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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Predicting marital satisfaction on the basis of identity style, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract: **Introduction:** Marital satisfaction affected mental and physical health, life satisfaction, career success, and social communications, and is one the most important indices of life satisfaction. Among all the factors relating to the marriage, the marital adjustment has a special place in the study of marriage and family relationships. Identity development is conceptualized as a process beginning in adolescence and peaking in the early adulthood period during which one explores and commits to possibilities in interpersonal relationship. During this time, young adults are determining the importance of parental, marital, and career life roles. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between identity styles with marital satisfaction and identification of predicting factors on marital satisfaction centers of city councils of Tehran, Iran. **Methods:** This was a correlational cross-sectional study. The population includes all couples referring to city councils in the 10th and 11th zones. Participants' duration of marriage was between 1 and 10 years. In this study, a total of 200 couples were selected using convenience cluster sampling, and the questionnaires were given and distributed to them in health homes, cultural centers of Tehran municipal. Tools of study were Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire and Identity Style questionnaire. Questionnaires were collected and data were entered in SPSS software ver. 18 and analyzed. Descriptive tests, Pearson correlation test, and Multivariate Regression Test were used for description and analysis of data. **Results:** The mean age of samples in this study was 31.60 years old with standard deviation of 5.12 years (Ranged between 20- 44 years). Demographic data had normal distribution ($P < 0.05$). One-way ANOVA analysis showed that there was significant relationship between the age of men and marital satisfaction ($P = 0.01$). Univariate Linear Model showed that there was no significant correlation between literacy ($P = 0.908$) and occupation ($P = 0.629$) with marital satisfaction. There was a significant relationship between marital satisfaction with normative and commitment styles ($P < 0.05$) but there was no significant relation between this and informative and diffuse/avoidant styles ($P > 0.05$). Linear regression analysis showed that only commitment style of identity can predict the marital satisfaction significantly. **Conclusion:** We concluded that commitment style can predict the marital satisfaction, and normative and commitment styles are related with it.

Keywords: Identity style; Marital Satisfaction; female; Mental health; Physical health.

1. Introduction

Family is a natural social system in which couples have a major role in all its stages of development, and many factors play a role in their marital satisfaction [1]. Marital satisfac-

tion is adopting expectations of couples in their marital lives and what is they are experienced themselves. Winch had indicated that marital satisfaction is the adoption of present status and expecting status [1]. Marital satisfaction affected mental and physical health, life satisfaction, career success, and social communications, and is one the most important indices of life satisfaction [2, 3].

Marriage is a sacred covenant among all peoples and nations, and in all time periods and places. Marriage is the beginning

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of forming a family. And family is one of the oldest social entities, which is as old as human life history [4]. The importance of relationships among family members, especially spouses as the main part of the family becomes clearer. Marriage is entering a new phase of life, which involves an important part of individual life and social life. Marriage and marital satisfaction play an important role in the family's normalized activities. In marriage spouses should (male and female) know their roles and responsibilities in relation to each other. If they play this role well and if they are satisfied with their lives, then we say that they are compatible. According to Greef, compatible couples are wives and husbands with a lot of agreements with each other, they are satisfied with the type of their relationships and they are satisfied with the quality of their leisure time [5]. Marriage is a natural social system, which has historically been common in various ethnic groups in various forms. The importance of understanding the factors that lead to consistency and strength in marital status can be a useful step to promote culture and society [6]. Among all the factors relating to marriage, marital adjustment has a special place in the study of marriage and family relationships. Marital adjustment in marriage has a major impact on consistency and strength of marital status, and that is the point where married people control the contrast and come along with each other. And it should be noted that our ability to come along with someone is influenced by many factors. These factors (including cultural, psychological, etc.) can affect marital adjustment [7]. Marital satisfaction is a mindful evaluation and person's feeling on marital relationship [8]. Marital satisfaction is a reflection of individual happiness levels of marital relationship as many factors affecting marital relationship. Marital satisfaction is an exhaustive and multidimensional concept affected by different factors. Thus, this concept is been allocated a large number of the published research on marital relationship. Marital satisfaction can be regarded as a psychological position which doesn't spontaneously come up; rather it needs both partners' effort [9]. Due to the importance of family balanced function and prevention of the breakup, identifying the factors associated with marital satisfaction is of paramount importance. Thus, if the factors affecting marital satisfaction are taken into account, it is expected that increase in marital satisfaction level will decrease many psychological, emotional, and social problems across the entire society. When marital and life satisfaction are reinforced, people in the society will experience life growth, economic, cultural and social services in more comfort [10-12].

This developmental process, however, is thought to occur through cognitive constructions of both a sense of who people think they are (i.e. their identity) and the reality within which they live [13]. Berzonsky's model shares this focus on the social–cognitive processes through which the social environment conveys information and feedback to people with other social–cognitive theories such as the self-efficacy theory [14]. It should be noted that these constructions are not necessarily formed or utilized in a deliberate and conscious fashion. Much if not most self-theorizing occurs in a relatively mindless or automatic fashion [15].

Personal identity should not be as long as human history. This means that identity was shaped when people felt the need to answer the questions of "who and what I am" and "what I do not" [16]. Identification, various dimensions, and its formation are psychologists' interests because of its role in life quality, and numerous studies have been done though. Studies showed that the processes of identification results are different for girls and boys [17]. Identity development is conceptualized as a process beginning in adolescence and peaking in the early adulthood period during which one explores and commits to possibilities in interpersonal (such as romantic and peer relationships) and ideological (such as career and religious beliefs) domains [18]. During this time, young adults are determining the importance of parental, marital, and career life roles [18, 19]. It is clear that identity formation is a complex process that affects the individual in a variety of domains. Some researchers have suggested that the domain of interpersonal relationships is of special importance in terms of identity exploration [20, 21]. The majority of women and men will marry and have children; and the more education individuals receive the more likely they are to experience competing family and career roles [19]. Passing time and cultural changes can affect the expectations and roles of women and men which are part of their identity in processing information about themselves and others and satisfaction or non-satisfaction of couples. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine the relationship between identity styles with marital satisfaction and identification of predicting factors on marital satisfaction in married men referred to centers of municipal of Tehran, Iran.

2. Methods

2.1. Research method

This was a correlational cross-sectional study.

2.2. Population, samples, and sampling method

The population includes all married male persons referring to Tehran municipal in the 10th and 11th zones. Participants' duration of marriage was between 1 and 10 years. In this study, a total of 200 married men were selected using convenience cluster sampling and the questionnaires were given and distributed to them in health homes, cultural centers of Tehran municipal. We included currently married and passing at least 1 year from a permanent marriage. If the couples have severe and critical conflicts or the woman was pregnant

or in the first 6 months of lactation, or any of the couples suffer from chronic medical conditions that affect sexual function, they were not included in the study. In addition, people with drug abuse and addictions were also excluded. Subjects with psychological disorders, chronic disorders like diabetes, cancer and other situations that may lead to confounding outcomes, were excluded. We asked participants some personal questions on parameters such as life span, job, and literacy, which can influence marital satisfaction. By regression analysis, we removed the effects of these confounders.

2.3. Research Measurement Tools

2.3.1. Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire
In this study, ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scales (EMS) questionnaire with 47 shortened questions was used to collect data associated with marital satisfaction. The scale consists of 13 subscales and a total of 47 items. The scales of this questionnaire consist of marital satisfaction, conflict resolution, idealistic distortion, personality problems, relationship, financial management, sexual contact, children training and leisure time activities, family and friends, equality-demand roles, religious distortion. A Five-theme Likert-type attitude questionnaire was used (Completely Agree, Agree, Not important, Disagree, Completely Disagree) in which the questions were scored in the range of 1 to 5. An Iranian version of questionnaire was validated by Soleimanian [22]. Internal correlation of the scale was obtained and reported by Soleimanian and Navabinejad as 0.93. Chronbach's alpha for marital satisfaction obtained 0.92. Answers to questions were added together and primary score was calculated. Then this score put in T-Score table and status of marital satisfaction of person was calculated.

2.3.2. Identity Style
The Identity Style Inventory-Revised is a 40-question-long questionnaire in which participants were asked to indicate how closely each statement describes them using a 5-point ordered category item ranging from 1 ("not at all like me") to 5 ("very much like me"). It measures four styles of personal problem-solving and decision-making (information orientation style, normative style , commitment style and diffuse/avoidant style) which represents the general approach an individual uses when dealing with identity related issues. Berzonsky provides data indicating acceptable levels of reliability and validity [23]. Stability scale of informative style , normative style, diffused/avoidant style, and commitment style, are reported 0.87, 0.87, 0.83, and 0.89, respectively. It is validated in Iran by Ghazanfari which had a Cronbach's alpha near to Berozonsky et al. which obtained 0.81 [24]. To determine the questionnaire's reliability, Jokar and Latifian used the Cronbach's alpha and obtained the coefficients of individual identity, social identity, and national-religious identity respectively 0.63, 60.60, 055. The reliability of this question-

naire for personal identity, social identity, ethnic identity, and national-religious identity are 83%, 50%, 39%, and 50%, respectively [25].

2.4. Ethics
Before enrolling the participants, the purpose of and information on fulfilling the questionnaire was explained to them.

2.5. Statistics
Questionnaires were collected and data were entered in SPSS software ver 18 and analyzed. Descriptive tests, Pearson correlation test, T-Test, One Way ANOVA Test, and Multivariate Regression Test were used for the description and analysis of data.

3. Results

The mean age of samples in this study was 31.60 years with standard deviation of 5.12 years (Ranged between 20-44 years). The average of marital lifespan was 7.26 years with standard deviation of 2.87 years (Ranged between 1-10 years). Other demographic data of participants was showed in Table1. Demographic data had normal distribution ($P<0.05$). One-way ANOVA analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction ($P= 0.01$). Figure 1 demonstrated that by increasing age, mean of marital satisfaction score was slowly decreased. There was no significant correlation between marital lifespan and marital satisfaction ($P=0.085$).

Univariate Linear Model showed that there was no significant correlation between literacy ($P=0.908$) and occupation, ($P=0.629$) with marital satisfaction.

Mean score of marital satisfaction scale was 140.69 ± 16.66 (Ranged 92-177). Table 2 showed the scores of identity styles and marital satisfaction in the participants of the study. Table 3 showed Pearson's correlation between identity styles and marital satisfaction. There was a significant relationship between marital satisfaction with normative (Figure2) and commitment styles ($P<0.05$). Though, there was no significant relation between this and informative as well as diffuse/avoidant styles ($P>0.05$).

Linear regression analysis showed that only commitment style of identity can predict the marital satisfaction significantly. It can indicate 9.1% of marital satisfaction score changes ($r=0.301$, $R2= 0.091$, Îš=0.820) ($P=0.0001$), but other identity styles cannot predict it ($P>0.05$) (Table4).

4. Discussion

The present study builds upon initial research in several ways. Besides studying the relationship between identity styles and marital satisfaction in a sample of married men, predicting the effect of different identity styles on marital sat-

Table 1: Demographic data of participants

Characteristics			
Age (Mean ± S.D) (year)	31.60 ± 5.12		
Marital Lifespan (Mean ± S.D) (year)	7.27 ± 2.87		
Occupation (Frequency, Percent)	Housewife	147	73.5
	Occupier	53	26.5
	Lower Diploma	23	11.5
Literacy (Frequency, Percent)			
	Diploma	97	48.5
	Bachelor	76	38
	Master	4	2

Table 2: Marital satisfaction and identity styles scores in participants

Characteristics	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	P-Value
Marital Satisfaction	92	177	140.69	16.66	0.001
Informative style	12	55	37.86	7.28	0.001
Normative Style	18	45	32.1	5.57	0.001
Diffuse/avoidant style	11	64	31.67	6.73	0.001

isfaction was evaluated. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis. According to the results, in dimensions of identity styles only the normative and commitment styles have a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction. This means that with increasing scores of these two styles, martial satisfaction will be increased, too. Other aspects of identity styles have no significant relationship with marital satisfaction. This lack of a significant relationship between some identity styles and marital satisfaction can be due to the reason that marital satisfaction is affected by many aspects of individual and social life. Results of our study showed that only commitment style can predict the marital satisfaction.

The results of our study showed that normative and commitment styles have a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction (P<0.05). In this style individuals accessed a powerful logic and they were stable. Choosing partner in this style is based upon previously-made powerful logic and affected current relationship. Individuals with this style are predictable for their partner. These can be what led to the results in our study. In addition, our results showed that Diffuse/Avoidant style had a negative correlation with marital satisfaction but there was no significant correlation. This is probably because avoidant style is related to low levels of knowledge, consciousness, and cognitive durability, as well as high level of decision-making and non-efficient processes. Also, our results showed that informative style had no significant relation with marital satisfaction. This can be due to the fact that informative style is encountered with traditional popularity and masculism demands. This issue originated from trending to develop more interpersonal relation-

ship, having certain and clear occupational and training purposes, definition of identity of self personally, being accepting of experiences, focus on problems, advisedly style, need to more cognition and making decision according map. In contrast to our study Maaref and et al showed that marital satisfaction had a positive relationship with informative style and inverse relation with avoidant style [26]. Bayzidi study showed that in married students, there was a positive and significant correlation between marital satisfactions with informational identity styles [7]. Bahadori Khosroshahi and Babapour Kheiredin showed that there is positive relationship between identity styles and welfare, and reverse relationship between avoidant identity style and welfare [27]. Asgharpour et al. demonstrated that there was a significant correlation between identity styles and marital satisfaction. Similar to our study, commitment style predicted marital satisfaction significantly. However, in contrast to our study, informative style had significant correlation with marital satisfaction and diffuse/avoidant or normative styles were negative predictors for it [28].

Differences between the obtained results can be initiated from various factors such as different sampling, research on both genders in contrast to our study which was done only on men, and occupational as well as environmental factors of study that differed outcomes. These results can be explained with Erikson theory. He had been indicated that personality in each stage, will encountered with a specific crisis. This will be resolved positively only when the personality had a normal improvement along with ability to exposure to a new crisis in the next stage of life [29-32]. He believed that psychosocial development followed a planned course, where all indi-

Table 3: Correlation between identity styles and marital satisfaction

Characteristics textbfP-Value	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	Like hood ratio	
Informative style	0.132	0.063	>0.05
Normative style	0.194	0.006	<0.05
Diffuse/avoidant style	-0.118	0.096	>0.05
Commitment style	0.301	0.001	<0.05

Table 4: Predictors of Marital Satisfaction from regression analysis

Model	B	Beta	F	T	R2	r	P-Value
Commitment Style	0.301	0.820	15.16	3.89	0.091	0.301	0.0001

viduals are guided by a universal pattern of growth that proceeds sequentially through eight stages. He proposed a dialectical approach where the two forces meet and hopefully the child (or adult) will gain a greater amount of the positive than the negative. It is important to note that each stage is actually a lifelong process, but each stage's theme is the most powerful force (at that time) guiding the individual [33]. Our results can be due to the traditional structure of study population and the definition of duties based on popularity habit. Also trending to follow the source of power and low compliance to obscurity and need for structure in persons can be related to obtained results. Overall, these factors can result in a sense of solidarity and satisfaction of status, and finally marital satisfaction. Our results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between age and marital satisfaction. This showed that identity scores decrease with elevating age and this subject can affect the marital satisfaction and based on Erikson theory by changing the stage of life. In addition, we showed that the level of literacy and marital lifespan did not affect the marital satisfaction (P>0.05) which indicated that identity and marital satisfaction are not related to the marital satisfaction or predicting it. Berzonsky argued that individuals not only have different types of identity, but they also go about forming their identity in different ways [33].

Multivariate regression analysis of our study showed that commitment style can predict the marital satisfaction in this study population of married men (P<0.05). Shamsaei et al. showed that identity score is higher in individuals with marital satisfaction in both male and female. They also showed that identity can predict the marital satisfaction similar to our study [34]. Bayzidi study demonstrated the one significant predictors in the regression model was information style [7]. Consistent with E. H. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, individuals high on accommodative identity style report difficulty negotiating many aspects of their romantic relationship [35]. It seemed that confidence and assumption to purposes and choices in which a person had been funded behaviorally and mentally, is a critical outcome to identity and one of the main fields in creating a relationship for a satisfied life. As a result, a person with low identity entered in marital life, will communicate to her/his partner with more pessimism, as well as distrust in interpersonal and emotional relationship.

5. Conclusion

According to the results of this study, it can be concluded that identity style is a rout in which individuals exactly used for decision-making and problem-solving (i.e. persons apply one the styles for management of daily statuses). True intimacy can be probable when a person achieved the independent identity and then it can result in satisfaction in interpersonal communication, especially in marital ones. If a person receives confidence from their identity, they can devolve all of their things to the opponent person. We concluded that commitment style can predict the marital satisfaction, and normative and commitment styles are related with this. Our study had some limitations such as the fact that the tiredness of participants was not controllable and can affect the results, controlling all variables was not possible which can confound the results, and large number of questions in standardized questionnaires was wearying which can affect the accuracy of participants. It is suggested to carry out research on a larger sample size to further popularize the results. Doing more research on informative style and etiologies of its effect on marital satisfaction is recommended. Performing workshops on recognition of self for selecting partner based on their identity style before marriage can be helpful.
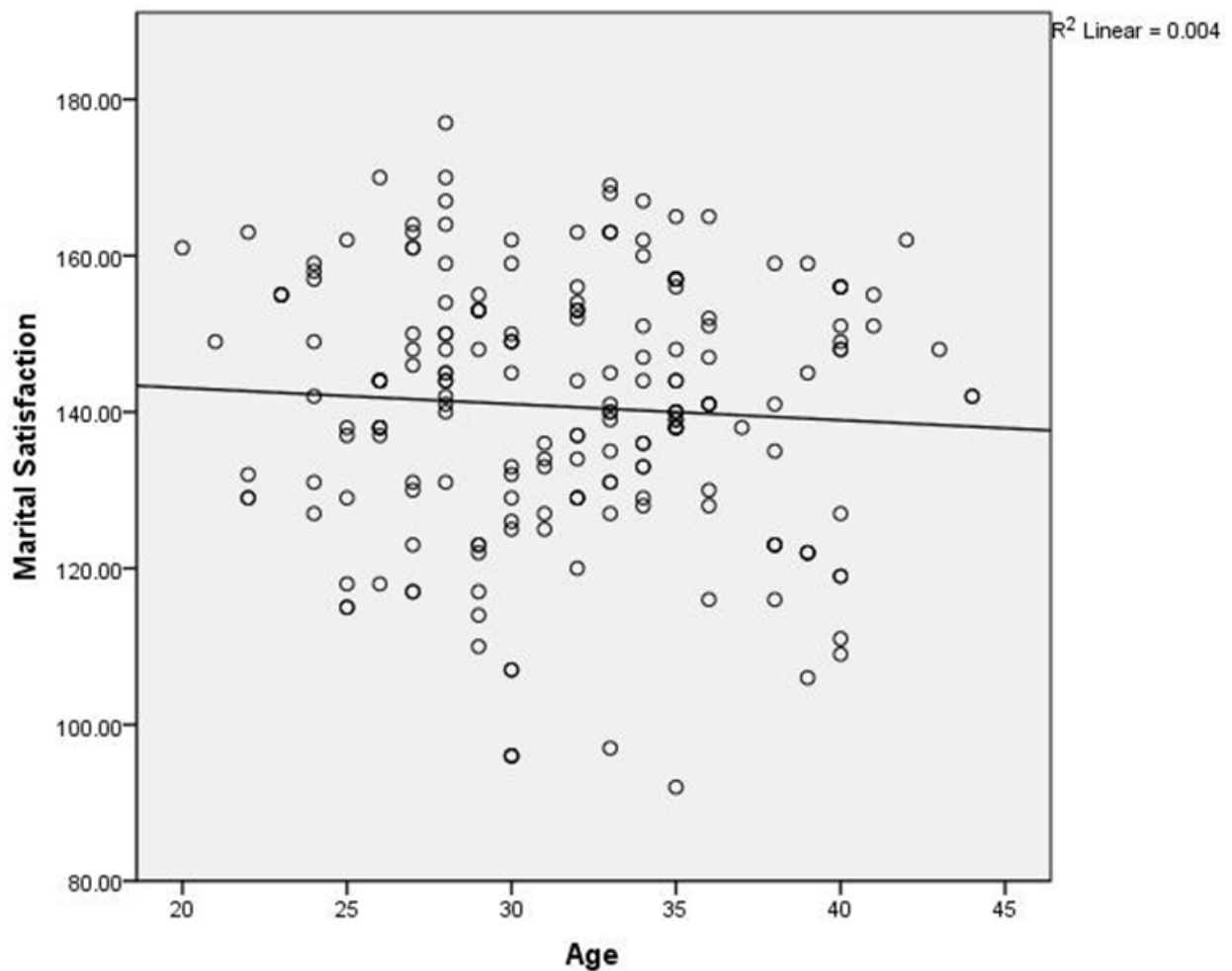
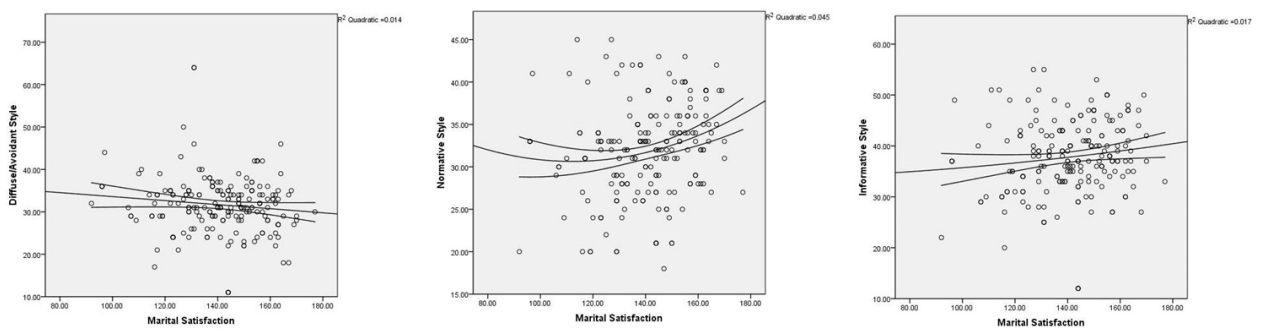**Figure 1:** Relationship between marital satisfaction and age in participants.

Figure 2: Marital Satisfaction relationship with Normative, Informative and Diffuse/Avoidant Styles.

6. Appendix

6.1. Acknowledgements

6.2. Author contribution

Saeed Seyed Esmaili planned the study, designed the survey, collected the data, doing methodological stage and wrote the article.

6.3. Funding/Support

None.

6.4. Conflict of interest

Author declares any interests.

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