

Relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes in student couples of university of Isfahan-Iran

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Abstract

Family is one of the important social institutions that has been considered by religious and moral scholars and education experts, sociologists and psychologists. Nonetheless, the researchers in mental health, particularly the experts and researchers interested in family psychology seek to understand and express that why and how the religion and spirituality affect the family functions and consequences. Identification and investigation of factors that cause the consolidation and strength of this social institution may be a useful step towards promotion of society's culture. The population of present study consists of all student couples referring to counseling center of University of Isfahan in 2014, out of them 25 couples were selected. In this study, ENRICH questionnaire has been used for assessment marital satisfaction scale. The researcher-made questionnaire based on the Lickert spectrum for assessment spiritual attitudes were applied. The results indicated a positive and significant correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes ($r=0.462$) in student couples referring to counseling center of University of Isfahan ($p<0.01$). This paper concluded that the spirituality is one of the important and effective factors in marital satisfaction and lead to achieves a deep feeling of confidence, calmness and enjoy, and never gets intensively disappointed and dissatisfied with the marriage life in the life adversities.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Spiritual Attitudes, Couples, Iran

Introduction

The family is the first core of community and most essential basis of societies that the people of any community are grown in its bed and through which enter into the society. Doubtless, establishing and

strengthening any structure has direct relationship with correct foundation and resistibility of its columns, so the society strength and stability like as a huge building is dependent to the stableness of its columns means the family, and any tilt and instability in its structure leads to disintegration and collapse of society principles. The family is the origin of its members and an institution that including the specific hierarchies secures its members and stores the traditions, characteristics and cultural specifications of people (Mousavi, 2009). The family is one of the important social institutions that has been considered by religious and moral scholars and education experts, sociologists and psychologists. Identification and investigation of factors that cause the consolidation and strength of this social institution may be a useful step towards promotion of society's culture. Various factors affect the strength and durability of family including satisfaction between spouses. One of the very important cases in a marital system is the satisfaction that spouses experience in their marriage (Taniguchi et al, 2006). One of the most important factors that affects the survival, durability and growth of family is safe relationships based on compatibility and understanding between family members particularly wife and husband. Marital satisfaction includes objective feelings of pleasure, satisfaction and enjoy experienced by wife or husband when they consider all their marriage aspects. Investigation of factors effective on marital satisfaction is important because the spouse's satisfaction with marriage life is assumed as the important part of individual health. Marriage is the most pleasant opportunity for signifying the life, forgiveness and sacrifice, generosity and truth, amity and compassion, brevity, justice, persistence and patience, and the heart of a person with spiritual attitudes is full of belief in the meaning of existence and benefits from highest mental security and calmness (Afrouz, 2008). The spiritual attitudes have significant effect on strength of family. Believing in God causes the person's attitude to the whole existence become purposeful and meaningful. Today, in the most families, the religion and family life is deeply interwoven and inseparable and studies applied on the family processes showed that the religious and spiritual beliefs and actions are very effective on safe familial functions. Nonetheless, the researchers in mental health, particularly the experts and researchers interested in family psychology seek to understand and express that why and how the religion and spirituality affect the family functions and consequences. On the other hand, the spirituality and spiritual growth of human within the recent decades has attracted the psychologies and mental health experts, increasingly, so that World Health Organization (WHO) in its definition of human's existential aspects, refers to psychical, mental, social and spiritual aspects and propounds fourth aspect (spiritual) in the human growth and evolution (West, 2004, translated by Shahidi & Shirafkan). Within the recent years, the psychologists have considered the effect of spirituality on supply of marital satisfaction, significantly. They believed that there is an extraordinary power in belief in God and spiritual attitudes that gives a spiritual power to the man and helps him for tolerating the difficulties in life (Kajbaf & Raispour, 2008). The spirituality has been defined as a dimension of human that induces the feeling of being to the man with qualities such as essence, capacity for internal knowledge and reinforcing source, experience of a sacred mind, excellence of man toward more love and knowledge capacity, unifying with the whole life and finding a meaning for the man's existence that is the axis of any creature. In addition, the spirituality is a collection of known values, attitudes and hopes that is connected to the excellent existence and leads the person's life (Kavandish et al, 2003). The spirituality in general and particular viewpoint has been defined as seeking for something in relation with humanization. In other definition, the spirituality is a style therein the person can find his historical structure and lives therein. It is a manifest of his religion, philosophy or morals that is shown as the most excellent, honorable and noblest and most deliberate thing and results in richness of ideals or ideal perfectness (King, 1999). As Peterson & Seligman (2004), the spirituality is the private and intimate communication between man and God, and spirituality is universal; although there are specific content of spiritual beliefs, but all cultures include a concept of ultimate, supreme, sacred and divine power; in addition, all religions are seeking for helping the people to reach the core of existential communications and positive and valuable effect that supports the people for a friendly relationship, that is better than the

individuals' effort for coping with the life pains. The worship is full of potential therapeutic elements such as music, aesthetics, environments, familiar rites, praying, thinking, releasing from mental stresses is an opportunity for socialization, membership and training (Benson, 1996, quoted by Etemadi, 2005). From spiritual viewpoint, accompanying and sharing the interests results in reinforcement of belief and resistance to the pressures, training the sense of altruism, belonging, closeness to God and love in others (Etemadi, 2005).

Spirituality is the joint product of all monotheistic religions and directs the life of all humans, and its presence at the text of life, provides the satisfaction of human (Zamani, 2002). Similarly, the Islamic spirituality is a spirituality based on religion which is originated from holy Koran and infallible imams. As the viewpoint of Muslims, spiritual life is formed based on fear of God as well as his love; surrender to the will of God as well as seeking for his recognition that is the ultimate goal of creation. Spirituality is situated at the heart of Islam and key for understanding his different aspects.

Various studies applied on relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes indicate a positive relationship between these variables. Muriyera et al (2006) in their studies concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between religious practices and satisfaction with life. Arian (2001) indicated a positive and significant correlation between satisfaction and religiosity. Attari et al (2006) in their research indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between predicting variables including religious attitude and its subscales, optimism and attachment styles, and marital satisfaction. Moreover, the result of multiple regression analysis indicated that religious attitude, optimism and attachment styles express the variance of criterion variable (marital satisfaction) up to 37%. Summary of study applied by Aflakseir & Coleman (2009) indicated that the people with higher score in religiosity and religious and spiritual beliefs scales, deemed the life more meaningful. Ghanbari et al (2007) in a research titled "comparison of satisfaction with marriage life between student marriage and non-student marriage", concluded that no significant difference existed between two groups in responding two topics of attraction and investment, and significant difference existed between understanding and perception, and general satisfaction was affected by these factors. Furthermore, a significant difference existed between satisfactions of these two groups. Jamali (1996) in his study titled "relationship between religious attitudes, feeling of life meaningfulness, and mental health of University of Tehran's students", concluded that there is a significant correlation between life meaningfulness and mental health as well as between religious attitude and mental health. In addition, two variables of religious attitude and life meaningfulness had significant correlation. Mousavi (1995) indicated that the religious beliefs has positive effect on the marital satisfaction, means that the peoples' religious consistency is effective on the marital satisfaction. Butler et al (2002) indicated that the worship and benediction causes empathy, perception, commitment, flexibility in relations, sense of responsibility and using self-intervention technique for solving the conflict. The researchers assumed that for some couples, spirituality and satisfaction affects each other that result of which is increasing the reciprocation, increasing the dedication and altruism. Who obtained the lowest degree in marital satisfaction, had external religious orientation (Giblin, 1994). Galin & Pouz (1988) indicated that the couple living together for a long time, deem the religion as the most important factor for satisfaction in marriage (quoted by Ghobari Bonab, 2001). Mahani et al (2002) concluded that the religion increases the verbal participation, reduction of verbal aggression and marital conflict and ultimately increases the marital satisfaction. Mullins et al (2001) in their studies indicated that religious emotions and beliefs are effective on the marital compatibility. Faures (1991) in their research indicated that the religion is effective on marriage life and satisfaction between couples. Kim et al (2004) also concluded that the religion has positive association with positive emotions such as good temper, kindness, self-reliance, attention and calmness. Curtis & Ellison (2002) in their studies on religious participation of couples indicated that whatever the couples spent time on prays is longer, the familial commitment will be increased and marital conflicts are reduced, and the couple will experience higher marital satisfaction (quoted by Olia et al, 2009).

The spirituality is one of the important and effective factors in marital satisfaction. The spiritual person assumes himself under comprehensive protection and blessing of God, the greatest power, and so achieves a deep feeling of confidence, calmness and enjoy, and never gets intensively disappointed and dissatisfied with the marriage life in the life adversities. Whereas the marital satisfaction of couple is dependent to accepting and believing in specific values particularly spiritual attitudes, thus this study intends to analyse the relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes of student couples of University of Isfahan. According to the objective of this research and available literature, hypotheses are as follows:

- 1- There is correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes of student couples of University of Isfahan.
- 2- Marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes are different between men and women of University of Isfahan.

Research methodology

The population, sample and sampling

The present study is a correlative research. The population of this research consists of all student couples referring to counseling center of University of Isfahan in 2014, among them 25 couples (50 persons) were selected by regular random sampling and then tested.

Research tools

In this research, following questionnaires have been used for collecting the data:

- 1- ENRICH marital satisfaction scale: This questionnaire has been used as a valid research instrument in various researches for analysis of marital satisfaction. The main form of marital satisfaction questionnaire included 12 scales (115 questions) that excluding its first scale that contains 5 questions, all other scales includes 10 questions. Answer of questions has 5 options. Validity of main form of this scale reported equal to 0.92, by alpha coefficient. Its main form has been normalized in Iran by Salimani (1994), and reduced the number of its questions from 115 to 47 which are scored based on the Lickert spectrum. Reliability coefficient of shortened form has been calculated based on alpha coefficient equal to 0.95%.

The researcher-made 35-item spiritual attitudes questionnaire and each question has 5 options that was scored based on Lickert spectrum. The benchmark for spiritual attitudes is total score of questionnaire. The range of total score is 35 to 175. This questionnaire has been provided according to cultural background of Iranian families and benefitting from Islamic verses and narratives and includes spiritual beliefs, spiritual experiences in life and also religious activities. Formal validity and its content was confirmed by professors of counselling dept. of University of Isfahan and its total validity was calculated by Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.96.

The Analysis of Data

The data firstly was described by descriptive statistical indices and then was analyzed by Pearson correlation by SPSS V.21.

Research Findings

The average marriage period equaled to 3.6 and average age range 25.6, including 32 associate's degree students, 14 bachelor's degree students and 4 Ph.D. students.

The mean value, standard deviation and correlation coefficients of research variables are provided in Table1.

Table 1: The mean value, standard deviation and coefficients of correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes of couple

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Marital satisfaction	Spiritual attitudes
Marital satisfaction	171.74	25.47	1.00	
Spiritual attitudes	149.40	22.73	0.462**	1.00

** p<0.01

The results obtained from Pearson coefficients of correlation indicated that the correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes ($r=0.462$) is significant in level ($p<0.01$). Therefore, it is concluded that whatever the marital satisfaction of student couples of University of Isfahan is higher, their spiritual attitudes will be also higher.

To analyse the data and test the second hypothesis, t-test was performed for comparing the scores of men and women in marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes.

Table 2: Comparison of marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes based on gender

Variables		Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Degree of freedom	t value	Significance level
Marital satisfaction	Woman	25	169.12	24.17	49	47.66	0.001
	Man	25	174.36	26.95			
Spiritual attitudes	Woman	25	139.48	24.15	49	46.47	0.001
	Man	25	159.32	16.32			

The summary of table 2 indicates a significant difference between women and men in marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes, so that mean value of women scores in marital satisfaction ($x=169.12$) is lower than men and in spiritual attitudes, mean of men score ($x=159.32$) is higher than women score men in significance level ($p<0.01$).

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes based on gender

Variable	Gender	Marital satisfaction	Spiritual attitudes
Marital satisfaction	Male	1.00	0.146
Spiritual attitudes	Female	0.734**	1.00

** p<0.01

Summary of table 3 indicated that Pearson coefficients of correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes in men ($r=0.146$) is not significant ($p>0.05$) and in women ($r=0.734$) in significance level ($p<0.01$). Consequently, whatever the score of couples' marital satisfaction is higher, their spiritual attitudes will be higher, as well.

Discussion and Conclusion

The family is one of the most important society institutions that whatever it is more durable and strengthened, the society is subsequently more stable and sustainable. According to the viewpoint of existentialism that emphasizes on difficulty of correct living in the modern world, the humans by their efforts towards achieving the material comfort that offered by the advanced, lose their bonds to the family and religion, and accordingly lose the protecting values confronting the requirements of social conformance and don't choose anymore but follow and obey and consequently deny their real self and involved in a spiritual death therein feel meaninglessness in the life (Govahi Jahan, 2007). On the other side, re-emergence of spiritual attraction and seeking for clearer perception of faith and its application in routine life has attracted the attention of experts and therapists for awareness and sensitivity to spiritual issues (Etemadi, 2005). As a result, the family has direct effect on mental health of its members and considering the importance of modern societies for continuity and survival of family and mental and spiritual health of its members, investigation and research on factors threatening the mental health of family members is completely necessary. Among the factors effective on family, the factor that recently considered by the psychologists is spiritual attitudes in life, which has been studied in this research under title of "relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes in student couples of University of Isfahan. Summary of this study indicated a positive and significant correlation between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes ($r=0.462$) in student couples referring to counselling center of University of Isfahan ($p<0.001$); it means having the spiritual attitudes in life may have considerable effect on marital satisfaction of couple and consequently their mental health. In addition, there is a significant difference between marital satisfaction and spiritual attitudes in women and men.

Results of this study are consistent to the studies applied by Muriera et al (2006), Aflakseir & Coleman (2009), Attari et al (2006) and Mousavi (1995).

For some people, spiritual aspect is a spiritual dimension of person's identity and self-disclosure in this relation leads the marital satisfaction towards a sacred experience. For these people that spiritual dimension of life is very important, spiritual participation is the most important aspect of marital satisfaction (Bagarozi, 2001). It is concluded that the spirituality is one of the important and effective factors in marital satisfaction. The spiritual person assumes himself under comprehensive protection and blessing of God, the greatest power, and so achieves a deep feeling of confidence, calmness and enjoy, and never gets intensively disappointed and dissatisfied with the marriage life in the life adversities.

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