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**The Study of Relationship Between Marital Satisfaction and  
Personality Characteristics In Iranian Families**

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and personality dimensions (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness) in the academic married students. For this purpose, this research was following a descriptive-correlation design. 70 married students (35 couples) were selected asked to complete the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Marital Satisfaction Inventory (ENRICH). Results indicated that neuroticism dimension is a power predictive of marital satisfaction and there is a significant negative relationship between neuroticism and marital satisfaction. The result of this study indicated that Neuroticism leading to marital dissatisfaction.

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*Keywords: Personality characteristics, marital satisfaction, personality dimensions, academic students;***1. Introduction**

Family is the most important unit of societies. Marriage has been described as the most important and fundamental human relationship because it provides the primary structure for establishing a family relationship and rearing the next generation (Larson & Holman, 1994). Marriage has been documented in every known culture (Brown, 1991). More than 90% of the world's population will marry at least once (Epstein & Guttman, 1984). Yet, while marriage seems to be a highly desirable relationship, statistics indicate that marital satisfaction is not easily achieved. One has only to consider the chronically high rates of divers in order to appreciate the magnitude of this problem (Rosen-Grandon, Myers, and Hattie, 2004). So the rate of marital satisfaction is the important factor that affects the family as a hole. One of factors that may affect the marital satisfaction relates to the personality characteristics.

Considerable research has focused on the effects of personality on interpersonal functioning in the domain of couple/marital relationships, with many examining marital dissatisfaction. Marital dissatisfaction is seen as resulting from the interplay of personality traits, stressful experiences and adaptive processes, and with personality traits

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indirectly affecting marital dissatisfaction through adaptive processes (marital interactions) (Stroud, Durbin, Saigal, and Knobloch-Fedders, 2010). Five Factors in NEO personality inventory are the most used personality characteristics for investigation of relation between marital satisfaction and personality characteristics. The most consistent predictor of marital dissatisfaction is a spouse's emotional instability (Buss, 1991; Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Low conscientiousness, low agreeableness and low openness/intellect also evoke dissatisfaction in a partner (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Buss, 1991).

A spouse with low emotional stability, low conscientiousness, low agreeableness and low openness/intellect inflicts many costs on a partner. Buss (1991) found that men and women married to people with these characteristics complain that their spouses are condescending, jealous, possessive, dependent, neglectful, unreliable, unfaithful, sexualizing of others, abuse of alcohol, emotionally constricted and self-centered (Shackelford & Buss, 2000). In a research Donnellan, Conger, and Bryant (2004) found that agreeableness and openness deserve increased attention as significant correlates of close relationships. In another research it revealed that the individuals with higher levels in the scales of extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness plus lower level in neurosis showed less rates of mental divorce (Fani & Nasaghchi Kheirabadi, 2011). It seems that cultural and other factors play roles in the relationship of marital satisfaction and personality characteristics.

So the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between Five Factors in NEO personality inventory and marital satisfaction among married university student couples in Iran. In the current study, we sought to extend previous research examining the role of personality characteristics in marital satisfaction of Iranian university students.

**2. Method**

For this purpose, this research was following a descriptive-correlation design. 70 married students (35 couples) were selected randomly. All these students were asked to complete the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) and Marital Satisfaction Inventory (ENRICH). Data were analyzed by use of both correlation and multivariate regression analysis (step by step) methods.

**3. Results**

Means of marital satisfaction for men and women in this study were 35.8 and 34.2. According t-test results, there wasn't a significant difference between men and woman's marital satisfaction. For indicating the relationship between marital satisfaction and five dimensions of personality the Pearson correlation coefficients were used. Table 1 shows the correlation between the variables.

Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients among the five personality factors, marital satisfaction

	Marital Satisfaction	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Openness	Conscientiousness
Marital Satisfaction	-					
Neuroticism	-.394**	-				
Extraversion	.092	-.370**	-			
Agreeableness	.129	.084	.142	-		
Openness	.079	-.160	.042	-.229	-	
Conscientiousness	.192	-.445**	.423**	-.127	.136	-

Results in table 1 indicate that there was a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism a marital satisfaction ( $p < .01$ ). But there weren't significant correlation between marital satisfaction and other four factors of personality (extroversion, Conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness). Also there were significant relationships between some of the five factor of personality with each other. These relations were negative for neuroticism with extroversion and conscientiousness, and a positive significant relationship was between extraversion and conscientiousness ( $p < .01$ ).

For testing that what amount of personality characteristics predicts marital satisfaction, Stepwise Multiple Regression method was used (Table 2).

Table 2. The results of Stepwise Multiple Regression for prediction of marital satisfaction with personality characteristics

	<b>B</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
N	-.275	-.394	-3.535	.001
E	-.063	-.064	-.522	.604
A	.016	.018	.144	.886
O	.163	.177	1.469	.149
C	.020	.021	.166	.869

According to Table 2, in samples of this research, marital satisfaction has a significant relationship with neuroticism, and factor of neuroticism can predict negatively the amount of marital satisfaction ( $p < .001$ ). Also four other aspects can't predict the amount of marital satisfaction.

#### 4. Discussion

In this study we investigated the relation of personality and marital satisfaction in a sample of couples who all were university students. The results indicated for this group the neuroticism, is the only aspect that could predicate marital satisfaction (with 99percent confidence). In other words, neuroticism has a negative significant relationship with marital satisfaction, or high neuroticism were related to martial dissatisfaction. These findings are consistent with studies which predicts that individual differences that couples bring to the marriage, such as personality traits, affect marital satisfaction (e.g. Stroud, Durbin, Saigal, and Knobloch-Fedders, 2010). The neuroticism is related to affective instability and negative affect as fear, sorrow, angry, guilt feeling, and embarrassment. Watson and Hubbard (1996) found neuroticism to be associated with passive, emotion-focused forms of coping, whereas extraversion and conscientiousness were associated with social support seeking and positive reappraisal coping styles. The use of more adaptive coping styles (i.e., active, problem-focused strategies rather than passive, emotion-focused strategies), in turn, was associated with higher levels of well-being (McCrae & Costa, 1986). Donnellan et al., (2007) Robins et al. (2000), and Stroud et al. (2010) replicated the well-documented link between NE and dissatisfaction. Husbands and wives who reported high levels of NE, or whose partners reported high levels of NE, described their relationships as more dissatisfying. Notably, the higher-order effects of NE were driven by its stress reaction, alienation, aggression and manipulative components, with the latter two facets evidencing the most robust actor and partner effects.

In a similar research Amiri, Farhoodi, Abdolvand and Bidakhavidi (2011) fund that neuroticism trait, of the personality questionnaire, had a negative and significant relationship with marital satisfaction; while the four other factors, i.e., agreeableness, conscientious, extraversion and openness to experience, had a significant and positive relationship with marital satisfaction.

These results have consistency whit current study. But one of the important different aspect of the current study with the same above mentioned study, was the sample group that selected from academic student couples. Another important aspect of this study was the indication of the predictive role of neuroticism trait for marital dissatisfaction. The results of this study indicated that the only characteristic that have a potential power of prediction of marital dissatisfaction was the neuroticism.

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