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## Construction of Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM)

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### Abstract

The present study was intended to construct a Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) for Myanmar married couples. The questionnaire was adapted from the Relationship Attribution Measure developed by Thomas N. Bradbury) and Frank D. Fincham (1989). The original test consists of eight hypothetical negative partner behaviours, requiring six attribution judgments for each behaviour. It was translated into Myanmar version and a pretest was done by (20) Myanmar married couples. To determine the reliability of this test, a sample of 100 (N = 200) Myanmar married couples from Yangon and Mandalay was used. Test reliability was computed by using the Cronbach's coefficient alpha and met the minimum criterion of .70. It is hoped that this kind of measurement will be useful for the counsellors in the marital counselling process in Myanmar.

### Introduction

Attribution refers to the process through which we seek to identify the cause of other's behaviour. More formally, attribution refers to our efforts to understand the causes behind other's behaviour and on some occasions, the causes behind our behaviour, too.

According to Duck (1988), some kind and degree of conflict is probably inevitable in all kinds of relationship. However, the process of resolving conflicts can often be a positive one that promotes the growth of the relationship (Wood and Duck, 1995). The important question is not whether there is conflict, but how this conflict can best be dealt with. Unfortunately, the recurrence of conflicts, indicating a lack of agreement and an inability to resolve the conflict's underlying source, may lead the partners to doubt each other as "reasonable persons". This might lead to a "digging in of the heels", disaffection with each other, and, ultimately, a "strong falling out".

Bradbury and Fincham (1990) have argued that happy and unhappy couples resolve their conflicts in typically different ways, and that these can be understood as different attribution patterns. Happy couples use what Bradbury) and Fincham call a *relationship - enhancing* attributional pattern in which a partner's negative behaviour

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is explained in terms of situational and other variable causes. By contrast, unhappy couples use a *distress-maintaining* attributional pattern in which a partner's negative behaviour is explained in terms of underlying and unchanging personality positions.

According to Fincham and Bradbury, a standard measure of marital attributions is critical for both clinical and empirical exploration of attributions in marriage. They developed a measure of marital attributions that is short, reliable, and simple in format and that permits assessment of different types of attributions. This instrument yields the association between attributions and marital dissatisfaction.

In the present study, the Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) is constructed for Myanmar married couples to examine whether their marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction is associated with their attributional style in marriage. Various kinds of psychological tests such as Intelligence Tests and Personality Tests have been constructed by the Departments of Psychology, in Yangon and Mandalay Universities. These existing tests have proved to be useful in many areas, such as measuring intelligence of children, personnel selection, etc. However, there is no test yet, regarding marriage satisfaction. It has become necessary especially in the counselling centres established by Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs. This kind of measurement will be useful not only for the counsellors at the centre but also for the private counselling session.

## **Method**

### **Instrument**

The items of RAM for Myanmar married couples were adapted from the Relationship Attribution Measure developed by Thomas N. Bradbury and Frank D. Fincham (1989). The items included in the original RAM consist of eight hypothetical negative partner behaviours, requiring six attribution judgments for each behaviour. Each item or stimulus event was followed by six statements to assess three causal (locus of cause in partner, causal stability, and causal globality) and three responsibility (extent to which behaviour was seen as intended, negatively motivated, and blameworthy) attribution dimensions for each behaviour. In addition, a statement that indicates how angry respondents would be if the partner behaviour occurred was included. Thus, there were seven statements for each stimulus event in this scale.

For each partner behaviour, the spouse were asked to rate their agreement with these statements on a 5-point scale to make the task as concrete as possible. Each

scale point was labeled as strongly agree, agree, agree somewhat, disagree and strongly disagree. Spouses were instructed to rate after imagining that the behaviour had just occurred in their marriage.

### **Subjects**

To determine reliability of the test, (200) random samples of Myanmar married couples from Yangon and Mandalay were used as subjects. The men averaged about 40 years; the women averaged about 39. The mean educational level was about 13 years for men as well as for women. Ninety-five percent of men and ninety four percent of women were Buddhists. 5 % of men and 6 % of women were Christians. The husbands in this study have different occupations such as professionals, semiprofessionals, businessmen, civil servants, and military servants, skilled or semiskilled workers. Apart from 36% of women who are presented housewives, the majority of remainder was civil servants. Regarding the number of children, 34% of couples has only one child, 26% has two children, 23% has three children and the remainder has four, five or six. Only 4% of couples has no children. Their length of marriage is within the range from 2 to 38 years.

### **Procedure**

To develop RAM for Myanmar married couples, the original scale was translated into Myanmar language and pilot study was done with a sample of 20 Myanmar married couples (N=40) from Yangon to test whether the wording of items, statement and instructions had their clarity in Myanmar version.

The internal consistency reliability of the RAM was examined with a sample of 100 Myanmar married couples from Yangon and Mandalay who participated in this study on a voluntary basis. They were administered by giving instruction to complete the scale independently. Reliabilities of the six attribution dimensions were computed by using coefficient alpha.

### **Results and Discussion**

Alpha coefficient for each causal and responsibility attribution dimensions were highly reliable for husbands. Although alpha coefficient for individual attribution dimensions for causal attributions were high for wives, coefficient alpha for one dimension of responsibility attributions was below the criterion of .70. Thus

the alpha coefficient for the composite measure of responsibility attributions was computed and examined. The composite measures for responsibility attributions for wives were highly reliable as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Alpha coefficient for individual attribution dimensions and for the composite measure of causal and responsibility attributions.

Attribution Dimensions	Wives	Husband
	8 - items	8 - items
<b>CAUSAL ATTRIBUTIONS</b>		
Locus	.88	.87
Stability	.86	.88
Globility	.92	.93
Causal composite		
<b>RESPONSIBILITY ATTRIBUTIONS</b>		
Intent	.86	.90
Motivation	.65	.88
Blame	.92	.89
Responsibility composite	.83	

### Conclusion

The intention of the development of Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) for Myanmar married couples was first described in this paper. The original scale was translated into Myanmar and reliability coefficient of this scale was found by using Crombach's coefficient alpha. The results of this study showed that a short, simple and reliable measure of attribution exists for assessing attribution style of Myanmar married couples.

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