



## The Study of Relationship between Self – efficacy and Marital Satisfaction of Couples Referring to the Community Health Centers of Babol in 2015

Niloufar Hajipour Khorasani<sup>1</sup>, Meimanat Hosseini<sup>2\*</sup>, Mahsa Matbouei<sup>2</sup>, Soraya Khafri<sup>3</sup>, Parvaneh Vasli<sup>2</sup> and Ali Esmaeili Vardanjani<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student Research Committee, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Community Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

<sup>3</sup>Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Medicine Faculty, Babol Medical University, Babol, Iran.

<sup>4</sup>Chronic Disease (Home Care) Research Center, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Iran.

### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author NHK designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MH guided research project, managed the literature searches and edited the manuscript. Author MM consulted the research project. Author SK analyzed the data and author PV managed the experimental process. Author AEV edited the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

**Background and Goal:** Marital satisfaction is the most important component of marriage. In most studies, there is disagreement on the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction. Therefore; in this paper, it is addressed to study the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction of couples.

**Methods:** This cross sectional study was performed on 354 couples referring to the community

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: [meimanathosseini@yahoo.com](mailto:meimanathosseini@yahoo.com), [M\\_hosseini@sbm.ac.ir](mailto:M_hosseini@sbm.ac.ir);

health centers of Babol in 2015. Self – efficacy level was measured using Sherer’s general self – efficacy scale, and marital satisfaction was measured using 47 – question form of Enrich’s marital satisfaction questionnaire. Using multi – variable regression analysis model and correlation test, the relationship between the self - efficacy and marital satisfaction was evaluated.

**Findings:** Mean (standard deviation= SD) age of males was 37.26 (8.81) years and mean (SD) age of females was 35.05 (9.04) years. Most males (86.2 percent) and most females (88.7 percent) reported strong self – efficacy, and most males (52.6 percent) and 49.7 percent of females reported high marital satisfaction. According to the results of regression analysis, self – efficacy was an effective factor in marital satisfaction of couples, ( $P<0/05$ ,  $\beta=0/08$ ).

**Conclusion:** Self – efficacy with a middle correlation value ( $r=0.41$ ) is the predictor of marital satisfaction. Performing interventional studies to increase the self – efficacy and evaluation of its effect on marital satisfaction is recommended in future studies.

Keywords: *Self – efficacy; marital satisfaction; couples; correlation.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of sociology and history, Family has the highest effect on the quality of psychological, social and cultural personality of children. It affects indirectly the society by its kind of relationship and culture. Therefore, health and quality of space inside the family is of great importance [1]. Marriage is one of the important stages in evolution path of personal and social lives of individuals. Its quality is proposed as the most powerful factor predicting psychological health of married persons. However, during recent years, the divorce has increased in Iran [2]. According to the satisfaction presented by deputy of office for affairs of damaged persons of the country’s rehabilitation organization, divorce rate in 2010 has increased by 9.1 percent compared to that in 2009.

In other word, one divorce has been registered against every 6.5 marriage [3]. Also, the number of marriages in the country up to September 21, 2015 were 368205 cases and the number of divorces up to this same date were 83277 cases [4].

Marital satisfaction is state of satisfaction in marriage which is defined by the intra personal or inter personal perception. Moreover, marital satisfaction is a measure that shows how much a person’s feeling and needs are met [5].

Marital satisfaction is an indicator of life satisfaction affecting couple’s mental health, life satisfaction and even their income, academic achievement and job satisfaction. On other hand, incompatibility in couple’s relationship results in impaired social relationships, social deviation tendency, and declining cultural values among couples [1].

Maintaining the family establishment in ensured by the continuation and health of the spouse relationship [6]. A Person’s consent of life means his/her satisfaction of family, and consent of family means life satisfaction, and these results to facilitation of growth and excellence, and marital and spiritual progress of society [7].

At different stage in life, may encounter situations which challenge the cognitive and psychological abilities. These abilities help an individual find out the needed strategies for facing with challenges such as marital satisfaction [8]. One of these abilities in the self – efficacy and the theory of self – efficacy, originally developed by Bandura [9]. Self – efficacy describes a person’s cognitions about whether he/she is capable of performing the behaviors necessary to produce a wanted outcome. Self – efficacy can also be thought of as a person’s confidence in his/her ability within a certain domain. Self – efficacy applied to marital relationships is a way to conceptualize an individual’s confidence in his/her ability to perform relationship affirming behaviors such as openly communicating with one’s partner, providing support and nurturance, and / or controlling feelings of hurt and anger [10]. Marital Satisfaction refers to a “subjective global evaluation of one’s relationship“ [11].

Being in a satisfaction marriage has consistently been associated with better physical health, mental health, and overall life satisfaction [12]. The researches show that there is a direct relationship between self – efficacy and life satisfaction. Bandura defines self – efficacy as the level of understanding about control degree which the person has on his/ her life [13]. People with high relationship self – efficacy may be more open to sharing about their marriages because

they perhaps believe they have valuable skills in relationships that are worth sharing [14].

Through increased self – efficacy and raising couple's motivation to solve daily and communicational problems, and belief in their abilities can improve the quality of marriage relationship in couple [15]. Conflict in the family as a stressful situation compresses person strongly. By missing the person's control on different and various family situations, it causes some fault in self – efficacy [16]. There are a few researches which express there is a negative relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction. These researches show opposite results [17]. There is a relationship between self – efficacy, optimistic expectations and the performance and health [18].

The studies show that high self – efficacy is followed by stress management, increasing self – esteem, rehabilitation, better physical conditions, adjustment (compatibility/ adaptation) and improvement of chronic diseases, decreasing the symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as increasing the level of rehabilitation and health [19].

Because of the importance of marital satisfaction, and since significant studies have not been performed in respect of the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction, as well as the existence of paradox in the results of the available studies, the goal of the present research is to determine the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction of couples referring to the community health centers of Babol. Findings of this research can be effective on extension of body knowledge of nursing in respect of family health as the main element of the society.

## 2. METHODS

This descriptive – correlational study was performed on couples referring in the community health centers of Babol in 2015. The inclusion criteria include: Passing at least 6 months from the beginning of joint life, ability for reading and writing and understanding and answering the questions and being nuclear family type of research units.

In this research, all couples referring to the community health centers of Babol constitute the research population who were selected in multi – stage method. In this way; initially, one of the

researchers referred to the health deputy of medical science university of Babol and received the list of covered community health centers. Then, one community health center from north, one from south, one from center, one from west and one from east of the city were selected randomly as the cluster. Finally, from each of the clusters, couples were selected as available sampling method. Regarding the volume of population and the couples of community city covered by the community health centers of Babol and Morgan's table, the required sample volume was determined to identify the value of relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction in the couples of Babol city as 350 couples [male and female]. In the present study, for more confidence, 354 couples were studied. This research was performed using 2 questionnaires (Demographic characteristics questionnaire and Enrich's marital satisfaction questionnaire) and one scale/ index (Sherer's general self – efficacy scale). Demographic characteristics questionnaire includes 9 statements about the age, gender, number of children, female's job, male's job, income sufficiency, female's education, male's education, and status of house. Enrich's marital satisfaction questionnaire includes 9 scales with 47 questions including personality issues, marital relationship, conflict solving, financial management, activities related to leisure times, sexual intercourse, marriage and children, relatives and friends and religious orientation. The questions of the questionnaire have five spectra of likert including "completely agree", "agree", "not agree, not disagree", "disagree" and "completely disagree" which the scores 1 to 5 belong to them [20]. The scores between 47 to 84 represent strong dissatisfaction, the scores between 85 to 122 represent relative dissatisfaction, the scores between 123 to 160 represent middle satisfaction, the scores between 161 to 198 represent high satisfaction, and the scores between 199 to 235 represent very high satisfaction [21]. Sherer's general self – efficacy scale has 17 questions. Each question is within the range of "completely disagree" to "completely agree" according to likert scale. Scale scoring is in this way that 1 to 5 scores are belonged to each question. The maximum score which a person can obtain from this scale, is the score 85 and the minimum score is 17. Scores' mean is 51. The scores more than 51 represent strong self– efficacy and the scores less than it represent weak self– efficacy. In Iran, this scale was translated and validated by Bakhtiari Barati [22]. In the present study, content validity and

face validity was used to determine the validity of instruments. Face validity was determined by qualitative method using the opinions and viewpoints of 10 specialists in the fields of community health nursing, health education, and health promotion and family specialists and 10 investigated families. Content validity was determined by quantitative method using the opinions and viewpoints of 10 specialists and using Walts & Bussle's content validity index. In respect of Sherer's general self – efficacy scale, the values of 0.90, 0.90 and 0.89 were obtained for relativeness, clearness and simplicity, respectively. Content validity index in respect of Enrich's marital satisfaction questionnaire was calculated as 0.80, 0.87 and 0.80 for relativeness, clearness and simplicity, respectively.

To determine the instrument's reliability by internal consistency method of questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used which was calculated as  $\alpha=0.95$  which represents high reliability of this questionnaire.

After data collection, for data analysis, SPSS software version 22 was used. For the goals of descriptive statistics, statistical parameters such as mean, standard deviation, range of changes, ratio, percentage and value were used. For data analysis, regression and correlation coefficient tests were used. To interpret the correlation severity, Cohen's classification criterion (2000) was used. According to this criterion, the correlation coefficients of 0.20 – 0.35, 0.36 –

0.65, 0.66 – 0.85 and more than 0.85 were regarded as weak, middle, high and very high, respectively.  $P < 0.05$  is regarded significant and meaningful.

### 3. FINDINGS

Data of 354 couples was analyzed. Mean (SD) age of males was 37.26 (8.81) years old and it was within the age domain of 22 – 65 years old. Mean (SD) age of females was 35.05 (9.04) years old and it was within the age domain of 17 – 60 years old. 33.6 percent of couples had one child. About 91.8 percent (325 persons) of males and 24.6 percent (87 persons) of females were employed. 41/2 percent of couples didn't enjoy enough monthly income. 207 males (58.5 percent) had high – school and lower educations and 147 persons (41.5 percent) had higher educations. In females, 192 persons (54.2 percent) had high – school and lower educations and 162 persons (45.8 percent) had higher educations. Most couples (69.2 percent) were owners in terms of the status of house. Most males (86.2 percent) and most females (88.7 percent) reported strong self – efficacy.

Most males (52.6 percent) and 49.7 percent of females reported high marital satisfaction. Demographic data of couples is summarized in Table 1.

Descriptive statistical parameters of self – efficacy and marital satisfaction and their subscales are shown in Table 2 according to

**Table 1. Descriptive statistical parameters in the studied couples (n =708)**

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Number of children	No child	146	20.6
	1	238	33.6
	2	232	32.8
	3	76	10.7
	4	12	1.7
Status of employment	5	4	0.6
	Employed	412	58.2
Sufficiency of monthly income	Unemployed	296	41.8
	Yes	272	38.4
	No	292	41.2
Level of education	No idea	144	20.4
	High – school & less	399	56.4
	Higher education	309	43.6
Status of house	Owner	490	69.2
	Tenant	218	30.8

\* Unemployed men mean unemployed or retired men and unemployed women means householders or retired women

gender separation. It shows mean (SD) scores of total marital satisfaction were 167.78 (26.32). In females, they were 165.87 (27.27) and in males, they were more than those of females, equal to 169.69 (25.3). Also, in both genders of male and female, the highest score in subscales of marital satisfaction was related to the subscale of religious orientation and the least one was allocated to the subscale of conflict solving (Table 2).

The result of correlation test in Table 3 shows that there is a direct and meaningful / significant ( $p < 0/001$ ) relationship between marital satisfaction and self – efficacy of couples participating in the research. Although the correlation coefficient among them was moderate ( $r = 0.41$ ). Also, there was a positive and significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) relationship between the subscales of marital satisfaction and self– efficacy. The highest level of self – efficacy correlation was observed in relation to the subscale of financial management ( $r = 0.39$ ) and the least one was observed in relation to leisure times activities ( $r = 0.26$ ) and sexual intercourse ( $r = 0.26$ ). Also, in current study of the relationship between marital satisfaction and self – efficacy and demographic variables, the results of regression in Table 4 showed that there is a weak (poor) relationship ( $p = 0.03$ ,  $\beta = 0.08$ ) between marital satisfaction and self – efficacy.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

In this study, it was addressed to determine the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction of couples. In studying the value of self – efficacy and marital satisfaction by gender separation, the results of the present study

showed that both factors in both genders of male and female are high and they are higher in females. The results of the present research were congruent with research findings of Zabihi Hesari [23] which showed that girl students enjoy higher general self – efficacy compared to boy students. According to the results of study by Khaksar Beldaji (2005), self – efficacy of girl was more than that of boys [24]. According to the findings of some studies, self – efficacy is different regarding the age and gender, and males enjoy higher self – efficacy compared to females, and boys enjoy higher self – efficacy compared to girls [25,26].

In the studies of Torki et al. [27] and Callaghan et al. [28] these findings were in conflict with the findings of the present study. To describe these findings, gender difference in self – efficacy might be originated from cultural and social factors. Some incorrect backgrounds existing in the society such as men are cleverer and women should attempt more to be successful, may cause strengthening these differences. Whereas like the present research, various studies show that in self – efficacy, women are not only less than men, but also they have more readiness for success, such that during current time, they have shown this ability in various scientific fields.

In another result of the present study to examine the relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction, the results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction which is concurrent with the findings of Matsui et al. [29], Hennessy [30] and Erdwins et al. [31]. Self – efficacy is one of the important concepts in the theory of Bandura [9,32,33 and 34].

**Table 2. Descriptive statistical parameters of self – efficacy and marital satisfaction and its subscales totally and in terms of gender separation in couples**

Variable	Total		Females		Males	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Self - efficacy	61.06	8.26	61.13	7.87	60.99	8.64
Marital satisfaction	167.78	26.32	165.87	27.27	169.69	25.23
Personality issues	17.51	4.07	16.96	4.18	18.06	3.89
Marital relationship	17.38	4.3	16.96	4.5	17.81	4.07
Conflict solving	16.96	3.62	16.62	3.87	17.3	3.32
Financial management	17.41	3.55	17.29	3.59	17.53	3.5
Leisure time's activities	17.99	3.36	17.84	3.49	18.14	3.23
Sexual Intercourses	18.01	3.14	17.87	3.22	18.16	3.07
Marriage & Children	17.81	3.56	17.86	3.7	17.77	3.43
Relatives & friends	17.75	3.41	17.71	3.45	17.78	3.36
Religious orientation	19.39	3.82	19.42	3.82	19.37	3.82

**Table 3. Correlation level of marital satisfaction and self – efficacy in couples**

Variables	Correlation coefficient	P - value
Marital satisfaction	0.41	0.0001
Personality issues	0.29	0.001
Marital relationship	0.32	0.001
Conflict solving	0.32	0.001
Financial management	0.39	0.001
Leisure times activities	0.26	0.001
Sexual intercourse	0.26	0.001
Marriage & children	0.34	0.001
Relatives & friends	0.29	0.001
Religious orientation	0.37	0.001

**Table 4. Multi-variate regression model for prediction effective factors on marital satisfaction of couples**

Independent variables	Category	Coefficient (index)	SD	Standard coefficient	P - value	CI (confidence Interval)
Self - efficacy	-	0.26	0.12	0.08	0.03	(0.02 , 0.5)
Age	-	- 0.08	0.12	- 0.02	0.49	(-0.33 , 0.16)
Number of children	-	0.96	1.07	0.03	0.37	(-1.14 , 3.07)
Gender	Female	- 3.19	2.3	- 0.06	0.16	(-7.71 , 1/33)
	Male	Reference class	-	-	-	-
Employment	Unemployed	2.58	2.25	0.04	0.25	(-1.83 , 7)
	Employed	Reference class	-	-	-	-
Status of house	Personal	- 1.51	1.81	- 0.02	0.04	(-5.07 , 2.05)
	Rental	Reference class	-	-	-	-
Educations	Higher education	2.5	1.7	0.04	0.14	(-0.84 , 5.85)
	High –school & class	Reference class	-	-	-	-
Income	Insufficient	0.96	1.07	0.02	0.36	(-1.14 , 3.07)
	Sufficient	Reference class	-	-	-	-

In view of Bandura, self – efficacy is the belief of individuals in their abilities in mobilization of motivations, cognitive resources and exercising the control on a definite event. By this belief, the individual can influence his / her life outcomes and have more feeling of control on his / her life. Self – efficacy reduces negative outcomes and consequences in marital satisfaction, family and life. Hennessy [30] believes that belief of self – efficacy is an important describing factor to decrease family conflict and to increase marital satisfaction. It means that the level of family conflict decreases when self – efficacy increases. Rajabi et al. [35] concluded in his research that there is a positive relation between marriage satisfaction and self – efficacy of nurses. Indeed, since self – efficacy beliefs are motivation and

well – being introduction of peoples, as long as people believe that their actives don't have the desired results they have little eagerness to work and persistence in solving their lives topics, so those couples who have higher self – efficacy, have more motivation and persistence to solve their communicational problems, hence they take more effort to improve their relationship, and as a result they experience a better marriage satisfaction [15].

In the present study examining the effective factors on marital satisfaction using regression analysis, the results showed that the variable of couples' marital satisfaction is predictable according to self – efficacy. After controlling demographic variables, the results indicated that

there was a weak (poor) correlation between marital satisfaction and self – efficacy ( $p < 0.03$ ,  $\beta = 0.08$ ). In addition, step – by – step regression model shows that self– efficacy had not a significant role in creating marital satisfaction besides other components. The results of the present study are congruent with the results of study by Ahadi et al. [36] in respect of the existence of correlation between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction. The couples who have more daring and courage and are able to express their ideas in a correct way, are better able to solve the problems and to remove life difficulties.

## 5. FINAL CONCLUSION

Generally, by studying and examining the research findings, it can be said that self – efficacy, with a middle correlation level, played role in marital satisfaction. Although studying other factors related to marital satisfaction such as emotional intelligence, is recommended. As limitations of this study, the questions which are answered in the form of self – reporting, as well as mental and psychological problems of samples (cases) can be pointed out. Performing mediational studies to increase self – efficacy and the evaluation of its effect on marital satisfaction are suggested for the future studies.

## UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Research project entitled “The study of relationship between self – efficacy and marital satisfaction of couples referring to the community health center of Babol in 2015” was introduced and provided written informed consent from participants, privacy subjects, coordination with local university or research organization, the project at the university / center university, shall be subject to rights of university, observance of religious principles in the process of implementation (including the same of sex the inter viewer and subject) especially when sampling was approved. SBMU2.REC.1394.149.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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