

Designing and Testing a Causal Model of Precedents and Antecedents of Marital Satisfaction

Salehe Piryaei¹, Ashraf Purazad², Somaye Jamali Paghale¹, Moluk Khademi Ashkzari¹

¹Department of Educational Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

²Payame Noor University, Isfahan, Iran

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to design and test a model of the number of antecedents (lifestyle promoting health and coping strategies with stress) and outcomes (life and mental health satisfaction) of women's marital satisfaction in Isfahan province. For this purpose, a total of 100 married women sample were selected as randomly sampling in Isfahan. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling method using software SPSS version 22 and AMOS version 20. The findings of this study indicate confirming all research hypotheses and a good fitness ultimate model with the data. Result of research has introduced a relatively comprehensive framework structural model of major antecedents and consequences of marital satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Marital Satisfaction, Coping Strategies With Stress, Promoting Health Lifestyle, Life Satisfaction, Mental Health

1. INTRODUCTION

The society is composed of families; therefore, the health of every family provides the society with good health as a whole. It can be assumed that the family health and then the society's health are ensured by each family member's health and also the health in the existing relation between them [1]. The first role of moral norms in a society lies in regulating the relations between men and women based on the principles and logic. In this vein marriage is the most successful and the deepest friendly relationship that a person can be experienced during his life [2]. Only marital life can offer three types of relation namely relationship, friendship and having a permanent companion and companionship contemporaneously. Different factors may contribute to the happiness of some marriages more than others. Adjustment and marital satisfaction are important in a marriage, more than anything [2]. Marital satisfaction, means an adjustment between expectations that a person of the marital life and what experiences in their life and is measured as the degree to which spouses perceive that their partners meet their needs and desires [3]. Marital satisfaction is a pleasure feeling, satisfaction and enjoyment by the husband or wife when all aspects of their marriage is considered [4]. Accordingly, satisfaction is a variable approach. Therefore, it is considered as a personal characteristic of the couple. As defined above, marital satisfaction is actually a positive and delightful attitude that a couple gain from different aspects of their marital relationship. According to the research that has been done in the area of marriage about matrimony, different variables are related with the marital satisfaction over time including styles for coping with stressful situations [5]. Coping styles include cognitive, emotional and behavioral efforts of a person applied when faced with psychological pressure to overcome, tolerance or to minimize the effects of stress [5]. The researchers have gathered valuable information about how to deal with the problems of life. When faced with circumstances perceived to be stressful, an individual typically mobilizes coping responses that serve to manage or minimize the demands of the situation [6]. According to Endler & Parker's [7] multidimensional interaction model of stress and coping, person variables (e.g., cognitive style, trait anxiety, emotionality) interact with situation. Many stress theorists believe that individuals tend to approach and respond to a range of stressful situations using a consistent style [8, 9]. According to Endler & Parker [8], coping styles can be categorized into three general types. Problem-focused coping is task-oriented and involves strategies aimed at taking action to modify the situation or generating alternative solutions. This strategy requires resulting information about the tension situation and likely consequences and its' characterized aspect is direct action to reduce the pressures or to increase stress management skills. Emotion-focused coping is person-oriented and is directed at regulating emotions cued by the stressor; this style of coping may comprise affective responses such as outbursts or fantasizing reactions. Emotion-focused coping strategies include ways according to which, individuals achieve the optimum level of emotional regulation and ability to deal with critical and strong situations and feelings. In general, when people cannot anticipate stress situations and adopt the solutions, emotion-focused strategies are more effective. Last,

*Corresponding Author: Salehe Piryaei (PhD of educational psychology), Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran.
E-Mail: s.piryaei@alzahra.ac.ir

Avoidance strategy is a trying to escape or avoid the situation [8] which involves the denial or undermining the stress-inducing situations, people who use this method, eject stressful thinking consciously and replace it another thinking. Avoidance coping responses are either task-oriented (e.g., distracting oneself with another task) or person-oriented (e.g., social diversion, such as seeking out others), and are generally directed at distancing oneself from the stressful situation [10].

Two common views about marital conflicts are in the literature: the first approach emphasizes the role of the individual in the development of dissatisfaction marital, and considers marital problems caused by the lack of mental health, at least in the one of the couple [11]. In the second approach, which insists on the role of interpersonal relationships and interaction between the spouses, marital problems is caused by the pattern of interpersonal interactions [11]. Thus, this approach focuses on therapies to improve communication patterns among couples as well as today. Despite the profound cultural changes and changes in lifestyles, many people lack the essential and necessary ability to deal with life issues and this has become he vulnerable in dealing with the problems of everyday life and based on that the leading cause of death and morbidity in today's societies is related to the wrong lifestyle, such as smoking, inactivity and inadequate eating habits [12]. Lifestyle is routine and usual activities' that people have accepted them. While these activities' effect on people's healthy [13]. Healthy means changing partly to human's potential and keeping balance in environment [14]. Life style modification needs to changing of behaviors' that they male our routine habits. If we do not improve global quality of life with lifestyle modification, we will have problems in continuing of motivation. Walker [15] defines promotion lifestyle: Multidimensional pattern of conceptions and self-healthy. Researches indicate that choosing of life style by people not only effects on their personal life but also it is effective on others lifestyle. In fact they are as a channel to spread matters of self-health promotion and society [15]. Meanwhile the promotion lifestyle has six aspects "physical", "nutrition", "responsibility in the face of health", "spiritual growth", "interpersonal relationships" and "stress management" [15]. This type of lifestyle, in addition to continuing and strengthening the health and well-being level lead to the feeling of satisfaction, personal satisfaction and self-actualization. The objective of health promotion programs is to encourage doing health behavior by teaching behaviors and how to do them correctly and convince people to change unhealthy habits [14].

Marital satisfaction level is along with the specific consequences in the life of people such as life satisfaction and mental health [16]. Mental health should not be considered as an ideal welfare state achieved through fully removal of illness, but health is a way for life through which inadequate human can achieve the success in the face of imperfect world without suffering pain and discomfort. Life satisfaction as another consequence of marital satisfaction [17] is an essential element in psychological health and well-being [18] and addresses to a worldwide judgment of happiness when an individual's standards of success are recognized [18]. A joyful, pleasure life may have a relation to successes. People who feel satisfaction with life concentrated on achieving goals than staff [19]. Life satisfaction from another perspective is a positive emotion including visible and internal assessment of good material, physical and social feelings which is measured by a set of unique values and is defined as a subjective evaluation of the individual from overall quality of his life, or certain aspects of his life [20, 21].

Accordingly, given the importance of the concept of marital satisfaction and many consequences that are followed by personal and family life of individuals, it is need to careful review of the structure and identify its antecedents and consequences and provide ways to promote it among couples, more than ever. This study aims to design and test a model to investigate the important antecedents and consequences of marital satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the proposed model of the study.

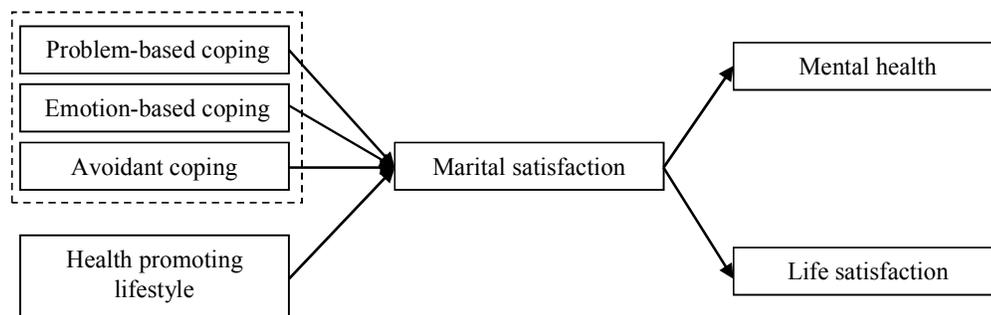


Figure 1. The hypothetical model of the current research

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

Respondents for this study were selected by stratified random sampling method from married women in Isfahan, Iran, ranging from 22-40. Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to 150 women altogether, 114 questionnaires were returned.

Measures

Marital satisfaction: ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Inventory was used to measure marital satisfaction. The original form of this inventory consists of 115 questions and 12 scales. Olson [22] used this inventory to assess marital satisfaction. He believed that every item of this inventory is relevant to one of the most important areas. Validity of marital satisfaction inventory was approved in several studies [23, 24]. The reliability of ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Inventory was obtained as 0.95 in the present study. Moreover, the reliability of personal issues, marital relationship, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationships, marriage and children, relatives and friends, and religious orientation subscales were obtained as 0.76, 0.80, 0.79, 0.71, 0.67, 0.45, 0.71, 0.64 and 0.61 [25] respectively.

Coping strategies: The 21-item Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations-Situation Specific Scale (CISS-SSC) developed by Endler & Parker [7] to assess the ways individuals react and cope with a specific situation. The instrument is composed of three seven-item subscales assessing three types of coping: task-oriented coping (e.g., analyze my problem before reacting); emotion-oriented coping (e.g., become very upset); and avoidance coping (e.g., visit a friend). Participants were asked to complete the CISS-SSC based on their reaction to the most stressful encountered over the past 4 weeks. Responses were scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). Higher scores on each of the subscales indicated greater use of the particular coping style. In present study Cronbach's alpha ranging from .72 to .81. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which provided evidence for construct validity of this scale.

Health promoting lifestyle: The Farsi version of Promotion health life style was according to health promotion life style [15]. The Health-promoting Lifestyle scale is a 46-item rating scale and consists of six subscales to measure major aspects of a health promoting lifestyle including health responsibility, physical activity, nutrition, interpersonal relations, spiritual growth, and stress management. The reliability and validity of this scale has been approved for the elderly in some surveys [12]. The reliability and validity of this scale has been approved for the in some studies [12]. In this study, the obtained Cronbach's alpha was 0.83 and CFA of the Farsi version of scale were acceptable.

Life satisfaction: the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) [29] was used to evaluate the life satisfaction. SWLS is a global rather than specify scale in nature, allowing respondents it weight domains of their lives in terms of their own values in arriving at a global judgment of life satisfaction [29]. This 5 item scale is scored on a 5-point, frequency scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always/every day). SWLS has been examined for both validity and reliability [17]. In the present research the scale was scored in a manner that higher scores reflect higher frequency of life satisfaction. In the current study the computed Cronbach's alpha is 0.94. Also we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which provided evidence for construct validity of this scale.

Mental health: the GHQ-28 used to assess mental health. In the GHQ_28 the respondent is asked to compare his recent psychological state with his usual state [30]. For each item four answer possibilities are available (1-not at all, 2-no more than usual, 3-rather more than usual, 4-much more than usual). In the study the Likert scoring procedure (1,2,3,4)is applied and the total scale score ranges from 28 to 112. The higher the score the poorer the psychological well-being of the people.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and the correlations among research variables are shown in Table1.

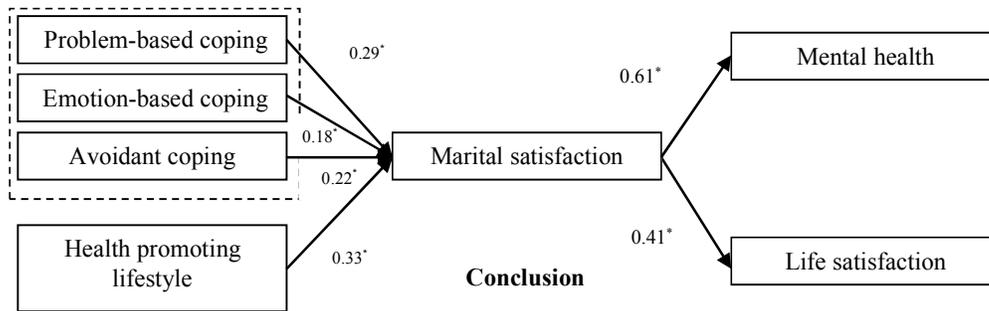
Structural model

Structural modeling results suggested that the hypothesized model fit the observed data moderately ($\chi^2=76.109$, $df=12$, $p<0.05$, $\chi^2/df= 6.342$, $GFI=0.80$, $AGFI= 0.55$, $NFI= 0.59$, $CFI= 0.62$, $TLI= 0.62$, $IFI= 0.63$, $RMSEA= 0.09$). Better fitness resulted with modification indices in Amos-18 ($\chi^2= 72.564$, $df=11$, $p<0.05$, $\chi^2/df= 6.597$, $GFI=0.81$, $AGFI= 0.53$, $NFI= 0.61$, $CFI= 0.63$, $TLI= 0.69$, $IFI= 0.63$, $RMSEA= 0.08$).. The structural model and standardized parameter estimates are shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (*Means & Standard Deviations*) and Inter-Correlations for Research Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Marital satisfaction	157.8	30.004	—						
2 Problem-based coping	65.486	11.789	0.38*	—					
3 Emotion-based coping	35.418	8.632	-0.21*	0.22*	—				
4 Avoidant coping	43.040	10.293	0.33*	-0.46*	0.42*	—			
5 Mental health	34.09	13.304	0.43*	0.12*	-0.50*	-0.24*	—		
6 Health promoting lifestyle	135.08	20.659	0.44*	0.29*	-0.27*	-0.34*	0.29*	—	
7 Life satisfaction	23.20	7.554	0.63*	0.29*	-0.22*	-0.15*	0.63*	0.42*	—

* $p < 0.001$



$p < 0.0001$ * **Figure 2.** The standardized parameters of structural model,

The purpose of the current research was to design and test a model of the number of antecedents (promoting health lifestyle and coping strategies with stress) and consequences (life satisfaction and mental health) of marital satisfaction. The results of this study suggest that styles for coping with stress (problem oriented, emotion oriented and avoidance styles) have a significant effect on level of marital satisfaction and this finding is consistent with previous studies [31, 32]. Thomson & Gilbert have shown that the use of ineffective coping styles, or using a fixed style with a less marital satisfaction and use of effective coping styles or the use of multiple styles associated with more satisfaction [31]. According to the model of Lazarus & Folkman [6] in the process of coping, cognitive skills used to solve the problem. People by applying the efficient problem-focused coping styles, uses the cognitive skills to solve the problem. On this basis, the ways to deal with the problem are directly verified and usually are achieved by finding appropriate solutions for the psychological satisfaction. In particular in the area of interpersonal relationships, especially the relationship between couples, marital satisfaction can be considered a product of this process [31]. On the other hand, to come to terms can be done in the form of emotion-focused with the aim of curbing the person’s emotional responses to stressful situation through behavioral techniques, such as use of alcohol or drugs, social support from friends or relatives, and doing things like exercising or watching TV temporarily to forget the event stress [6]. In other words, when individuals feel they cannot change the stressful situation use further emotion-focused approaches [10] and the use of such strategies provide underlying problems in the marital relationship. Another possibility is that couples using negative emotion focused coping style emotionally involved with each other and lose concentration and calm [6]. Therefore, stress becomes more and dissatisfaction increases. The apparently successful avoidance strategy seems to be remain stable for a long time, but if the conflict remains unresolved, then the stimulus is relatively weak, breaks barriers and makes the person involved in intense emotions [33].

From other hand, the findings suggest that promoting healthy lifestyle has significant positive effect on marital satisfaction, which is consistent with the earlier researches [12, 27]. Studies have shown that human life health is influenced by the lifestyle of individuals. Health behavior may decrease illness and premature death risk in people. It also seems that lifestyle is more important for men’s health than women’s health [27]. Another findings also indicate that marital inconsistency is related to the progressive diseases such as changes in the immune system, endocrine system and cardiovascular disease [15], thereby lifestyle of promoting healthy and applying its principles by individuals will lead to increase the level of marital satisfaction. So when choosing a way of life that causes to promote health, such as having a healthy dietary habits, not smoking, deaths from major causes of death now, may to reduce significantly and will lead to higher marital satisfaction in couples.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that marital satisfaction followed by mental health consequences such as increasing the level of life satisfaction and mental health. The results have shown that there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and mental health, and marital pressures with the mental disorders especially depression and anxiety disorders in one of the spouses, decrease marital satisfaction. Adjusted and satisfied couples of married life are men and women who highly agree with each other, are satisfied with their relationship type and level, are satisfied with leisure time activity types and quality, and rationally plan their time and financial issues [2]. Also, numerous studies have confirmed the significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and mental health [34]. So there is significant relationship between the two factors of marital satisfaction and mental health of women, and women with better mental health show better situation in terms of marital satisfaction. Accordingly, by identifying important factors and antecedents of marital satisfaction such as coping strategies with stress and benefit from healthy lifestyle can help to improve marital satisfaction level and to benefit the desired consequences such as prompting mental health and life satisfaction.

Limitations and recommendations for future researches

This study was a correlation study with small sample; therefore, results could not be generalized to the entire population in Iran. Interventional or longitudinal studies are recommended to confirm these results. It is suggested that future studies try to investigate the effectiveness of training courses in this field such as lifestyle change education and coping strategies with stress to improve the level of satisfaction for both men and women's. Accordingly, in addition to the effectiveness of these programs can compare them between women and men.

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