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Social and Behavioral Sciences**ELPHIC 2013**Evaluation of Learning for Performance Improvement International Conference,
Malaysia, 25 – 26 February, 2013**Marital Satisfaction and Demographic Traits in an
Emigrant Sample: Rasch Analysis**Latifehossadat Madanian^{a*} Syed Mohamed Shafeq Syed Mansor^b^{a,b}Faculty of Education, Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia,
Skudai, 81310, Johor Bahru, Malaysia**Abstract**

Previous research has demonstrated that demographic traits have impact on level of marital satisfaction. However, the universality of these findings is limited since the majority of the studies have been conducted in the Western societies. In the present paper, 29 females and 18 males from the Iranian students in Malaysia were assessed for levels of marital satisfaction and the demographic traits such as age, level of education, number of children, length of marriage and level of finance. Data were collected using Latifeh-Shafeq Marital Satisfaction Instrument and was analyzed using Winstep software, version of 3.6. Majority of participants were in satisfied level. In addition, it was evident that age, number of children and length of marriage had some impacts on levels of marital satisfaction negatively. The findings also indicated that participants with high level of education had higher level of marital satisfaction than other. This paper also offers direction for future research.

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Keywords: marital satisfaction; demographic traits; emigrant sample.

1. Introduction

While the immigration makes available an individual growth for immigrants, it is associated with stresses such as adjusting to a new culture, leaving family, friends and homeland, and learning a

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new language (Short & Johnson, 1997; Shuval, 1982). Unsurprisingly, the stresses level among married immigrants appear to be higher and associated highly with marital relationships (Ben-David & Lavee, 1994). According to Dohrenwend (1978), Hinkle (1974), Moritsugu and Sue (1983) and Richmond and Goldlust (1977). there is a negative link between marital satisfaction and immigration. Moreover, studies on married international students accentuate that transition to a new context involved adjusting to a new culture and way of life, spending little time with spouse and financial obligations (Shekarchizadeh, 2011; Gold, 2006; Kline & Liu, 2005). Chinese students in the US spending lesser time together and this had caused a low level of marital satisfaction, (Goff, 2004). Orithinkal and Vansteenwegen (2007) noted that marital satisfaction has been tied to many different individual-level and couple-level demographic traits, age, duration of marriage and number of children. However, these factors may be different across various cultures and population. It was found that, the number of married Iranian immigrants is increasing in Malaysia during two past decades (Madianian et al., 2012). According to the Iranian Embassy in Malaysia, about 14,000 Iranian students were studying in Malaysia in 2011. In academic year 2010-2011, for instance, 1,500 out of 2,594 international students in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) were Iranian. Limited studies were conducted examining marital life of this population in Malaysia (Madianian et al, 2013). Lacks of research exploring marital life of Iranian immigrants were done in Malaysia, Asadinik (2009). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to identify levels of marital satisfaction in terms of demographic traits such as, age, level of education, number of children, length of marriage and levels of finance among married Iranian students in Malaysia.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The current investigation employed purposive criteria sampling, a community sample of married Iranian immigrants who have been residing in Malaysia for at least two years beginning 2011-2012. They were 29 females aged between 24 and 52 and 18 males aged between 29 and 52. They had between 0 and 3 children. They were 15 with undergraduate degrees, 15 holds Master degree and some 17 holds PhD degrees.

2.2 Measures

The participants completed the Latifeh-Shafeq Marital Satisfaction Instrument (Madianian, Shafeq & Hafidz, 2013). It is an empirically developed instrument containing 46 items under 10 dimensions. These dimensions are as follow: communication with nine items, commitment with five items, time together with four items, personality with five items, support with seven items, financial issues with three items, sexual relationship with three items, family of origin four, conflict resolution with two items and children issues with four items (See appendix A).

Participants answered each question using a five-point scale (from “Strongly disagree” or to “Strongly agree”). The Latifeh-Shafeq Marital Satisfaction instrument has an acceptable item reliability of .83 and person reliability of .95. Rasch model suggests that criterion for accepting person and item reliability is exceeding 0.5 levels (Bond & Fox, 2007). On average, participants took approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Based on literature, participants were asked to fill background information regarding age, educational background, number of children, and length of marriage and level of finance.

2.3 Data analysis

Determining level of marital satisfaction among married Iranian immigrants was implemented by item and person map in Rasch measurement model, Winstep software, version of 3.68.2. Item-person maps are great tools to see how well the items match up with the respondents being measured. The logit

scale which is the measurement unit common to both person ability and item difficulty is used in the item- person map. The distances in person location are equaled one logit as well as the distances between the item marital satisfactions.

3. Results

Tables 2 to 6 depicts levels of marital satisfaction in terms of demographic traits in the sample of current study.

Table 1: Levels of Marital Satisfaction among Married Iranian Immigrants

Level of marital satisfaction	SL	MSL	MDL	SSL	D
Logit	1 to 2	0 to 1	0 to -1	2 to 3	-1 to -2
Participants	44%	25%	14%	13%	4%

Table 2 demonstrates the participants in SL in terms of five demographic traits (age, level of education, number of children, and length of marriage and level of finance). As shown in the table the most of participants in the SL were in age of 29-30 years old. Interestingly, most of the participants did not have children and have been married for 5 - 14 years. In addition, the majority of them are in moderate level of finance.

Table 2: Satisfied Level	SL (44%)	
Demographic traits	Most	Least
Age	29-32	More than 47 year
Level of education	Master without child	Bachelor
Number of children	5-14	3 children
Length of marriage		20-24
Level of Finance	Moderate	High

MSL is the second level of marital satisfaction that includes 25% participants. As Table 3 depicts the majority of participants have ages were between 33- 37 years old; hold PhD level, with 10-14years duration of marriage and in moderate level of finance. While the least rate of participants in this level, have one child, 5 -9 years duration of marriage and with high level of finance.

Table 3: Moderated Satisfied Level in terms of demographic traits

Demographic traits	MSI (25%) Most	Least
Age	33-37	More than 47 year
Level of education	PhD	Master
Number of children	1 child	2 children
Length of marriage	10-14	5-9
Level of finance	Moderate	High

MDL includes 14% of the participants. Surprisingly Table 4 indicated the highest rate of participants in this level were between 33 – 37 years, with bachelor degree and did not have children. Most of them were married for 5-9 years, and the least rate of them were married for 1- 4 years.

Table 4: Moderated Dissatisfied Level in terms of demographic traits

Demographic traits	MDL (14%) Most	Least
Age	33-37	24-28
Level of education	Bachelor	Master
Number of children	without children	1 children
Length of marriage	5-9	1-4
Level of Finance	High	Weak

SSL is the forth level of marital satisfaction that includes 13% of the participants. As indicated in Table 5, most of the participants in this level hold PhD level, without child, with duration of marriage of 1-3 and moderate level of finance. The least of participants were those of more than 47 years, hold a master level, with 3 children and have more than 24 years length of marriage.

Table 5: Strongly Satisfied Level in terms of demographic traits

Demographic traits	SSL (13%) Most	Least
Age	29-32	More than 47 year
Level of education	PhD	Master
Number of children	without children	3 children
Length of marriage	1-4	More than 24
Level of Finance	Moderate	Weak

DL includes only 4% of participants. These participants were those between ages of 38- 42 years. All of them have in bachelor degree, and with 2 children (as in Table 6). In addition, their lengths of marriage were 10- 14 years and have a moderate level of finance.

Table 6: Dissatisfied Level in terms of demographic traits

Demographic traits	DL (4%) Most	Least
Age	38-42	-
Level of education	Bachelor	-
Number of children	2 children	-
Length of marriage	10-14	-
Level of Finance	Moderate	-

Discussion and Conclusions

Although prior efforts have documented the impact of demographic traits on level of marital satisfaction, those studies just considered Western population and have not focused on various population.

In this study, we identified the levels of marital satisfaction in terms of demographic traits of age, level of education, number of children, length of marriage and level of finance among married Iranian students in Malaysia.

Most notably, this is the first study to identify level of marital satisfaction among this population in the literature. We found that the majority of married Iranian students in Malaysia had a Satisfied Level of marital satisfaction. Our results presented evidence that participants with high level of marital satisfaction were in a range of 29 - 32 years old. However, participants in low level of marital satisfaction were in range of 33 - 42 years old.

The observed outcomes highlights that participants with younger ages had higher level of marital satisfaction than participants with older ages. The results extend with findings of Amato & Booth (1997) and Glenn (1990). They confirm that the quality of marriage may be varied by age that people marry. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with findings of Aghajanian (1986). This researcher expressed that an old age of females in marriage is likely reasons for separation in Iranian culture.

In the Iranian context, males prefer to marry younger women. Iranian males believe that if they marry a younger female, they can socialize with them according to their norms and values (Aghajanian, 1986).

Moreover, these findings analogous to findings of Jose & Alfons (2007) that uncovered middle aged adults have more problems in their marital relationship than younger or older age adults. Surprisingly, the outcomes showed that participants with high level of marital satisfaction were without children. In contrast, participants with low level of marital satisfaction had more than one child. In explanation, this emerged outcome shows that there is negative relationship between number of children and marital satisfaction among married Iranian immigrants. These findings is in good agreement with findings of Jose & Alfons (2007), Lincoln, et al. (2008), White (1990) and Gorchoff, et al. (2008) that noted the absence of children or an empty nest had positive correlation with marital satisfaction. Also these results is identical to results of Dillon, et.al (2010) that by conducting a meta-analysis research on collectivistic cultures found that presence and number of children has impact on marital satisfaction negatively. However, this finding is inconsistent with finding of Onyishi et al., (2012). This researcher found that number of children is a significant predictor of marital satisfaction than to the other traits such as level of education and finance for Nigerian population.

In addition, our results illustrated that participants with lower level of education had lower level of marital satisfaction. This finding is in line with that of Lincoln, et al. (2008) and Karney & Bradbury, (1995). They demonstrated that individuals with lower levels of education have a higher probability of marital dissatisfaction and divorce. These represents that education is an important element in relationship satisfaction among the participants of this study. Amazingly, the observed results depicted that most of participants with high level of marital satisfaction had been married for 1- 4 years. This finding corroborates findings by Vandervorst (2000) that determined a steady decline in marital satisfaction among married couples as the years pass.

However, these findings are in contradiction to findings of Amato et al. (2003). They acknowledged the marital satisfaction decreases in the early years of marital life because spouses require the time to adapt to a new circumstance. They have to negotiate responsibilities and encounter the realities of marital life. Also, it is noticeable that the majority of participants in all levels of marital satisfaction had a moderate level of finance. In other words, level of finance has not affected level of marital satisfaction for sample of current study.

In summary, the finding of this study showed that demographic traits such as age, number of children, and length of marriage and level of education have impact on marital satisfaction. These results are not unrelated to researches in western cultures. Although our findings were supported statistically, it would be interesting to identify role of gender on level of marital satisfaction. Also we suggest that future investigations determine impact of cultures' type on marital satisfaction. It would be beneficial that future works have comparative research between collectivistic and individualistic societies based on level of marital satisfaction.

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Appendix A: Latifeh-Shafeq Marital satisfaction Instrument

1= strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= strongly Agree

No.	Item	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1.	My spouse easily expresses his or her love to me, as expected.					
2.	My spouses never do things that I disagree to.					
3.	My spouse and I enjoy spending time with each other					
4.	My spouse is a optimistic person					
5.	When I am sick, my spouse takes cares of me.					
6.	My spouse and I do not argue about money.					
7.	My spouse accompanies me in the training of our children					
8.	My parent have had good relationship with each other					
9.	Sexual relationship is one of the important aspects of our marital life					
10.	I am satisfied with the way our conflicts are resolved.					
11.	My spouse listens to me, as expected					
12.	My spouse is not disloyal to me					
13.	My spouse and I spend our free time with each other.					
14.	My spouse is very tolerating in our marital life.					
15.	My spouse provides everything to help me improve.					
16.	My partner and I have agreement for how spending money					
17.	My spouse prefers to spend his / her times with me than others					
18.	I was raised in a happy family.					
19.	I am satisfied with the frequency of our sexual activities.					
20.	My spouse and I can manage our conflict without needing the help from any third parties					
21.	My spouse and I have enough talk with each other.					
22.	My spouse seldom lies me					
23.	I am satisfied with the amount of time we spend with each other.					
24.	My spouse is a sociable person					
25.	When I am upset, my spouse tries to console me					
26.	My spouse and I decide our expenses together.					
27.	My spouse spend enough times with our children					
28.	My parents have had good relationships with me.					
29.	We have a satisfactory sexual relationship.					
30.	My spouse understands me.					
31.	My spouse shares every things with me					
32.	My spouse prefers to spend his or her time with me than with others.					
33.	My spouse can control his /her aggression easily					
34.	My spouse appreciates me as expected.					
35.	My parents have grown me with religious value.					
36.	I know My spouse loves me.					
37.	I feel secure in my marital life					
38.	My spouse has a reasonable personality					
39.	My spouse cannot express his/her love towards our children.					
40.	There is humour in our relationship					
41.	My spouse sometimes does some of my duties.					
42.	My spouse and I have a good relationship with each other					
43.	My spouse understands if I need privacy.					
44.	I am not afraid to express my feelings to my spouse.					
45.	My spouse respects me in front of others.					
46.	I feel that My spouse always needs me					