Marital Attitude Scale/The Marital Scales

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A Name and Type of Measure

The Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) is a self-report measure of both married and unmarried individuals’ attitudes and opinions toward heterosexual marriage. The Marital Scales applies to individuals of any age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation and is comprised of three different scales that measure overall attitudes toward marriage, expectations to get married, and assumptions of what marriage will be like.

Introduction

The primary use of the MAS (Braaten and Rosén 1998) is to assess an individual’s feelings regarding their own marriage (present or future), and their feelings toward marriage concepts in general. The benefit of this scale is that it includes assessments of marital attitudes from those who have never been married, which had not previously been included in any other measure. The MAS has since been used in studies assessing individuals’ attitudes toward marriage as a result of ever-changing social roles and the influence of contemporary culture, such as in China (see Liu et al. 2015). Other studies have used the MAS in assessing attitudes toward, and openness to, heterosexual marriage among those in the gay community (Wang et al. 2011). The MAS can also be useful in assessing any changes regarding marital attitudes as a result of therapy and family counseling (Johnson 2011) and has been used in correlating marital attitudes with relational conflict and divorce outcomes (Segrin et al. 2005). Studies have also shown the effectiveness of using the MAS to assess parental factors that influence adult children’s marital attitudes (Yu and Adler-Baeder 2007).

The Marital Scales (Park and Rosén 2013) is an extensively revised and updated version of the MAS for assessing marital attitudes. The Marital Scales are designed to apply to a wide representation of the population, by including those of any age, ethnicity, gender, or marital status. It is also the first measure of its kind to include those of any sexual orientation and can be applied to same-sex marriage attitudes. The Marital Scales are comprised of three different scales that measure overall attitudes toward marriage, intent to get married, and assumptions of what marriage will be like.
Developers

The MAS was developed by Ellen B. Braaten and Lee A. Rosén (1998). The Marital Scales were developed by Stacey S. Park and Lee A. Rosén (2013).

Description of Measure

The Marital Attitude Scale (MAS; Braaten and Rosén 1998) measures both married and unmarried individuals’ attitudes and opinions toward heterosexual marriage. It comprises 23 items in which individuals are asked to rate the strength of agreement or disagreement on a four-point scale to each statement regarding their subjective opinions of marriage. The MAS is scored by summing all individual item scores, with nine items requiring reverse codes. The total MAS score can range from 23 to 92, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward marriage.

While the MAS was beneficial in expanding previous scales’ attempts at assessing attitudes toward relationships and marriage for heterosexual couples, an updated scale was needed to tap into attitudes toward all types of romantic partnerships. The primary purpose of creating the Marital Scales (Park and Rosén 2013) was to fulfill that need. The Marital Scales have been used in studies assessing how gender, parental divorce, and especially interparental conflict influence young adults’ attitudes, fears, and doubts regarding marriage (Christensen 2014; Yaacob et al. 2016).

The Marital Scales comprise three separate measures with a total of 36 items. All measures contain questions that ask individuals to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to statements on a seven-point scale (scored from 0, strongly disagree, to 6, strongly agree). Higher scores reflect more positive attitudes toward marriage. The three measures’ abbreviations and brief descriptions are as follows:

Intent to Marry Scale (IMS): This short scale is designed to measure an individual’s intentions of getting married in the future (three items), with summed scores ranging from 0 to 18. Higher scores indicate a more positive intent toward getting married.

General Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale (GAMS): This measures an individual’s general opinions toward marriage (ten items), with summed scores ranging from 0 to 60. Higher scores indicate a more positive attitude toward marriage. Items from this scale load onto three factors: positive attitudes, negative attitudes, and fears or doubts.

Aspects of Marriage Scale (AMS): This 23-item scale measures an individual’s expectations for what certain aspects of marriage will include, with summed scores ranging from 0 to 138. Higher scores indicate more positive expectations for the importance of six factors or categories pertaining to marriage and relationships: romance, respect, trust, finances, meaning, and physical intimacy.

Psychometrics

The MAS was tested using a sample of 499 undergraduate students enrolled in a Western US university (Braaten and Rosén 1998). The sample was representative of college enrollment, with a mean age of 19 (SD = 3.35), but with the majority reporting as females (324; 175 males). Braaten and Rosén (1998) reported high internal consistency of the MAS with a coefficient alpha of 0.82. The mean for the scale was 55.89 (SD = 7.07) and ranged from 35 to 72. Item total correlations for the sample ranged from 0.12 to 0.64 (all p’s < 0.01), and all but two items had coefficients above 0.33 (p’s < 0.0001). Braaten and Rosén (1998) also showed high construct validity, such that the MAS is highly positively correlated with the attitudes toward marriage (ATM) scale (r = 0.77).

Construct validity was further demonstrated, as the MAS scores negatively correlated with several subscales of the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI), including the Disagreement is Destructive (r = −0.11) and the Partners Cannot Change (r = −0.24) subscales. The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was also included in the analyses of the MAS and indicated
a positive and significant correlation. Further analyses showed that the MAS predictably discriminated students from divorced homes with those from non-divorced homes, such that students from divorced homes had less favorable attitudes toward marriage than their counterparts (the multivariate effect size was 0.24).

Test-retest reliability of the MAS was assessed using 206 participants (113 from introductory psychology students, 93 from a child psychology course; Bassett et al. 1999). Participants completed the MAS at Time 1, and again 6 weeks later. Each participant’s scores were matched from Time 1 and Time 2 using a Pearson product-moment correlation. Test-retest reliability indicated a correlation of 0.85 ($M = 48.56$, $SD = 7.35$). Specifically, the test-retest correlation reliability for males was 0.81 and 0.87 for females.

The Marital Scales consist of three different scales and were validated in the Western US university using 516 participants who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course, reporting a wide representation of demographics (Park and Rosén 2013). Participants ranged from 17 to 41 years old ($M = 19.57$, $SD = 2.27$), with the majority (83.1%) self-reporting as White. The majority of this sample identified as heterosexual (95.7%), and 33.3% reported being in a relationship at the time of the study, though only 1.4% were married.

Items were constructed to reflect an individual’s intent to marry, general attitudes toward marriage itself, and expectations regarding several domains of marriage. These items were pooled and reviewed for clarity and quality. Other scales were added to establish convergent (e.g., the MAS and the ATM) and discriminant validity (e.g., the Life Orientation Test-Revised, LOT-R, which assesses dispositional optimism). Finally, the items were analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Results of these analyses for all three scales are as follows:

**Intent to Marry Scale (IMS):** The IMS revealed only one factor of positive intent toward marriage, which included three items. These items accounted for 67.98% of the variance. The CFA indicated an optimal comparative fit index (1.00), Tucker-Lewis index (1.00), root mean square error of approximation (0.00), and standardized root mean squared residual (0.00). The IMS also showed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$) and construct validity such that the IMS indicated a moderate correlation with the GAMS ($r = 0.55$), the AMS ($r = 0.43$), the MAS ($r = 0.59$), and the ATMS ($r = 0.62$). The correlation between the IMS and the LOT-R was low ($r = 0.24$), indicating good discriminant validity.

**General Attitudes toward Marriage Scale (GAMS):** The GAMS revealed three major factors, positive attitudes, negative attitudes, and affective reactions (fears and doubts) toward marriage, which include a total of ten items. These items accounted for 48.11% of the variance. The CFA indicated an acceptable comparative fit index (0.97), Tucker-Lewis index (0.96), root mean square error of approximation (0.06), and standardized root mean squared residual (0.04). The GAMS also showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.84$) and construct validity such that the GAMS indicated a moderate correlation with the IMS ($r = 0.55$), the AMS ($r = 0.30$), the MAS ($r = 0.74$), and the ATMS ($r = 0.70$). The correlation between the GAMS and the LOT-R was low ($r = 0.28$), indicating good discriminant validity.

**Aspects of Marriage Scale (AMS):** The AMS revealed six final factors (some factors had fewer than three variables), romance, respect, trust, finances, meaning (personal fulfillment or shared values), and physical intimacy, which included 23 items. These items accounted for 59.15% of the variance. The CFA indicated an acceptable comparative fit index (0.93), Tucker-Lewis index (0.92), root mean square error of approximation (0.07), and standardized root mean squared residual (0.05). The AMS also showed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.92$) and construct validity, such that the AMS indicated a moderate correlation with the IMS ($r = 0.43$), the GAMS ($r = 0.30$), the MAS ($r = 0.41$), and the ATMS.
The correlation between the AMS and the LOT-R was low ($r = 0.25$), indicating good discriminant validity.

The Marital Scales have also been validated cross-culturally and translated into a version to be used in Persian-speaking countries (Fallahchhai et al. 2016). The sample used for validation included participants living in Iran, with ages ranging from 18 to 40 and older, and had a wide representation of occupations (e.g., students, housewives, etc.), thus establishing generalizability. An EFA confirmed that none of the items should be deleted, and all ten factors were retained. Internal consistency analyses revealed an alpha of 0.88, with a split-half coefficient of 0.86. Subscale reliability alphas were 0.80 (IMS), 0.84 (GAMS), and 0.88 (AMS).

**Example of Application in Couple and Family Therapy**

The MAS and the Marital Scales can both be used to help those in relationships or those who hope to enter into relationships understand their attitudes and expectations. Because the Marital Scales represent a more recent adaptation of the MAS and are more inclusive of all demographics, the Marital Scales are recommended for use in couple and family therapy over the MAS. The Marital Scales can be administered at multiple time points throughout therapy to track the changes in attitudes that a couple may see.

Take, for example, the case of Jake and Laura, who represent an amalgamation of several real-life client scenarios. Jake and Laura had been dating for some time and had been contemplating marriage. Before they took that step, they thought it is wise to undergo therapy to make sure they were on the same track. During therapy, they engaged in several discussions regarding their past, present, and possible future relationships. The aim was to develop and discover their own beliefs and expectations surrounding topics of intimacy within their own lives. Jake comes from a divorced home and reported less optimism regarding his relationships and had a less favorable belief about relationships in general, compared to Laura, who did not come from a divorced home. However, Laura had inflated expectations about her relationships, though became much more realistic toward the end of the therapy sessions.

Because the Marital Scales are divided into three main subcategories, with the third category broken into six further constructs, it allows for a more comprehensive approach to understanding how each individual feels regarding their future relationships, specifically assessing their intentions, their attitudes, and their expectations. Throughout therapy, each couple can clearly identify if there are areas of concern (if Jake had a higher intention of getting married than did Laura) and where they should focus their attention throughout the course of therapy. Additionally, the ease in which measures such as the MAS and the Marital Scales can be administered allows individuals to receive premarital counseling services without the intimidation of actually going to counseling, if they so choose.

**Cross-References**

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**References**


