, interpersonal stress gradually emerges (Falconier et al., 2015). Rather than viewing marital conflict as the result of individual shortcomings, the psychosocial perspective considers it a dynamic process influenced by multiple interconnected systems. This holistic understanding enables psychologists, counsellors, and family therapists to design interventions that address both individual and contextual factors simultaneously (Bodenmann, 2005).

## III. PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF INTERPERSONAL STRESS

One of the most significant contributors to interpersonal stress among young married couples is emotional immaturity. Many individuals enter marriage with limited experience in managing conflicts, expressing emotions constructively, or understanding their partner's psychological needs. As a result, minor disagreements often escalate into prolonged emotional disputes (Overall et al., 2015).

Unrealistic expectations further intensify marital stress. Popular media frequently portrays marriage as a continuous state of happiness, romance, and mutual understanding. However, real marital life inevitably involves compromise, sacrifice, financial planning, and emotional adaptation. When expectations remain unrealistic, disappointment becomes inevitable, creating dissatisfaction within the relationship (Fincham & Beach, 2018).

Personality differences also influence marital adjustment. Individuals with high levels of neuroticism, impulsivity, perfectionism, or emotional instability often experience greater interpersonal conflict because they struggle to regulate emotions during stressful situations. Conversely, emotionally intelligent individuals are generally better equipped to navigate disagreements with empathy and understanding (Xu et al., 2022).

Poor emotional regulation significantly contributes to interpersonal stress. Couples who suppress emotions, avoid difficult conversations, or react aggressively during conflicts often develop persistent patterns of resentment. Over time, emotional withdrawal replaces emotional intimacy, making reconciliation increasingly difficult (Rehman et al., 2018).

## IV. COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN: THE SILENT DESTROYER OF RELATIONSHIPS

Communication forms the emotional foundation of every successful marriage. It allows couples to express affection, resolve disagreements, share responsibilities, and strengthen emotional intimacy. Unfortunately, ineffective communication remains one of the leading causes of interpersonal stress among young Indian couples (Lavner et al., 2016).

Many couples communicate primarily about practical responsibilities such as finances, household chores, or parenting while neglecting emotional conversations. Over time, this functional communication replaces emotional connection, leaving partners feeling unheard and misunderstood (Lavner et al., 2016).

Misinterpretation of intentions frequently escalates conflicts. Words spoken in frustration may be perceived as personal attacks, while silence is often interpreted as rejection or indifference. Without effective communication skills, couples become trapped in repetitive cycles of criticism, defensiveness, blame, and emotional withdrawal (Overall et al., 2015).

Active listening, empathy, and respectful dialogue are therefore essential protective factors that promote healthy marital adjustment and reduce interpersonal stress (Falconier et al., 2015).

## V. CHANGING FAMILY DYNAMICS IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Indian families have experienced profound structural transformations over recent decades. Traditional joint families are increasingly being replaced by nuclear households, particularly in urban settings. While nuclear families offer greater independence, they often reduce emotional and practical support available to young couples (Story & Bradbury, 2021).

In many households, conflicts arise from differing expectations regarding household responsibilities, financial management, parenting, and relationships with in-laws. Cultural expectations surrounding gender roles continue to influence marital interactions despite increasing educational and occupational opportunities for women (Yucel & Yuan, 2015).

Young women frequently balance professional careers alongside primary domestic responsibilities, creating significant emotional and physical exhaustion. Similarly, men often experience societal pressure to fulfil the role of primary financial provider. These competing expectations contribute substantially to interpersonal stress when partners perceive an imbalance in responsibilities or appreciation (Williamson et al., 2019).

Intergenerational differences further complicate marital adjustment. Differences in values, parenting philosophies, lifestyle preferences, and financial priorities between couples and extended family members may create emotional tension that gradually affects marital satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 2020).

## VI. CONCLUSION

Interpersonal stress among young married couples in India is rarely caused by a single event. Rather, it emerges through the cumulative interaction of psychological vulnerabilities, ineffective communication, family expectations, economic pressures, and rapidly changing social environments (Falconier et al., 2015; Karney & Bradbury, 2020). Beneath everyday disagreements often lie unmet emotional needs, unspoken fears, and unresolved conflicts that quietly shape the quality of marital relationships.

A psychosocial perspective reminds us that healthy marriages are built not merely on love but on emotional understanding, mutual respect, resilience, and shared growth. By strengthening communication, emotional intelligence, adaptive coping, and supportive family environments, couples can transform moments of conflict into opportunities for deeper connection and lasting companionship (Bodenmann, 2005; Randall et al., 2022). As India continues to evolve socially and economically, promoting marital well-being must become a priority for psychologists, counsellors, educators, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. Investing in relationship education, premarital counselling, culturally sensitive mental health services, and couple-based interventions can strengthen marriages and improve public mental health (WHO, 2022; Pietromonaco & Overall, 2021).