

Causal pattern of couple's satisfaction based on personality trait components by mediating role of mother-child relationship

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Abstract

Introduction: Marital satisfaction means a positive attitude that couples gain from different aspects of life. The researchers nowadays in search of factors related to marital satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to test the causal model of couples' satisfaction by mediating role of mother-child relationship based on personality trait components.

Method: This research was applied in terms of purpose and correlational in terms of descriptive method. The statistical population included both sexes of boys and girls in grade six of primary schools and their mothers in Shiraz city. The sample was 260 individuals according to Raykov and Marconlides who were selected by stratified random sampling from 9 part of Educational System of Shiraz city to collect research data from NEO Personality test, ENRICH Couple Scale and Fine, Moreland and Schwebel parent-child relationship were used. Data analysis was performed by Pearson correlation and structural equation modelling.

Results: Findings showed significant negative correlation between neuroticism and couples' satisfaction but positive correlation with extraversion, openness experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Also, the mother-child relationship variable predicts couples 'satisfaction in a positive direction.

Conclusion: Personality traits, as the preconceived forms of engagement by individuals in marital relationships affect the mediating structures including the mother child relationship. Therefore, couples' satisfaction affected by intrapersonal factors in particular personality traits. The results also revealed that personality trait components with mediating role of mother-child relationship have the capacity to determine marital satisfaction ($P \leq 0.01$).

Keywords: couples' satisfaction, mother-child relationship, personality trait components

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Citation: Parpaie R., Amiri H., Arefi M.. Causal pattern of couple's satisfaction based on personality trait components by mediating role of mother-child relationship, *Family and health*, 2022; 11(4): 27-39

Introduction:

Women in every society especially societies with rich Islamic culture because of their privileged position as the center of the family play a significant role in the vitality, prosperity and dynamism of family members (1). One of the factors that makes women play a proper role in the family and society is marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is one of the most important indicators of a successful marriage, the survival and health of the family and it is related to the joy and pleasure of relationships between married people. Satisfaction is viewed as a variable related to attitude hence it is a personal characteristics of wives (2). In another definition, marital satisfaction is considered as the individual's overall mental assessment of the marital relationship and the extent that their needs, wants, and aspirations are satisfied. Because couple's interactions with each other affect their marital satisfaction and marital relationship causes satisfaction of the family and it subsequently causes satisfaction of life (3). The important question is what factors are involved in marital satisfaction? Among the effective factors in determining the level of marital satisfaction of individuals one can mention family variables and individual characteristics. The study of effective factors in marital satisfaction is important in this regard that satisfaction with married life is an important part of personal health (4).

On the other hand, psychologists believe that any behavior that a person show is influenced by many factors such as environmental, emotional and personality factors. The meaning of personality factors is in fact the personality traits that can predispose a person to a series of behaviors. If possible, a person with different personality traits should not engage in such behaviors. Therefore, personality factors are one of the most important factors that is able to recognize the complexities of human behavior in different situations (5). Personality traits refer to a set of traits that exists in a person almost permanently and they distinguish him/her from others. Five major personality factors have been under focus as an important framework in understanding the structure of human behavior by researchers and wherever they seek to explain behavior, it is considered as an important variable. This model examines five personality traits including neuroticism, extraversion, openness experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (6). Chehreh, Ozgoli, Abulmaali husseni and Nasiri (7) by examining and comparing the relationship between personality traits and women's marital satisfaction concluded that marital satisfaction has a negative relationship with the personality component and a positive relationship with openness experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The results of Sheikh Zeineddin, Farrokhi and Abbaspoor research (8) showed that the personality factor of neuroticism and marital satisfaction have a negative relationship but the personality factors such as extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness and marital satisfaction have positive relationship. In their research, the extraversion personality factor had the largest role in predicting marital satisfaction. Schaffhuser, Allemand and Martin (9) in examining the effect of personality on marital satisfaction found that the correlation between agreeableness, openness experience and conscientiousness with marital satisfaction indicators are moderate and positive and between neuroticism and marital

satisfaction indicators is moderate and negative. Concerning spouses' personality on parenting relationship, Rohner (10) believes that mechanisms that affect the personality of parents affect their acceptance and rejection of their children. The results of Yazdkhasti and Ghasemi research (11) showed that parents who have higher levels of agreement and extraversion have warmer and more structured parenting. These parents have more positive interactions and they are responsive enough and use more authoritarian control methods. Also, Carens Holt research (12) showed that emotional social support from parents is associated with life satisfaction. Therefore, the concept of personality is very important as many societies and cultures have their own accepted patterns. But individual differences are an important factor that show why some people cope better than others with environmental conditions and variables and they have satisfaction, quality and mental health and finally different levels of motivation (13).

Also, with regard to effect of parent-child relationship on marital satisfaction it can be said that the impact of family on the overall development of the child starts from the moment of birth and it is manifested with special power and learning. The parent-child relationship means that parents express their feelings, expectations and attitudes towards the child and mutually understand and consider the child's expectations, feelings and needs (14). The relationship between mother and child that is the most basic relationship for the child can affect the satisfaction of couples. Low quality relationship between mother and child in some cases can lead to problems and conflict in the marital relationship. Also, it has been found that women have high marital satisfaction in their lives, and hence their child have high behavioral health and emotional relationship (15).

Among the logical reasons in studying the details of marital satisfaction, one should refer to its understanding and centrality for health of family and individuals. Various researches have studied the effect of personality traits and mother-child relationship on marital satisfaction or quality but each of the above structures is either viewed separately in these studies or desired structures and their interactive effect is not viewed together in one model. Nowadays, the position of marital satisfaction has been recognized as very important due to the increasing number of divorces in research related to family and marriage. Because satisfaction is an important structure in married life, it has an important function in maintaining, satisfying and healthy marriage. Thus, absence of satisfaction causes the marriage contract and family foundation to be shaken subsequent to that family may eventually lead to divorce. Therefore, doing research like this is necessary to achieve effective factors on increasing level of stability and satisfaction of couples to understand the important correlations of the structure of marital satisfaction and effective factors such as the parent-child relationship. So, according to the importance of the couple relationship in the family system process, this research seeks to examine the effect of personality trait components on couples' satisfaction based on the mediating role of mother-child relationship in the form of a structural model. This article also tries to answer the question of whether this data has a good fit with the proposed theoretical model for the relationships between the components of personality traits and marital satisfaction with mediation the mother-child relationship.

Methods:

Variables in this research were conducted in a causal model. The methodology of this study is based on correlational study and structural equation model. The statistical population include all students at level six (both sexes) with their mothers in Shiraz city. The totality of individuals in this study were 92331 persons among them 260 (mother and child) were selected as the sample randomly according to the view of Raykov and Marconlids. Of nine areas of education in Shiraz,

two primary schools were selected from each area: a primary school for boys and a primary school for girls. The criteria for participating in the study included whether their parents are alive and they are living with their parents also the duration of mothers' marriage varied between 14-25 years and their age is under 50 years old. Exclusion criteria included physical disabilities and chronic mental illness, taking medicine and psychiatry, last year hospitalization history and receiving psychotherapy in the past year.

The method of conducting this research was such that by participating in school and talking with the authorities about the objectives of this research and then the questionnaires completed with their mothers after the initial connection by stating the importance and goals of the research and creating a sense of trust. Marital satisfaction, personality traits and mother child relationship scores were analyzed according to the purpose of the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistics including correlation was used in a structural model. The data were analyzed by means of SPSS 22 and AMOS 23.

Instruments

NEO Five personality factors: This scale is a short form of the revised NEO-RI-R questionnaire that designed by Costa and McCrae (17) for quick assessment of the five main personality factors. This questionnaire has 60 items that measures the five dimensions of normal personality namely, neuroticism, extraversion, openness experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. They were scored based on a five-point Likert scale in the range between strongly disagree (0) and strongly agree (4). Costa and McCrae in a study of 280 students report reliability coefficients of five personality traits from the NEO short form test (60) items by Cronbach's alpha method in the range of 75% to 85% (17). Khojasteh Mehr (18) has appropriate reported validity of this questionnaire using two methods of simultaneous criteria validity and internal correlations. He has evaluated the reliability of this questionnaire with two methods of Cronbach's alpha and composing. And the result for individuals in the process of divorce were 66% to 90% for Cronbach's alpha and 51% to 82% for composing and the result for ordinary individuals are 60% to 84% for Cronbach's alpha and 64% to 80% for composing. The reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha method in this study was 82%.

ENRICH couple scale: Enrich questionnaire was selected to assess marital satisfaction. This questionnaire has been used as a valid research instrument in numerous researches and clinical works. Fowers and Olson (19) used this questionnaire to assess marital satisfaction and they believe that this scale is related to the change that occur during the course of human life. It is also sensitive to changes in the family. For this purpose, the Enrich short-scale form including 4 subscales of 35 items was used. Each of the topics of this questionnaire is related to one of the important areas. Assessing these areas within a marital relationship can describe the potential problems of couples or it can identify strong areas and strengthen them. The scoring range of this scale is five-choice and for each of the items, a four-choice scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagrees considered (20). Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire for subscales of marital satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution and ideal distortion are as follows 86%, 80%, 84%, and 83%. The validity of the questionnaire retest for each subtest was 86%, 81%, 90%, 92% respectively. The reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha method in this study was 84%.

Parent child relationship scale: The original version of this questionnaire for parents to communicate with their children was prepared by Fine, Moreland and Schwebel in 1983. This instrument contains 48 questions (24 questions for a relationship with a father and 24 questions for a relationship with a mother). This instrument has two faces, one to measure the child's relationship with the mother and one to measure the child's relationship with the father. Both scale forms are the same, except that the word father and mother change. However, various factors have emerged in parent related forms. These factors for the mother questionnaire are: positive emotion, annoyance role confusion, replication, communication or dialogue. The total score is the sum of the averages of the subscales. Its reliability with alpha coefficients 61% to 94% for mothers related subscales. As well as the overall alpha 96% has an internal consistency above the questions. The validity of this scale benefits from well-known groups and good predictive validity and it discriminates the children of divorced and integrated family efficiently(21). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability and the value of alpha coefficients for subscales related to mother was obtained 61% to 91%. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 91%.

Results:

In order to understand the mean of performance and distribution of scores of participants in each of the variables, mean and standard deviation indicators of the whole group are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive indexes of research variables

Research variables	Average	Standard Deviation
Marital Satisfaction	109.85	10.83
Mother-child Relationship	109.11	13.73
Neuroticism	39.64	5.55
Flexibility	42.12	5.2
Extraversion	37.3	5.11
Agreeableness	42.05	4.94
Responsibility	35.37	4.98

Correlation matrix of the studied variables (marital satisfaction, mother child relationship and personality characteristics) is presented in table 2. As seen in table 2, the highest correlation coefficient was related to the relationship between extraversion and marital satisfaction (. /417) and the lowest correlation coefficient was related to the relationship between flexibility and neuroticism (. /000). Significant levels for all coefficient are ($P \leq 0/01$).

Table 2. Correlation matrix between variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Marital Satisfaction	1						
Mother-child relationship	0.366**	1					
Neuroticism	-0.225**	-0.300**	1				
Flexibility	0.216	0.205	0.000	1			
Extraversion	0.417**	0.273**	-0.051	0.182**	1		
Agreeableness	0.246**	0.188**	-0.023**	0.203**	0.317	1	
Responsibility	0.397**	0.222**	-0.100	0.136*	0.290**	0.090	1

**P≤ 0.01

In modeling structural equation, model fit and significance of relationships is checked. In order to investigate the fitness of the proposed model, fitness indicators were used. Table 3 shows the fitness indicators of the proposed model.

Table 3. The most important indicators of the general fit of the assumed model

General Indicators	Absolute fitting		Adaptive Fitting		Parsimonious fit	
	CMIN	GFI	IFI	CFI	PNFI	RMSEA
Sample index	22/110	0.972	0.966	0.965	0.67	0.087
Quantity						

According to the contents of table 3 the values of the fit indicators of the proposed model include absolute fit, adaptive fit and frugal fit indicators. The general fitting indicators of the model are in a good level. In this model mother child relationship acts as a mediator variable that has been able to play its mediating role between personality traits and marital satisfaction.

Table 4. Estimate direct, indirect and total effects in structural equation model

Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
Neuroticism on Marital Satisfaction	-0.247	-0.192	-0.439
Flexibility on Marital Satisfaction	0.307	0.144	0.45
Extraversion on Marital Satisfaction	0.742	0.142	0.884
Agreeableness on Marital Satisfaction	0.402	0.137	0.539
Being Responsible on Marital Satisfaction	0.721	0.141	0.862
Neuroticism on Mother-child Relationship	-0.743	-	-0.743
Flexibility on Mother-child Relationship	0.542	-	0.542
Extraversion on Mother-child Relationship	0.636	-	0.636

Agreeableness on Mother-child Relationship	0.534	-	0.524
Responsibility on Mother-child Relationship	0.613	-	0.613
Mother-child Relationship on Marital Satisfaction	0/243	-	0.243

**P≤ 0.01

Table 4 shows the extent of direct, indirect and total effects of each variable on marital satisfaction. Direct path of mother-child relationship to marital satisfaction (. /243) is statistically significant. Direct path of flexibility, extraversion, agreeableness and responsibility to mother child relationship and marital satisfaction are positive. Significant and direct path of neuroticism to mother child relationship and marital satisfaction is negative and significant.

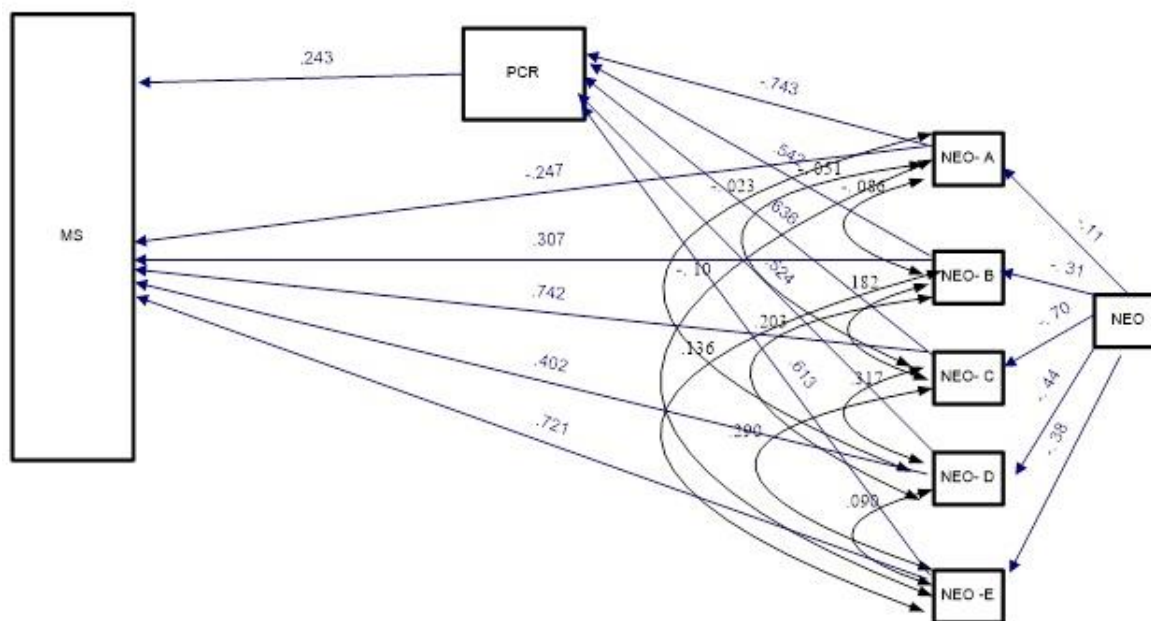


Figure 1: structural equation model for relationship between research variables

Based on figure 1, theoretical model of research is confirmed and is accepted as the final model of research. As a result, we can say that personality traits can provide a desirable model by considering the mediating role of mother child relationship. That is, personality traits effect on mother child relationship and in terms of this interaction predict marital satisfaction.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The results obtained from the present study according to the presented model and placing the association of mother-child relationship as a mediator variable showed that the model of the researcher's expectations satisfies and has a good explanatory power and fit for marital satisfaction. It also indicates that personality traits directly and the mother-child relationship indirectly can predict marital satisfaction. In the analysis of the research data, it was concluded that neuroticism traits negatively, and extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness positively predict marital satisfaction. These findings are also in line with the results of Chehreh et al. (7), Sheikh Zeineddin et al. (8), Schaffhuser et al. (9). Since high scores in neuroticism are associated with emotional instability and negative emotions such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, feeling guilty and hatred, those who score high in this area are more likely to have impulsiveness, aggression, and vulnerability. People with high scores on neuroticism are more likely to show anxiety in stressful situations and mostly use emotion-focused methods (22).

Couples with high extraversion and low neuroticism are more likely to use a problem-oriented approach and are genetically more emotionally stable, and therefore have higher mental health. Extroverted couples are able to cope with daily stresses better and more likely to seek social support that helps them cope with stress. Instead of intimidating and threatening others, extroverts attract others by displaying their charms. Extraversion is associated with positive emotions such as optimism, love and intimacy, as well as the social and active nature of extroverts which in combination with other traits has a positive effect on marital relationships and the consequence is satisfaction with this relationship. Koohi, Etemadi and Fatehizadeh (23) found that the factor of extraversion deals with social interactions. Therefore, couples who have fewer interpersonal relationships are more vulnerable and frustrated when they have problems in their marital relationship. Chehreh et al. (7) stated that agreeableness allows people to control their feelings and deal calmly in their interactions with others. Agreeable spouses have more positive perceptions of each other which in turn can lead to greater satisfaction and reduced frustration. Agreeableness reflects traits such as sympathy for others, helping them, and believing that others are mutually helpful. High levels of agreeableness allow the person to regulate their emotions in interpersonal interactions to show gentler behaviors, and to resolve conflicts between interpersonal relationships more easily and this behavior then cause reduction in negative interactive behaviors. Therefore, increasing cooperation and compatibility between couples create more support for each person from his / her spouse and reduces the emotional distance between them. In addition, agreeable individuals are usually trustworthy and believe in the honesty and goodwill of others (23).

Open people are curious, rational and have a liberal attitude. They tend to listen to and understand their partner. Also, open people can endure hardships and respect differences in thought and behavior, thus reducing many aggressions and increasing harmony and companionship. Openness is a special value for women. In general, increasing the sense of aesthetics, curiosity, acceptance of new ideas, and flexibility increase marital satisfaction. The positive relationship between being conscientious and marital satisfaction is due to the fact that people who are highly conscientious need to make progress and therefore strive to maintain a successful relationship (22). Given the above issues and the fact that people with a conscience are ready to face life issues, they are regular and have a plan, responsibility also adherence for ethical principles and as a result they strive to achieve their goals.

Research data also showed that mother-child relationship predicts positively marital satisfaction. In other words, the mother-child relationship was also able to mediate significantly in the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction. These results are in line with the results of the research of Shafiee Kandjani et al. (14) and Ahmadi Farsani et al. (15). The relationship between mother and child that is the most basic relationship for the child can affect the satisfaction between couples. Children do not in themselves have a negative effect on the couple's relationship but rather increase economic and social pressures and reduce the couple's time together. The low quality of the relationship between mother and child in some cases can lead to problems and conflict in marital relationships. It has also been found that women who have high marital satisfaction in their lives have high behavioral health and emotional relationship between themselves and their children (15).

In relation to the parent-child structure, most of the total effects are related to mothers' neuroticism and extraversion. Thus, the mother's extroversion increases the mother's relationship with the child and the emotional distress reduces this relationship. These results are in line with the results of Yazdkhasti and Ghasemi (11) and Rohnar (10) researches. In explaining these results, it can be stated that among the five personality factors, three factors of neuroticism, extraversion and responsibility are the most prominent factors in personality-related research that are also related to parenting (24). Personality in interaction with environmental stresses and supportive resources determines parents' capacity to care for and improve children's development. Meanwhile, parents who are more neuroticism and less flexible express more restlessness and anger and have less intimate relationships with their children. In contrast, parents who show more extraversion and less neuroticism have warmer and more structured parenting. They show more positive interactions and they are more responsive and the environment in which they raise their child is more structured and stable (25).

Because achieving a healthy relationship has principles and methods, and parents must have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to establish a spiritual and intellectual bond with their children based on principles to be able to better play their educational role. Also, the quality of the marital relationship and the degree of marital happiness depend on how the spouses interact and how they deal with stressful life situations. Personality seems to influence patterns of marital interaction. According to the present study, it can be concluded that using the Neo Five Personality Factors Questionnaire as a measure of communication, emotional and motivational styles for marriage counseling is useful. Using this questionnaire in marriage counseling helps people to have a better understanding of themselves, to understand the relationship between their characters and each other, and also to realize that each person sees herself differently from what the other party perceives. Finally, it can be said that couples' awareness of each other's characteristics leads to better understanding of each other and more marital satisfaction. Therefore, it is suggested that educational workshops be held by people specializing in family therapy and counseling to clarify the importance of marital relationships and effective communication between parents and children. One of the limitations of this study was the lack of control over variables such as the social and economic status of the subjects. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalizing research findings. A point is that it has been done only on married women and this can limit the process of generalization of results to other population groups. We can also mention the use of self-report questionnaires that may have affected the results of this study.

Conflict of interest

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

Acknowledgment

This is an article for fulfilment as a partial requirement for satisfying PhD thesis in Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah Branch. Many thanks and gratitude to the people who participated in this research, and all those who helped us somehow, are sincerely grateful.

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