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Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract

The aims of paper were investigating relation between religious attitude and marital satisfaction among married students of University of Tehran. 156 married students were randomly selected as the study sample. Two questionnaires, Student's Religiosity Scale (Khodayarifard et al., 2007), and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), were used. Correlation findings showed a significant positive relation between religious attitude and marital satisfaction. Results showed that the religious attitude had a more significant relation with dyadic consensus than other three dyadic adjustment subscales. Findings also indicate not significant differences between marital satisfaction and religiosity among married male and female students. According to findings, family therapists could consider religious belief factors in occurrence and solving marital conflicts.

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1. Introduction

Since the religion and the family foundations emphasis on the same values and are related to strengthening socialization, the infield experts suppose a close interrelation between the religion and family. This assumption brought the idea that the religion can fortify and support the couple's relation (Call & Heaton, 1997). The religion can affect marital relations, because it has effective guidance to life improvement and effective system of beliefs and values to life reinforcement (Hunler & Genchuz, 2005). Also, the family attitude toward the religion passes values and religious behaviors to their descendants. Hence, the relation between religion and the family could be considered as an effective and impressionable relation. Many believe that the marriage lifetime responsibility, being kind to each other, supporting life calmness, faithfulness, and commitment to the spouse would be gained and interpreted by the religion and this proves that the marital relation is effected by the religion (Mahoney, 2001).

Many researchers have shown the relation between the religiosity and the marital satisfaction. Sullivan (2001) reported that people who are in higher level of religiosity are more stable in their marriage and have a higher satisfaction compared to the people who are in lower level of religiosity. In a study to Turkish couples (Hunler &

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Gencoz, 2005), after considering variables of degree of education and duration of marriage, came into the result that being religious affects marital satisfaction considerably. However, they reported that being religious could not reduce the marriage problems.

Call and Heaton (1997) in a study to 4587 couples, reported that among various factors of religiosity, going to the church have had the most relation with marital stability and couples disagreement on going to the church has worsened the marital conflict. This study also showed that those couples who regularly have gone the church were less encountered with divorce risks. Margaret et al. (1990) showed that religious similar status in couples, prayer and going to the church (religiosity variables) are the most predictive factors to marital satisfaction. In a comparison between couples who were in their first marriage period and those who had several marriage, Orathinkal and Vansteewegen (2006) reported a significant positive relation between being religious and marital satisfaction.

Since above mentioned studies were all in western (non-Islamic religion attitude) countries and only investigated a single factor (going to the church), and the studied population were not in higher education, it seemed necessary to perform a comprehensive study to the relation of marital satisfaction and religiosity status among a sample of university students.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

The population of current study was all married students in University of Tehran. A sample of 156 (71 male and 85 female) married students of University of Tehran were selected randomly from all resident of dormitory. Selection process was performed by allocating a number to every single one of dormitory students, then, the samples were selected randomly. Afterwards, the instruments were sent out to the samples. Samples' consensus was gained and their identifications were treated as confidential.

2.2. Instrument

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spener, 1976): this scale is a 32-item scale for assessing the quality of dyadic relation. Factor analysis showed that the scale would measure four dimensions of dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. The total scores of all questions are between 0-151; higher scores means better quality of marital relations. The internal consistency of scale was 0.96 (Sanaei, 1379). This scale has been used in several studies for example Esmaeili (1997) reported its test- retest coefficient over 4 week as 0.82 and Fathi-Ashtiani and Ahmadi (2005) as 0.84. In current study, the internal consistency was 0.94.

Student Religiosity Scale (SRS; Khodayarifard, et al, 2007): The scale has 113 items and has been produced to assess the students' attitudes to religious issues. The scale has four sub-scales of religious cognition, religious belief, religious emotion, and obligation to religious duties. The total scale internal consistency was 0.95. According to 12 experts' confirmation in psychology, psychometrics, and religion fields, the scale content validity was satisfactory. The scale criterion validity was gained and confirmed by simultaneous method and by the two scales of religious orientation (Bahrami, 2002), and by asking two questions about religiosity status from the individual, his/her mother, father, relations, friends, classmates, professors, and unknown neighbors (Khodayarifard et al, 2007).

3. Results

Statistical analysis showed a significant positive relation between total scores of religiosity scale and the dyadic adjustment scale ($r=0.49$, $p<0.01$).

Table 1. Correlation coefficient of marital satisfaction and its subscales with religiosity and its subscales.

subscale	Religious cognition	Religious belief	Religious emotion	Obligation to religious duties	Religiosity (total score)
dyadic satisfaction	0.52*	0.39*	0.49*	0.40*	0.45*
dyadic cohesion	0.35*	0.40*	0.47*	0.26*	0.39*
dyadic consensus	0.54*	0.37*	0.50*	0.35*	0.46*
affectional expression	0.38*	0.23*	0.41*	0.44*	0.44*
marital satisfaction (total score)	0.52*	0.42*	0.55*	0.44*	0.49*

* p<0.01

As shown in Table 1, examining the relation between marital satisfaction scale and religiosity scale showed that the religiosity has the most relation with dyadic consensus (r=0.46, p<0.01). Also, the results showed that the religious emotion has the most relation with total marital satisfaction (r=0.55, p<0.01). The correlation coefficients of marital satisfaction subscales with religiosity factors showed that the most relationship was between religious cognition and dyadic consensus (r=0.54, p<0.01) and the least relationship was between religious belief and affectional expression (r=0.54, p<0.01).

At the next stage, a stepwise multivariate regression analysis was used for examination of the relation and the prediction power of religiosity subscales to marital satisfaction. At the first step, religious emotions inter to analysis and could predicate 58% of variance of marital satisfaction. At the next step, religious cognition was added to the model and the percentage of explained variance reached to 64%. At the last step, the obligation to the religious duties was added to the model and the final explanation percentage of variance became 0.66%.

A t- test for independent groups was used to be examined the sexual differences in the marital satisfaction and religiosity. The results showed that there is no significant differences in two variables of marital satisfaction (t(154)=0.55, p<0,05) and religiosity (t(154)=0.1, p<0.05) among married male and female students. A summary of results are shown in table 2.

Table 2. t- test for comparison of married male and female student in marital satisfaction and religiosity

Variable	Group	Mean (SD)	t	df	P value
Marital satisfaction	Male	111.44 (2.11)	0.55	154	0.60
	Female	113.24 (2.47)			
Religiosity	Male	480.18 (6.84)	0.10	154	
	Female	81.25 (8.08)			

4. Discussion

The revealed significant relation between the religiosity and marital satisfaction in this study was in agreement with the findings of Margaret et al. (1990), Call and Heiton (1997), Sullivan (2001), Hanler and Genchuz (2005), Ortingal and Vanstiugen (2006) studies. All of these studies confirmed the positive relationship between the religiosity and marital satisfaction; also, they reported religiosity as an effective factor to marital satisfaction feeling.

The religion prepare human with general guides and if the human act upon them, the marriage unity will be fortified. The religion general guides include rules for sexual relations, sexual roles, sanctification, and removing marital conflicts (Mahoni, 2003).

The chance for a better spiritual marriage in religious individuals is high, and this is a good reason to show the effect of religion on the couple’s mind. A study of 97 couples representing the variety of religions in the US showed that the samples would call their marriage as Holy, and this means that their belief to their marriage had a

spiritual nature (Mahoni, 2005). Therefore, it seems that if couples deeply believe to spirituality of their marriage, the continuous struggles could be accompanied with the fear of losing the link with the Almighty, and thus, try to preserve their common life (Lotfabadi, 2005).

Religion study results showed that among religiosity factors, the religious tendency and emotion has the most relationship with the marital satisfaction. This result depicts that among religiosity factors for the couple's marital satisfaction, the most important factor is similar and coordinate religious tendency and emotion which can bring emotional harmony to the couple's life.

Another factor which after the religious tendency and emotion could predict the marital satisfaction is religious cognition. The common and similar religious cognition among couples which would lead to a cognitive consensus and common religious beliefs can increase marital satisfaction. The obligation to the religious duties, common performing religious customs, and more common religious factors can lead to a better marital satisfaction. In Iran, approximately all families have religious culture with religious marital system; therefore, the study results were coordinated with Iranian family system.

Several studies (Russ, Westfield, & Ansli, 2001; Ptesono et al., 2000) showed that considering religious beliefs during the treatment period can improve couple's relationships. The process is so that when a family conflict happens on a specific issue, the religion can remove misunderstandings by referring to the spiritual concepts and common religious values. The religion emphasis on religious concepts like to the holiness of marriage can solve the family problems (Mahoni et al., 1999). The family therapists, during the treatment sessions, could regard and remind the religious belief role and the holiness of the marital relation to their clients.

Family problems can be soothed using intervention religious method. Lotfabadi (2005) reported that 90.3% of Tehran people have strong religious identification. This study illustrates the strength of religious belief among Iranian peoples. Khodayarifard et al. (2002) demonstrated the application of forgiveness treatment method in family therapy by the emphasis on the Islamic disciplines.

Religiosity and common religious concepts among couples act as facilitator to understanding and cooling the conflicts and struggles. In regard with the religious culture of Iran society, leading the Iranian religious families to the therapists familiar with the religious concepts and then fostering psychologists with religious approach to serve the Iranian families seems necessary.

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