



Investigating the Relationship between Maladaptive Schemas and Marital Satisfaction in Mothers of Primary School Children

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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and maladaptive schemas. The sample of the study included 380 mothers of primary school children in Bandar Abbas city. The sample was selected using multistage random sampling method. In this study, short-forms of Young maladaptive schemas questionnaire and ENRICH Marital Satisfaction questionnaire were used. In order to analyse data, descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient ($\alpha = 0.05$), ($\alpha = 0.01$) and multiple regression analysis were used. The findings suggested that there are significant and negative relationship between three domains of the schema including disconnection and rejection, other-directedness and over vigilance and inhibition and marital satisfaction components including marital satisfaction and communications. Moreover, there are significant and negative relationships between disconnection and rejection and conflict resolution. In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship between domain of the schema relevant to impaired autonomy and performance and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, there is a positive and significant relationship between domain of the schema relevant to over vigilance and inhibition and ideological distortion. In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship between domain of the schema relevant to impaired limits and conflict resolution.

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INTRODUCTION

The marital satisfaction term refers to overall pleasure or satisfaction of either wife or the husband from intimate marital relationship [1]. Some experts define marital satisfaction as a function of life cycle stages [2]. Marital relationship is described as the most important and most fundamental human relationship since it provides a basic structure for establishing the family relationships as well as educating the next generation [3]. Marital satisfaction is a very important as well as a complex aspect of the marital relationship.

In other words, it is one of the most crucial aspects of a marital relationship. In other words, one of the vital aspects of a marital system lies in the satisfaction that spouses may feel or experience in the marital relationship [1]. In early stage of the marriage, many couples may have the same level of marital satisfaction. However, as time passes by, the same couple may show different levels of marital satisfaction due to various reasons. Desirable relationships along with satisfaction within the family help the family members to more effectively cope with various situations in their lives. On the other hand, marital conflict may cause trauma. Marriage inherently challenges the couples' relationship. It may also cause conflict among the couples [4]. Factors influencing marital satisfaction were discussed repeatedly by various researchers. The complexity of marital satisfaction concept and factors affecting marital satisfaction is a challengeable field of study. Coping with another individual who belongs to another culture and family background is difficult. On the other hand, changes within life cycle of every individual add further complexity to this matter. Meanwhile, it can be assumed that the effects caused by the primary environment in which the individual lived before marriage may affect both marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the individual as well [4]. Part of this effect, according to Young, is derived from such schemas that the individual has subconsciously shared with his/her spouse after marriage. Then, this scheme affect marital satisfaction either intentionally or unintentionally [1]. Early maladaptive schemas of emotional and cognitive patterns are considered as self-damaging behaviors, which form in early stages of evolution of the mind. They may also repeat in the course of life [5].

Young et al. [6] believed that several particular schemas, especially such schema created as the result of bad experiences in childhood, might be the main core of chronic behavioral disorders and interpersonal problems. In order to explore this idea, Young identified a set of early maladaptive schemas. He proposed Schema Therapy for modification of these schemas. Selecting incompatible partner is one of the most common mechanisms by which schemas work. When schemas are activated, they may cause bias in interpretation of the events. This bias is manifested in interpersonal psychopathology (spouses) as misunderstandings, distorted attitudes, false

assumptions, unrealistic goals and expectations. When maladaptive scheme is prompted, the individuals may usually experience high levels of emotions such as extreme anger, anxiety, sadness or guilt. Individual schemas are one of the important factors, which may lead to either failure or success in marriage. Being aware of the attitudes, thoughts and beliefs on marriage may result in a satisfying marriage. Being realistic about this issue may also lead to marital satisfaction [7].

The present study was conducted based on Young maladaptive schema model. According to Young [8], the schemas affect both emotional and intimate relationships between the couple. The source of these schemas is the main emotional needs including secure attachment to others, autonomy, the adequacy and identity, freedom to express needs and healthy emotions, spontaneity, leisure, realistic limits, self-control, early life experiences (failure to satisfy basic needs, overestimated satisfaction, and identification with the parents' incorrect behavior) and the children's emotional temperaments (the child's mood characteristics which are inherent and distinctive original character of the child) [9].

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of an educational intervention based schema model in promoting the couples' marital satisfaction. For example, Ariety and Bemporad conducted a study and found out that early maladaptive schemas have a negative effect on marital satisfaction. Stiles [10] showed that early maladaptive schemas of "emotional deprivation" predict that there is less intimate and romantic relationship between the couple. Epstein et al., conducted a study and showed that [11] cognitive elements, particularly stringent standard schema, one-sided sacrifice (sacrifice) are the deepest cognitive elements, which predict whether the couples are compatible or incompatible. Beach et al conducted a study and showed that maladaptive schemas of extreme self-control (inability to express feelings) may lead to marital dissatisfaction in the couples' relationships. It may also collapse the family. In this regard, this study aimed to determine the relationship between marital satisfaction and early maladaptive schemas. In fact, this study was designed to answer the following question: Is there a relationship between marital satisfaction and maladaptive schemas?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive, non-experimental and correlational kind of study. The statistical population included all mothers of primary school children in Bandar Abbas. The sample included 380 mothers of primary school children. The sample was selected using multistage random sampling method.

Measurement Tools: The Short Form Questionnaire of Young Maladaptive Schema: 75 items of this questionnaire was developed by Young [8] in order to assess 15 early maladaptive schemas. These 15 schemas are categorized into five domains. Each item is scored by a six-degree scale. The score 1 represents the minimum score in measuring early maladaptive schemas while score 6 represents the maximum score in measuring early maladaptive schemas. The range of the scores is between 1 and 6. The maximum score indicates high score of early maladaptive schemas of the subject. In this questionnaire, every 5 questions measures one kind of schema. The reliability and validity of this tool is demonstrated in numerous studies. Validation of this questionnaire was conducted in the University of Tehran [12].

Internal consistency was obtained as 97% in the female population while this variable was obtained as 98% in the male population using Cronbach's alpha coefficient [13]. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was obtained as 76% for the whole questionnaire.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire: This scale consists of four subscales. Each subscale includes 35 items. Each one of the topics of this questionnaire is associated with one of the important fields. Assessment of these fields within a marital relationship can either describe potential problems of the couples or identify areas of strengths in the couples' relationship. ENRICH couple questionnaire was executed by Olson Vami on 25501 subjects in 2000. The alpha coefficients for the subscales of marital satisfaction questionnaires including marital satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution and ideological distortion are respectively as 86%, 80%, 84%, and 83%. The test-retest reliabilities of each subtest are respectively as 86%, 81%, 90%, and 92% [14].

RESULTS

In this study, 32.9% of subjects were between 25 to 29 years old, 27.1% were between 30 and 34 years old, 13.9% were between 35 and 39 years old, 13.9% were between 40 and 44 years old, 10% were between 45 and 49 years old while 2.1% were between 50 and 54 years old. In this study, 20.3% of the subjects had primary education were, 26.6% had secondary education, 19.5% had high school diploma, 12.6% had Postgraduate Diploma, 21.1% had a bachelor degree or higher than that.

According to the table 1, regarding marital satisfaction components, the marital satisfaction had the highest mean while the ideological distortion had the lowest mean. Moreover, regarding maladaptive schemas, disconnection and rejection schema and over vigilance and inhibition schema had the highest mean while impaired autonomy and performance schema had the lowest mean.

Table 1. The descriptive data relevant to maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction scales schemas

Main factor	Factors	Mean	SD	N
Marital satisfaction	Marital satisfaction	37.64	6.86	380
	Communication	33.67	5.93	380
	Conflict resolution	31.18	4.57	380
	Ideological distortion	19.20	3.14	380
Maladaptive schemas	disconnection and rejection	70.21	13.93	380
	impaired autonomy and performance	24.21	7.16	380
	impaired limits	28.85	9.28	380
	other -directedness	24.93	8.96	380
	other -directedness	29.42	7.55	380

The main question: Is there a relationship between overall marital satisfaction and maladaptive schemas? Regarding overall marital satisfaction scales, marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution had a significant relationship with maladaptive schemas in 0.05 level of significance. Marital satisfaction and ideological distortion had a significant relationship with maladaptive schema of impaired autonomy and performance respectively in 0.05 level of significance and 0.01 level of significance. Marital satisfaction and conflict resolution had a significant relationship with impaired limits in 0.05 level of significance. The communication had a significant relationship with impaired limits in 0.01 level of significance. Marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution had a significant relationship with maladaptive schema of over vigilance and inhibition in 0.01 level of significance. Conflict resolution had a significant relationship with maladaptive schema of over vigilance and inhibition in 0.05 level of significance. Moreover, overall marital satisfaction scales had a negative relationship with maladaptive schema of disconnection and rejection while the latter had a positive relationship with maladaptive schema of impaired autonomy and performance. In addition, the marital satisfaction and communication scales had a negative relationship with maladaptive schema of impaired limits while the scales of conflict resolution and ideological distortion had a positive relationship with maladaptive schema of impaired limits. The scales of conflict resolution and ideological distortion had a negative relationship with maladaptive schema of other-directedness. Furthermore, all scales of marital satisfaction except ideological distortion had a negative relationship with maladaptive schema of over vigilance and inhibition. Summary of multiple regression analysis of maladaptive schemas on dimensions of marital satisfaction

Table 2. Regression coefficients

Method	B	Beta	R	R ²	T	Sig.
Regression coefficient	4.232	2.49	0.276	0.076	17.761	0.000
Disconnection and rejection	-0.049	0.025			-1.999	0.046
Impaired autonomy and performance	-0.2	0.054			3.728	0.000
Impaired limits	-0.111	0.042			-2.626	0.009
Other-directedness	-0.068	0.04			-1.725	0.085
Over vigilance and inhibition	10.105	0.047			-2.257	0.025

In order to predict the criterion variable (marital satisfaction) by predictor variables (disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness and over vigilance and inhibition), the regression coefficient of B=44.232 and beta coefficients for each one of predictor variables, as shown in the above table were considered. It is shown the criterion variable is significant and predictable by all the predictor variables.

Table 3. Regression coefficients

Method	B	STD.ERROR	Beta	R	R ²	T	Sig.
Regression coefficient	40.855	2.174				18.793	0.000
Disconnection and rejection	-0.043	0.021	-0.102	0.241	0.058	-2.026	0.043
Impaired autonomy and performance	0.099	0.047	0.119			2.104	0.036
Impaired limits	-0.095	0.037	-0.148			-2.577	0.010
Other-directedness	-0.053	0.035	-0.080			-1.534	0.126
Over vigilance and inhibition	-0.084	0.041	-0.107			-2.-62	0.040

In order to predict the criterion variable (marital satisfaction) by prediction variables (disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness, over vigilance and inhibition), a regression coefficient of B=40.855 and beta coefficient for each one of the predictor variables as shown in the above table were considered. It was shown that criterion variable is significant and predictable by all the prediction variables.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

Method	B	STD.ERROR	Beta	R	R ²	T coefficient	Sig.
Regression coefficient	33.968	1.703				19.944	0.000
Disconnection and rejection	-0.037	0.017	-0.113	0.168	0.028	-2.220	0.027
Impaired autonomy and performance	-0.015	0.037	-0.023			-0.395	0.693
Impaired limits	0.059	0.029	0.120			2.051	0.041
Other-directedness	-0.036	0.027	-0.071			-1.337	0.182
Over vigilance and inhibition	-0.021	0.032	-0.035			-0.658	0.511

In order to predict the criterion variables (communication) by prediction variables (disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness, over vigilance and inhibition) the regression coefficient was considered as B=33.968 and beta coefficients were considered as the values in the above table. The criterion variables are only significant and predictable by the scales of disconnection and rejection and impaired limits.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Method	B	STD.ERROR	Beta	R	R ²	T coefficient	Sig.
Regression coefficient	17.575	1.163				15.107	0.000
Disconnection and rejection	-0.004	0.011	-0.019	0.196	0.039	-0.379	0.705
Impaired autonomy and performance	0.070	0.025	0.159			2.776	0.006
Impaired limits	-0.018	0.020	-0.053			-0.915	0.361
Other-directedness	-0.024	0.019	-0.070			-1.316	0.189
Over vigilance and inhibition	0.047	0.022	0.112			2.139	0.033

In order to predict the criterion variables (conflict resolution) by the prediction variables (disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness, over vigilance and inhibition), a regression coefficient of B=17.575 and the beta coefficients as the above table were considered. The criterion variable is only significant and predictable by the scales of impaired autonomy and performance and over vigilance and inhibition.

DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to answer the following question: Is there a relationship between marital satisfaction and maladaptive schemas? The results of both regression and Pearson correlation analysis showed that there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of marital satisfaction. These findings are in line with the principles of cognitive theory and the schema. The results of correlation coefficient showed that there are significant and negative relationships between maladaptive schema of disconnection and rejection and the scales of marital satisfaction including marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution. This means that if the score of disconnection and rejection increases, marital satisfaction, satisfaction from the level of communication and the ability to resolve conflict also decreases .

The results obtained from this study are in line with those obtained by previous studies [10, 11, and 12]. In all of these studies, it is shown that if the maladaptation of the scheme increases, marital satisfaction decreases. For example, Styles [10] conducted a study and showed that early maladaptive schemas of disconnection and rejection areas (emotional deprivation) predict less intimate and romantic relationships between the couples. Yousefi [15] showed that maladaptive schemas lead to biases in the interpretation of the events. These misunderstandings affect marital satisfaction. Zolfagari et al. conducted a study and showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of marital intimacy.

In explaining these findings, it can be stated that maladaptive schemas can lead to biases in interpretation of the events. This bias is represented as misunderstandings, distorted attitudes, false assumptions, goals and unrealistic expectations among the couples in psychopathology. This misunderstanding affects future perceptions and evaluations in the mutual life [2] .

The results obtained from Pearson correlation also showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between impaired autonomy and performance and marital satisfaction and ideological distortion. In other words, if the score of the subject in the schema increases, the marital satisfaction also increases. Obtaining high score in ideological distortion shows unrealistic marital relationship. This result is consistent with the findings obtained by previous studies [7, 15]. The results are also in line with Young theory based on individuals with impaired autonomy and performance. In explaining this finding based on Young theory, it can be stated that the individuals who have this scheme are incompetent, dependent and vulnerable individuals whose inner self is undeveloped and involved. They cannot independently take responsibilities for their lives. These individuals often ask other people to make their decisions and carry out their tasks. They have no self-esteem. They had not undergone the normal process of growth and independence. They are dependent on others like a child. They ask others to make their own decisions for them. They yield to their schema since they had accepted that this schema

is the correct one. They never try to change this schema. They also avoid doing so. This would cause feelings of marital satisfaction in them [1].

The results obtained from Pearson correlation analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between components of impaired limits and marital satisfaction and communication and conflict resolution. The former has a negative relationship with marital satisfaction while it has a positive relationship with conflict resolution. In other words, if the score of the subject in the area of impaired limits increases, his score in marital satisfaction and communication decreases while his score in conflict resolution increases. This result is consistent with the findings obtained from the previous studies [1, 7, and 3]. In all of these studies, it was shown that the maladaptive schema has a negative effect on marital satisfaction .

In explaining these findings based on Young theory, it can be stated that the individual whose schema is in this area have undeveloped inner limits regarding mutual respect and self-control. They are often spoiled, selfish, irresponsible and narcissistic. The spouses who believe in these schemas know that they are superior to others and think whatever they want should be done immediately, regardless of whether it is reasonable or not .

The results obtained from Pearson correlation showed that there is a negative relationship between components of other-directedness, marital satisfaction and communication. In other words, if the score of the individual in this schema increases, his marital satisfaction decreases. Moreover, the regression analysis showed that criterion variable of marital satisfaction is significant and predictable by other-directedness component. These results are consistent with findings obtained from the previous research [4, 5, and 11].

In explaining this finding, it can be stated that the individuals who obtain high scores in schemas of other-directedness are those who attempt to satisfy others' needs instead of their needs. In other words, if these individuals were approved by others, they will feel satisfied and happy. If they were not approved by others, they may have different feelings. If these individuals are married to normal individuals or their schema did not successively seek approval from others, they will not have satisfied marital relationships [1].

Another result obtained in this section shows that there is a negative and significant relationship between other-directedness and communication. In other words, if the score of the subject in other-directedness area increases, his obtained score in communication also decreases. This result is consistent with the theory of Young and Ellis .

In explaining this result, it can be stated that individuals whose schema is in this area try to satisfy others' needs rather than satisfying their own needs. The individual may feel that his desires, beliefs and emotions have no validity. Moreover, he feels that his attitudes are not important for others and himself. This scheme belongs to the individuals whose parents had too much control over them. Therefore, they avoid the situations, which raise the possibility that they may be controlled by others or be entangled in others' ties. They usually avoid long-term romantic relationships. However, they often choose the spouse who is a controller. These individuals are often not satisfied with life. They are susceptible to overestimated rejection. It could cause dissatisfaction in married life.

The results obtained from Pearson correlation showed that there is a significant relationship between over vigilance and inhibition and marital relationship, communication and ideological distortion. The former has a negative relationship with marital satisfaction and communication. The former also has a positive relationship with ideological distortion. This result is consistent with the findings obtained from the previous studies. Beach et al. [12] conducted a study and showed that maladaptive schema of over vigilance and inhibition (excessive self-control or inability to express feelings) causes marital dissatisfaction in the couples' relationships and collapse the family. In explaining this finding, it can be stated that the individuals whose schema is in this area have deep focus on the negative aspects of their lives and underestimate or ignore the positive aspects of their lives. Their characteristics include chronic anxiety, complaining, or uncertainty in the relationships. They ignore spontaneous emotions and impulses. In other words, they try to behave according to their internal and inflexible rules; albeit, they may be deprived of happiness, expressing their feelings, comfort, intimate relationship with others and health, which decrease marital satisfaction .

Another result obtained in this section shows that if the score of the individual in the over vigilance and inhibition schema increases, his level of marital satisfaction decreases. In explaining these findings, it can be stated that these individuals are cynical and pessimist. In other words, they pay attention to the negative aspects of life such as death, divorce, loss, disappointment, betrayal and conflict always and everywhere. They ignore positive aspects of life. They expect that dangerous events occur in many areas such as employment, education, marriage and interpersonal situations. These individuals feel vulnerable. If some mistakes happen in their marriage, school and job positions, that would be a disaster. This mistake can lead to marital dissatisfaction, followed by conflict and divorce, financial breakdown and losing jobs or loss of academic achievement and dissatisfaction from the level of communication.

Another result obtained in this study suggested the positive relationship between over vigilance and inhibition and ideological distortion. This result is consistent with those obtained by Epstein et al. [11] who showed that over vigilance and inhibition schemas components (strict criteria) are the strongest predictors of either compatibility or compatibility among the couples. This is also consistent with Young theory .

In explaining these findings, it can be stated that these individuals believe that the individual should try hard to achieve internal and extreme standard regarding their behavior and performance. This operation is usually done to avoid criticism. These individuals believe that everything they do should be perfect and they need

to try harder. They emphasize on values such as prestige, wealth and power. They ignore social interaction, joy and happiness [1].

In general, it can be stated that if the maladaptation of the schema increases, marital satisfaction and intimacy decreases in romantic relationships. These findings are in line with those obtained by other studies. This indicates the uncountable and determinate role of maladaptive schemas is the couples' marital dissatisfaction .

The findings obtained from this research are not only useful for incompatible couples but also family counselors who can use these findings in their counseling to the unmarried couple. It also helps the couples whose level of marital satisfaction is low. It can increase their knowledge on the schemas, so that they become aware of maladaptive schemas and they become more predictable for each other. Finally, marital conflict is minimized. This research was only conducted on women. It is essential to examine gender differences in this area in future researches.

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