

## Marital satisfaction of student marriage and its relationship with demographic characteristics among students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explain the relationship between marital satisfaction with personal (demographic) characteristics of students participating in student wedding ceremonies. Accordingly, this study is regarded as an applied research in terms of its objectives and a descriptive-correlational research in terms of method of data collection. The research population consisted of couples studying at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (at least one of the couples being a student) who attended the student wedding ceremony. The sample consisted of 88 students who started their shared life with the celebration of student marriage and were selected through census. The instruments used to collect the data were the researcher-made demographic factors questionnaire and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale whose reliability and validity were at an acceptable range. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between the participants' demographic characteristics and their marital satisfaction. There was also no significant difference between the male and female participants in terms of marital satisfaction.

### KEYWORDS

marital satisfaction, personal (demographic) characteristics, student marriage

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## Introduction

The family is more than a group of people who live in a particular material and psychological space. Family is a natural and social system with its own unique features. There is a deep multi-layered relationship between the members of this subculture which is mainly based on a shared history, shared and common internalized perceptions and assumptions about the world, and common goals (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, cited in Hussein Shahi Baravati, Naqshbandi, & Arjmand, 2009).

A family is considered as functionally healthy that in addition to its survival in the form of a system, it enables its individual members to flourish and enables them to get involved in self-exploration and self-discovery with confidence. A powerful family system is able to create a balance among the system needed in the form of a family unit and the personal interests of all its members. In addition, the family needs to show flexibility in stressful life situations and in life transitional stages. Sometimes it needs to find proper solutions to adapt to new situations through changing behavioral patterns and restructuring. Such a family is characterized by a flexible power structure with participatory power, a distinct family system, a strong parental coalition, boundaries between healthy generations, an attachment style, distinction among family members through intimacy and separation, the maintenance of equilibrium against conflict and doubt, strong marital relations, sense of humor, love, care and hopefulness (Tabriz, Dibai, Kardani, & Jafari, 2006).

A strong marriage forms the basis for a powerful and stable family (Olson Walson, cited in Boheiraei & Fathy, 2009). In addition, a thing that is of high importance in a marriage is marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction refers to an objective feeling of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by the husband or the wife when they consider all the aspects of their marriage (Ellis, 1980, cited in Najafi Zehtab, 2009). Marital satisfaction which is often considered as marital adjustment happiness generally includes the subjective evaluation of marital quality in terms of a number of factors (Spiner & Lewis, 1980). Marital satisfaction marriage is the most important determinants, which shows whether a marriage will remain healthy and stable or not (Callan and Nooler, 1987).

Solomon (1989) believes that marriage will not be formed in heaven or sky, but it is created in basic dynamic interactions between parents and the child that is reactivated frequently in adulthood (Etemadi, 2005). The level of security or instability of attachment between the spouses serves as the basis of marital consent. Just like childhood, if the need for attachment is not satisfied it leads to marital disequilibrium (Johnson cited in Hosseini, 2010).

Partners' satisfaction of their sexual relationship, love and passion for life will depend on how they are intimate and good friends (Burke, cited in Seyyed Mohammadi, 2003). Love and satisfaction that act a foundation for the marital relationship decline over time. Most couples consider their love relation as eternal at the beginning of their life when they are replete with love and passion. However, this passionate love cools down gradually as the time passes (Beck, 1988; cited in Gharachedaghi, 2001). Today marriage is not as simple as

it was in the past because nothing is fixed and predictable. In the traditional marriage, each party in the marital relationship was aware of his/her position. In addition, the complexity and depersonalization of society created a sense of alienation and isolation and questioned and threatened our traditions and beliefs more than ever and this is more evident in in the area of marital and family relations than in anything else (Abedi, 2001).

Several factors are involved in marital satisfaction, the most important of which include the quality of relationships before marriage, the way the marriage is formed, the couples' communication style, the couples' personality, and the method of dealing with marital problems (Patrick et al., 2007 cited in Timuri Asfichi, 2009).

One of the factors that may affect marital satisfaction is student marriage. The most important thing in student marriage is to find the perfect partner at university. Student marriage gives students the chance to live with someone who is at the same age. They are in a fairly common social environment and they may have the same field of study, which in turn brings about many commonalities and makes them closer to a common expression. Students spend usually a long time (at least 2 years) together studying so they have more opportunity to get familiar with each other and their behavioral, personality, psychological, and moral characteristics. The student wedding ceremony allows student to have an easy, informed, and stable marriage. Personal (demographic) factors affect the marriage. For instance, student age is the right age for marriage and education turns students into members of an educated and intelligent group with an error rate that is lower than others'. Both or one of parties in the student marriages are students and they do not have high expectations for the other party and they adopt an easygoing approach to marriage (Javadi, 2015). Based on what was mentioned, the present study explores the relationship between marital satisfaction with personal (demographic) characteristics among students attending the student wedding ceremony.

### Research questions

In the light of the above objectives, this study addresses the following three main questions:

1. How is the quality of marital satisfaction among student couples?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the participants' demographic characteristics (age, gender, housing, education, and occupation) and marital satisfaction?
3. Is there any significant difference among the male and female participants in terms of their marital satisfaction?

### Research methodology

The present study is a descriptive-correlational research. The research population consisted of couples studying at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences who attended the student wedding ceremony (with the requirement that at least one of the couples being a student). The sample under study consisted of 88 students who started their shared life with the celebration of student marriage and were selected through census.

The instruments used to collect the data were the researcher-made demographic factors questionnaire designed to measure the participants' demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, marital status, and occupation) and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale with 47 items.

## Result, Discussion and Conclusion

The descriptive statistics of formal survey can be found in Table 1 to 4:

Table1: Personal factor of the Respondent

| Variables            |                                | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative percent |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------------------|
| Gender               | Male                           | 40        | 47.6    | 47.6               |
|                      | Female                         | 44        | 52.4    | 100                |
| Age group            | Below 22 years                 | 19        | 22.6    | 22.6               |
|                      | 23-26 years                    | 35        | 41.7    | 64.3               |
|                      | 27-30 years                    | 25        | 29.8    | 94                 |
|                      | Above 31 years                 | 5         | 0.6     | 100                |
| Birth order          | First child                    | 29        | 34.5    | 34.5               |
|                      | Second child                   | 18        | 21.4    | 56                 |
|                      | Third child                    | 20        | 23.8    | 79.8               |
|                      | Fourth child                   | 7         | 8.3     | 88.1               |
|                      | More than fifth and last child | 10        | .24     | 100                |
| Educational status   | U.D /B.D                       | 9         | 10.7    | 10.7               |
|                      | B                              | 47        | 56      | 66.7               |
|                      | M                              | 14        | 16.7    | 83.3               |
| City                 | PhD/ DR                        | 14        | 16.7    | 100                |
|                      | Same city                      | 60        | 71.4    | 71.4               |
| Duration of marriage | Other city                     | 24        | 28.6    | 100                |
|                      | 0-1                            | 28        | 33.3    | 33.3               |
| Housing              | 2-4                            | 56        | 66.7    | 100                |
|                      | Leased                         | 53        | 63.1    | 63.1               |
| Occupation           |                                | 31        | 36.9    | 100                |
|                      | Official                       | 18        | 21.4    | 21.4               |
|                      | Contractual                    | 23        | 27.4    | 48.8               |
|                      | Without jobs                   | 38        | 45.2    | 94                 |
| Income               | Self-employed                  | 5         | 6.      | 100                |
|                      | Below 1 million Tomans         | 27        | 32.1    | 32.1               |
|                      | 1 million - 2900000 million T  | 28        | 33.3    | 65.5               |
|                      | Above 3 million T              | 3         | 3.6     | 69                 |
|                      | No income                      | 26        | 31.3    | 100                |

N=88

Table 2: The results of Pearson correlation coefficient to measure the relationship between marital satisfactions and demographic characteristics

| Variable             | Gender | Age group | Birth order | Educational status | City | Duration of marriage | Housing | Occupation | Income |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|-------------|--------------------|------|----------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| Marital Satisfaction | .460   | .231      | .845        | .500               | .260 | .804                 | .045*   | .865       | .404   |

Note: \*p $\leq$ .05 levels

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and independent-samples t-test of marital satisfaction based on gender

| Variable             | Group  | Frequency | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Df | t     | Significant |
|----------------------|--------|-----------|--------|----------------|----|-------|-------------|
| Marital Satisfaction | Male   | 40        | 171.37 | 22.73          | 82 | -.742 | .643        |
|                      | Female | 44        | 175.38 | 22.43          |    |       |             |

Table 4: Level of marital Satisfaction

| Level of marital Satisfaction | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| High                          | 62        | 73.8    |
| Medium                        | 22        | 26.2    |
| Low                           | 0         | 0       |

This section restates the research questions and discusses their answers based on the findings of the study.

*1. How is the quality of marital satisfaction among student couples?*

The results of the study indicated that there is a high level of marital satisfaction among the college students in this study. This finding can be explained in the light of the fact that marital satisfaction is one of the concepts that has received much attention from psychologists and researchers. Marriage is the result of a marital bond between a man and a woman. Marriage and marital relations are among factors that can stimulate emotions and excitement. Sexual relations, social relations, employment, financial position, religious matters, religion and its teachings as factors affecting excitement seeking are of vital significance.

The first important thing in student marriage is to find an ideal partner at university. Student marriage gives students the chance to live with someone who is at the same age. They are in a fairly common social environment and they may even be studying in the same discipline. Marrying in student period helps couples to organize their life more effectively. In addition, it enables them to adapt themselves to new conditions. Besides, couples are highly motivated to organize their life and gain control over new situations and this affects the couples' marital satisfaction. Marriage serve as the foundation for family and it requires cooperation, empathy, unity, love, kindness, tolerance, and responsibility. When couples marry and establish a marital relationship, marital satisfaction becomes an important variable in relation to the quality of marriage. Marital satisfaction refers to an objective feeling of happiness,



satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by the husband or the wife when they consider all the aspects of their marriage. It is also considered as one of the most important components of couples' emotional stability. The impact of the quality of marriage on the mutual relations between the two partners, the mental and physical health, their success, and their psychological and social adjustment in various aspects of individual and social life has always been documented. Accordingly, it can be said that there is an acceptable level of marital satisfaction among married students.

*2. Is there a significant relationship between the participants' demographic characteristics (age, gender, housing, education, and occupation) and marital satisfaction?*

The findings of the study indicated that there is no significant relationship between the participants' demographic characteristics and their marital satisfaction. It was also noted that only those participants who possessed a house were had higher levels of marital satisfactions than those who lived in a leased house. This finding can be justified with reference to the fact that usually there is a minimum age for marriage in nearly all communities and this age is considered in codified and non-codified laws and as such people are not allowed to start their marital life before reaching this age, which is often set around sexual puberty or slightly before or after it. However, as marriage is seen as the only normal way of sexual needs, it is not considered only as a biological event in the sense that it is associated with other humane affairs and is formed based on the culture of the community. In addition, to sexual maturity, a person who is going to marry must be capable of managing his/her life affairs. In other words, he/she must be intellectually and economically mature so that they can assume the responsibility of performing their commitments and obligations towards the other party in the marital relation. Accordingly, it can be said that the marriage age can be explained in terms of environmental, economic, and cultural aspects of a given community. As our findings show, age has no significant impact on marital satisfactions among students.

The education level can play a positive and constructive role in each person's life. Because of their education and academic learning in different field, university graduates have a higher level of understanding and awareness of various issues than other people, and such awareness helps them avoid committing inappropriate behaviors. In addition, their education level determines their position and role in the community. Our findings indicated that the participants' education level has no significant impact on their marital satisfaction. Among the participants' demographic variables, only housing was found to be significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. It can be said that people who possess a personal housing have more facilities and resources available. They also are in a better financial position than other people who live in a rented house. The use of such resources can increase people's awareness about marriage and family issues and be effective in solving their problems, thus enhancing their marital satisfaction.

*3. Is there any significant difference among the male and female participants in terms of their marital satisfaction?*

The findings of the study suggested that there was no significant difference between the male and female participants in terms of their marital satisfaction.

A possible explanation for this finding is that marriage is one of the important events, which happens during most people's lifetime. Therefore, it is natural that marriage is considered as a very important issue that should be looked upon from an expert lens. In addition, marital satisfaction has been considered with an especial focus in studies conducted on marriage and family, because the quality of marital life plays a significant role in the stability of family and the physical and psychological health of spouses and their children. As such, marital satisfaction can be seen as a mixed construct which is affected by various factors and has a significant impact on people, family, and the society as a whole.

Inconsistent findings concerning differences in marital satisfaction and satisfaction with sexual relations between couples may suggest that marital satisfaction and its subscales including sexual satisfaction are dependent on two individual who have marital relations and the couples' satisfaction or dissatisfaction is more affected by the marital context rather than by couple's genders. It also depends on the harmony between both parties rather than one of them. Therefore, in order to come up with more accurate results, couples must be compared so that males' and females' differences can be assessed by measuring different aspects of marriage for each couple.

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