

# The relationship between emotional intelligence health and marital satisfaction: A comparative study

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Marriage is known as the most important incident in everyone's life after birth. The most important purpose of marriage is achieving a life followed with love and affection beside the spouse and providing mental comfort and general health. The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence health and marital satisfaction among married people. **Materials and Methods:** The research method is descriptive- analytic and its design is comparative, done on 226 people including 114 persons (50 women and 64 men) having marital conflicts, and 112 people (58 women and 54 men) having marital satisfaction, by cluster random sampling from 13 districts of the city of Isfahan. Bar-on (with 90 questions) and Enrich marital satisfaction (115 questions) questionnaires were used for collecting the required information. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including independent *t*-tests, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analysis, using SPSS software version 19. **Results:** The results from the research showed that the scores of emotional intelligence in married people group having marriage conflicts who had referred to the administration of justice was  $57.3 \pm 13.2$ , and the random sample from the married people in the city of Isfahan as the comparing group had the score of  $67.2 \pm 9.5$ , and the difference of the average scores for the emotional intelligence for the two groups was significant ( $P < 0.001$ ). The correlation analysis showed that there was a significant and positive relation between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $r = 0.529$ ). The results of linear regression also showed that the general emotional intelligence predicts the quality of marital satisfaction. The emotion of the predicting line of the marital satisfaction score ( $y$ ) is in the form of:  $y = 14.8 + 0.656x$ , by using the emotional intelligence score ( $x$ ). **Conclusion:** Regarding the close relations between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction, education centers such as universities, organizations and family clinics could use this variable in micro- and macro-social plans for improving the quality of the married people relations and promoting health of the families and the society.

**Key words:** Emotional intelligence, general health, marital satisfaction, married people

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## INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization has defined general health as full physical, mental and social welfare in an individual, with dynamic and mutual effects between them.<sup>[1]</sup> It has also defined the family as the primary social factor in increasing general health and social welfare.<sup>[2]</sup> Furthermore, Corsini considered mental health as the mental state followed by emotional intelligence, almost released from anxiety signs, and

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incapability in providing structural relations, confrontation with unwanted aspects, and life stressing stimuli.<sup>[3]</sup>

Families are the founders of personality, values and humanistic views. Hence families are regarded as the greatest wealth and also worry in the society, and marital conflicts are considered as serious problems having negative effects on physical and health of people couples<sup>[4]</sup> and their children.<sup>[5]</sup>

Marital satisfaction, family agreements, and firmness together make a process under influence of various factors such as the rate of understandings before marriage, cultural harmony and economic similarities, behavioral and personality soundness, conformity in values, views, interests, common purposes, coordination between families, and interventions by others, family management quality, family happiness factors, family sentimental atmosphere, life problems, stressors, and mental stresses.<sup>[6,7]</sup> Marital satisfaction has used phrases like compatibility and happiness, and has used as a replacement for the criteria regarding marital life quality.<sup>[8]</sup> Thus, marital satisfaction could strengthen families as the infrastructure for the community.<sup>[9]</sup>

Gutman believe that the possibility of reaching the deadlock in marriage and reaching divorce could be predicated by analyzing the relations between married people.<sup>[10]</sup> Evidences indicates that most of the marital conflicts and problems are related to inabilities for maintaining sincere relations, and misunderstanding between married people, as well as other various factors such as economic, cultural, and social factors would provide inappropriate and bad effects in their common life, and frustration, hopelessness and humiliation feelings would overcome between the couples in facing the mentioned problems.<sup>[11]</sup>

The intelligence of people does not guarantee their success in long-term and other features are necessary for proper human relations and success in life that are referred to as emotional intelligence.<sup>[12]</sup> Emotional intelligence is the newest transformation regarding the concepts of relations between thoughts and emotion. This phrase was first offered and suggested by Salovey and Mayer.<sup>[13]</sup> As a kind of capability, emotional intelligence consists of capacity perception and stating, recognizing, applying and managing self-emotions, and emotions by others. It can be said that Bar-on is the first person pioneering in evaluation of emotional intelligence as a criterion for health. He considers emotional intelligence as a set consisting of emotional and social sciences and capabilities affecting our general abilities in effective confrontations with environmental requirements.<sup>[14]</sup>

The subject for men and women to know what duties they have, with regards to their spouses, and proper undertaking of them, could provide that causes for stabilization of family relations<sup>[15]</sup> and prevent the emergence of intense conflicts.<sup>[16]</sup> Therefore, the way to achieve a successful marriage and a family life with prosperity is indeed quite simple. It is important to know when, where, and how you should apologize to your

spouse. To have abilities like patience and getting along with problems in anger require skills including coordination, self-control, and deep understanding of needs and emotions of others.<sup>[17]</sup> These skills have great similarities with forming domains of emotional intelligence.<sup>[18]</sup>

The aim of this study was to describe the importance of emotional intelligence to improve the quality of couples' relationships and helping promote healthy families and healthy society.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method is descriptive- analytic and its design is comparative, performed on individuals between married people in the city of Isfahan in 2012. The sample population included 226 people including 114 persons (50 women and 64 men) having marital conflicts, who had referred to the administration of justice, by simple random sampling, and 112 persons (58 women and 54 men) having marital satisfaction, by cluster random sampling from 13 different districts of Isfahan as the control (comparing) group. A questionnaire was used to collect relevant data. The researcher presented information about the voluntary participation, the purpose of the study, the content of the questionnaire, and questionnaire data confidentiality. Was considered 1 h to complete a questionnaire for each participant and as there were many questions they were allowed to fill out the questionnaire at homes. Some gifts were also given to the participants for their contributions toward the research. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including independent t-tests, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analysis using SPSS software version 19.

### Research tools

A questionnaire is used in this research that includes four different sections. Was considered 1 h to complete a questionnaire for each participant and due to many questions allowed them to fill out the questionnaire at homes:

1. Demographics such as age, sex, level of education, number of children, duration of common married life, occupation, family income, living costs, and number of marriages
2. This part is related to Bar-on emotional intelligence questionnaire with 90 questions
3. 115 questions regarding marital satisfaction
4. At the end, each person is asked to write his/her views. This part is quite optional and confidential.

### Bar-on emotional intelligence questionnaire

The first emotional intelligence scale of Bar-on was started by asking why some people are more successful in life than others and after 17 years of research in the year 1997, the first scale of emotional intelligence was prepared.

Emotional intelligence scale includes five different aspects (intrapersonal skills, confrontation with stress, compatibility, and job creation), and 15 micro-scales. The test

responses are arranged on a 5-degree scale, as Likert's (I am completely agreed, I agree, I agree to some extent, I disagree, I am totally disagreed). According to Bar-on, emotional intelligence is considered in five domains: (1) Intrapersonal; (2) interpersonal; (3) compatibility; (4) stress control; and (5) general temperament.<sup>[12]</sup> This questionnaire has 90 questions and it is the first ultra-cultural questionnaire for evaluation of emotional intelligence. This test has been done in Iran in three stages and after applying some changes in the main context of the questionnaire, elimination or changing some questions and rearrangement of them for each scale, the questionnaire changed from being with 133 questions to a questionnaire with 90 questions. Minimum score of the questionnaire is 90 and maximum score in it is 450. Obtaining higher score in this test indicates more superiority of the person in the considered scale and vice versa, lower marks indicate more infirmity. Cronbach's alpha scale was reported to be 93% for the test.<sup>[19]</sup>

### Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire

Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire has been chosen in order to survey marital satisfaction. This questionnaire has been used as a valid tool in countless researches to test marital satisfaction. Olson has used the questionnaire to probe marital satisfaction and believes that this scale is related to changes, which take place in the duration of human's life and also is sensitive to the changes that happen in the family. This questionnaire can be used as a diagnostic tool for couples who seek for marriage and matrimony consultation or reinforcement of their marriage strength. Marital satisfaction questionnaire is established by 115 questions and 12 scales that apart from the first scale that has 5 questions, the rest include 10 questions. In enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire, the respond to the questions has been based on five-level Likert item ranging from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied and Olson and assistants have reported the validity of this questionnaire as 92% with Cronbach's alpha co-efficiency. This questionnaire's validity and reliability has been estimated in a test by Soleimanian. Its validity has been calculated through alpha co-efficiency as 93%.<sup>[20]</sup>

## RESULTS

This study was performed on 226 people, consisting of 114 persons (50 women and 64 men) having marital conflicts

who had referred to the administration of justice, with simple random sampling, and 112 persons (58 women and 54 men) having marital satisfaction, with cluster random sampling, from 13 different districts in the city of Isfahan.

Table 1 shows gender frequency distribution on two group samples including 114 person (50 women and 64 men) who are married and having marital conflicts, and who had gone to Isfahan justice administration, and 112 married persons (58 women and 54 men) having satisfaction in the city of Isfahan.

Table 2 shows average and standard of demographic variables in married people having conflicts that had referred to Isfahan justice administration and married people having marital satisfaction, in the city of Isfahan. Independent *t*-test in this table showed that average age, spouse's age, marital life duration had no significant differences between the two groups, also, independent *t*-test showed that the average number of children, monthly income and monthly costs had significant differences between the two groups, hence number of children and monthly costs of married people having conflicts who had referred to Isfahan justice administration were more than the similar data for married people having marital satisfaction, in Isfahan, but average of monthly income of married people having marital conflicts who had gone to Isfahan justice administration was less than the married people with marital satisfaction.

Comparison of the average, standard deviation of the general scores for marital satisfaction and the score for general emotional intelligence and their domains are observed in Table 3. Independent *t*-test in this table showed that the average scores for emotional intelligence and also the "five" relevant domains in the married people group having marital conflict who had referred to Isfahan justice administration are significantly lower than the control group consisting

**Table 1: Gender frequency distribution**

Gender	Group 1*		Group 2**	
	No.	%	No.	%
Women	50	43.9	58	51.8
Men	64	56.1	54	48.2
Total	114	100	112	100

\*Married people with marital conflict that referred to Isfahan court of justice. \*\*Random sample of people with satisfaction in Isfahan

**Table 2: Average and standard deviations of demographic variables**

Demographic variable	Group 1*		Group 2**		Independent <i>t</i> -test	
	Average	SD	Average	SD	T	P
Age	33.8	8.1	33.3	8.2	0.49	0.627
Spouse's age	33.5	8.6	33.7	8	0.14	0.889
Duration of married life (year)	8.9	7.7	9.3	8	0.33	0.745
Number of children	1.76	0.95	1.48	0.6	2.1	0.044
Monthly income	801,384	393,370	997,638	628,372	2.17	0.032
Monthly costs	745,614	51,926	940,277	85,857	1.8	0.035

\*Married people with marital conflict that referred to Isfahan court of justice. \*\*Random sample of people with satisfaction in Isfahan

**Table 3: Comparing average (outof100) and standard deviation regarding the general score for marital satisfaction score of emotional intelligence and its domains**

Variables Average	Group 1*		Group 2**		Independent t-test	
	Average	SD	Average	SD	T	P
General score for marital satisfaction	42.1	8.2	68.2	8.4	23.7	<0.001
General emotional intelligence	57.3	13.2	67.2	9.5	6.5	<0.001
Emotional intelligence domains						
Interpersonal domain	56.9	13.4	66.9	11.4	6.1	<0.001
Interpersonal domain	69.1	14.9	76.3	10.3	4.2	<0.001
Compatibility domain	54.8	13.5	63.9	10.3	5.8	<0.001
Control stress domain	43.1	20.2	55.1	17.9	4.8	<0.001
General temperament domains	58.8	16.4	71.5	13	6.5	<0.001

\*Married people with marital conflict that referred to Isfahan court of justice. \*\*Random sample of people with satisfaction in Isfahan

**Table 4: Correction coefficient between the total scores of emotional intelligence and the domains and the scores of marital satisfaction**

Domain of emotional intelligence	Total score of marital satisfaction	
	r	P
Interpersonal domain	0.522	<0.001
General temperament domain	0.480	<0.001
compatibility domain	0.468	<0.001
Interpersonal domain	0.432	<0.001
Control stress domain	0.375	<0.001
Total emotional intelligence	0.529	<0.001

of married people having marital satisfaction in the city of Isfahan ( $P < 0.001$ ).

Table 4 shows four correlation coefficients between emotional intelligence total scores and the relevant domains with the general scores regarding marital satisfaction. Pearson correlation test showed that there is a direct relation between emotional intelligence and its five domains, and the total scores for marital satisfaction ( $P < 0.001$ ).

Finally, the results of linear regression analysis showed that the general emotional intelligence and its domains are predicting the marital satisfaction quality. The equation for the predicting line for the score of marital satisfaction (y), by the used of emotional intelligence score (x) is in the following form:  $y = 14.8 + 0.654x$ .

## DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence health and marital satisfaction among married people. This study showed the direct positive effect of emotional intelligence and the quality of marital relations ( $P < 0.001$ ,  $r = 0.529$ ). The results of this study are consistent with the desired goals.

Schutte (2007) analyzed relationship between high emotional intelligence and interpersonal relations, in an extensive study. They concluded that people having high rate of emotional intelligence had coordination in social situations, higher self-control, higher social skills, more cooperative responses, closer relations and more marital satisfaction.<sup>[20]</sup> Ciarrochi showed that individuals with high rate of emotional intelligence have obtained higher scores in coordination, self-reviews, and self-control in social situations. These people have shown closer and more affectionate relations with their spouses, and experience better marital satisfaction in their marital life. They are also talented in creating and maintaining high qualitative relations.<sup>[21]</sup>

Research by Forest, Stuzer, indicates that high marital compatibility leads to bio-psychological aspects in spouses.<sup>[22, 23]</sup> Furthermore, Ogińska-Bulik (2005) has shown that individuals with higher emotional intelligence have lower working stresses and health problems. Emotional intelligence has prevention role in health problems especially, depression. Individual with higher level of emotional intelligence are identified by their better capabilities in confronting with stress and expressing emotions as well as their management and controlling abilities.<sup>[24]</sup>

In the research by Akbarzadeh (2004), restoration is considered as one of the emotional components having significant effects in predicting marital satisfaction. Restoration of emotions functions in their balancing aspects.<sup>[25]</sup>

In the research by Khameneh (2006), 240 married high school teachers of the city of Tehran were randomly selected and examined according to the determined aims and assumptions. The results show that there is a significant correlation between "emotional intelligence" and "marital satisfaction".<sup>[26]</sup>

In the studies by Salahian (2010), 50 couples were randomly selected from 13 urban districts of Isfahan to complete the



questionnaires. The obtained results from regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence and forgiveness in couples could predict the variable regarding marital conflicts.<sup>[16]</sup> In the research by Dokanehchard (2010), 200 people were selected by multiple random sampling method and the results showed that the components of emotional intelligence are effective in the rate of satisfaction in between married high school teachers of the city of Ilam.<sup>[27]</sup> By Jadiri (2010), 110 people among students of Imam Khomeini Institute were randomly selected. The results in this regards show that there is significant relation between marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence. It indicates that the higher the score of marital satisfaction, the scores related to mental perturbation would be lower and hence people benefit from higher emotional stability. The above investigation shows that there is a relation between marital satisfaction and emotional stability.<sup>[28]</sup>

In the research by Abdollahi (2011), the sampling group included 60 married women in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari province, with the age range from 23 to 49 years of age. The results showed that marital satisfaction and harmony have positive correlations with emotional intelligence and problem-oriented confrontation style.<sup>[29]</sup>

In the research by Rajabi (2011), 250 married employees (125 men and 125 women) were selected randomly among the employees of governmental offices of the city of Shiraz, by satisfied random sampling method. The results showed positive correlations between 23% and 52%, between the variable regarding sexual ideologies for the emotional intelligence marital roles and the quality of life. Among the predicting variables (the sexual ideologies for the marital roles and emotional intelligence), the variables regarding marital roles and emotional intelligence predict the variable regarding quality of life.<sup>[30]</sup>

Due to the effects of emotions in life, especially interpersonal relations and also due to ever-increasing problem in marriages, the main aim of this research is indeed emphasize on the importance of instructing emotional intelligence, as well as improving the quality of relations between people couples and also develop the emotional potentials of people couples for them to have more self-respect for themselves and achieve convince, courage, assurance and satisfaction, and also get more flexibility in life to learn how to solve their problems and have more satisfied life with regards to the emotional potentials. Hence, since emotional intelligence is of acquiring nature, and has social basis, individuals learn the ways for emergence of emotions in communicating with others, either consciously or unconsciously.

## CONCLUSION

Since the present research showed a positive and strong relation between the soundness of emotional intelligence and marital relations quality, this variable could be used in

improving human relations and increasing marital satisfaction between couples, via instructing the skills related to improving emotional intelligence in universities, organizations, and family clinics.

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