Prediction of Marital Satisfaction based on Spiritual Intelligence

Amir Masood Rostami a *, Hayedeh Cheraghali Gol a

aIslamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch, Young Researchers Club, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to predict marital satisfaction based on spiritual intelligence. The statistical population of the study consisted of all couples who referred to [family] counseling centers of Tehran in 2012. A sample of 240 individuals (120 women and 120 men) was selected from among this population in counseling centers of Tehran using random multistage sampling method. Additionally, stepwise multivariate regression was used to examine research hypotheses. The results indicated that, while relying on the inner core of spiritual intelligence, the element of spiritual life had the largest contribution to the prediction of the criterion variable and explained 35.2% of the marital satisfaction variance. Adding the element of “perception of and communication with the origins of the universe” to the equation increased the explanation coefficient to 37.1%. In addition, the results showed that the elements of spiritual intelligence among women and men explain marital satisfaction differently. Therefore, it is recommended that family therapists also consider the role of religious beliefs as an important factor in both the incidence of marital conflicts and solving them.

Key words: Marital Satisfaction, Spiritual Intelligence, Spiritual Life;

1. Introduction

Family is the generator of manpower and the path of other social institutions such that normality or abnormality is dependent on the general conditions of family and none of the social harms could occur without the influence of family (Hamidi, Rasoolzadeh Tabatabai & Afrooz, 2009). Marital satisfaction is one of the influential factors in the stability and persistency of family and also the mental hygiene of couples and children (Hatami, Habi & Akbari, 2009).

Marital relationship has been the main source of social support for many individuals and acts as a protective factor against mental diseases as well as destructive consequences of negative events of life (Perrone-Mc Govern et al, 2012). For instance, Booth and Hawkins found that individuals who are not satisfied with their married life get significantly higher grades in distress assessments and lower grades in life satisfaction assessments compared with individuals who are satisfied with their married life.

Instability in married life puts individuals’ mental and physical health in danger. Therefore, identifying the factors which may decelerate the decline in marital satisfaction is of particular importance (Murray et al. 2011). One of the factors related to marital satisfaction is religion and spirituality (Markes et al, 2008).
In Durkheim’s view, religion sets common behaviors by creating common values and norms and these common behaviors cause interdependency and inner integrity in family by the integrative function of religion (Durkhiem, 2005).

Spiritual intelligence is a relatively new concept which results from a modern viewpoint in psychology, i.e. paying attention to spirituality. Although in the history of psychology, some famous psychologists such as William James (1902), Karl Jung (1969) and Gordon Allport (1950) have paid attention to the field of religion, special attention has been paid to this subject during the recent decades (Rajaee, 2010).

As defined by Nasel (2004), spiritual intelligence is an individual’s ability to utilize spiritual talents to know more, searching for the meaning and analyzing the existential, spiritual and practical issues (Hosseini et al, 2010).

Individuals with higher spiritual intelligence have more flexibility, self-awareness, insight and holistic approach in life (Ebrahimi et al, 2012).

Several studies show the positive relationship between spirituality and life satisfaction and purposefulness, as well as physical and mental health and well-being (Pargament & Sanders, 2007, Fallah Joushani, 2010). In their investigations, Ahmadi et al, (2006) showed that religious beliefs could affect all aspects of human life such as family relationships such that family therapists could consider religious beliefs as an important factor affecting both the incidence and solution of family conflicts. The research done by Mahoney et al, (2003) on the role of closeness and distance structure on marital interactions illustrated that the religious closeness structure variables were reflected directly in marriage integrity and were correlated with more general marital adaptability, received benefits, less marital conflicts, more verbal cooperation and closeness, less verbal aggressiveness and not coming to a dead end when facing disagreements. Moreover, Shahabi & Akhbari (2007) and Roohani & Manavipoor (2008) have confirmed that couples’ happiness and marital satisfaction increased by doing religious affairs and worship. Hashemi (2004), Hatami et al (2009), and Haditabar et al (2011) showed the impact of teaching the components of spiritual intelligence on increasing marital satisfaction. Glein (1988) showed that individuals who have lived together for a long time consider religion as the most important factor in marital satisfaction. Giblin (1994) concluded that religion is the best stabilizing factor in marriage and marital life.

Since individuals’ relationships with their spouse are the central part of their spiritual and social life and also because marital dissatisfaction can damage the spouses’ ability to establish a satisfactory relationship with their children and other non-family individuals, and also taking into account that marital satisfaction of spouses depends on the acceptance of and belief in specific values such as religious approach [to phenomena] and also considering the results of the mentioned studies that recognized spirituality as one of the influential factors in marital satisfaction, the present study was conducted with the aim of predicting marital satisfaction based on spiritual intelligence.

2. Method

2.1. Statistical population, sample and sampling method

The statistical population of this study included all the couples who referred to the [family] counseling centers of Tehran in 2012. In order to select the sample group, random multistage method was used and two counseling centers from each geographical region (North, South, East, and West) were selected. Then, 24 individuals were randomly selected from each center, accounting for 240 subjects of the study (120 men and 120 women).

2.1.1. Instruments

**ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire:** consists of 12 micro-scales, including: Idealistic Distortion, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends, Equalitarian Roles, and Religious Orientation. This questionnaire was standardized in Iran by Soleymanian and included 47 items. Moreover, the reliability of the original version, which included 115 items, has been reported to be 0.92 based on Cronbach’s alpha and the
reliability of the shortened version has been 0.95. Mirkheshiti (1996) calculated the reliability of the short form 0.92 using alpha coefficient (cited from Roohani & Manavipoor, 2008).

Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire: This questionnaire consists of 29 questions. Abdollah et al (2008) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 for the reliability of the questionnaire. To assess the validity, in addition to face and content validity which was confirmed by experts, the factor analysis was also utilized and the correlation of all questions was more than 0.3. After using Varimax Rotation Method to decrease variables, two main factors were achieved, the first one of which with 12 questions called “perception of and communication with the origins of the universe” and the second one with 17 questions called “spiritual life with inner core”. The test indicated a significant difference between men and women in terms of the first factor and general spiritual intelligence, but there was insignificant difference in terms of the second factor (Zare et al, 2012).

3. Results

The stepwise multivariate regression was used to examine the study hypotheses. The findings of the study show that marital satisfaction among men is to some extent more than that in women. Moreover, women in conception of and communication with the origins of the universe and men in the component of spiritual life based on the inner core obtained higher scores. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction and the components of spiritual intelligence by gender.

Table 1: mean and standard deviation of marital satisfaction and the components of spiritual intelligence by sex

| Variables                          | N  | Mean | SD  |
|------------------------------------|----|------|-----|
| Marital satisfaction               |    |      |     |
| M                                  | 120| 3.71 | 0.43|
| F                                  | 120| 3.65 | 0.38|
| Spiritual Intelligence             |    |      |     |
| M perception of and communication with the origins of the universe | 120| 4.62 | 0.61|
| F perception of and communication with the origins of the universe | 120| 4.78 | 0.64|
| M spiritual life with inner core   | 120| 4.18 | 0.49|
| F spiritual life with inner core   | 120| 4.03 | 0.57|

The results of stepwise multivariate regression are shown in table 2. Based on the information in this table, the spiritual life in reliance on inner core has the largest contribution to prediction of the criterion variable and explains 35.2% of marital satisfaction variance. In the second step, the component of “perception of and communication with the origins of the universe” was inserted in the equation and increased the explanation coefficient by 1.9% to 37.1%. In addition, the results showed that components of spiritual intelligence explain the marital satisfaction differently, such that the spiritual life in reliance on the inner core explains 33.1% and 36.3% of spiritual satisfaction variance in men and women, respectively. When the component of “perception of and communication with the origins of the universe” is inserted in the second step, this amount increases to 35.5% and 38.4% in men and women, respectively.

Table 2 Summary of stepwise multivariate regression model as the predictor of marital satisfaction by sex

| G      | Variable                                      | R     | R²   | SE  | F    | B    | β    | t    |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|
|        | spiritual life with inner core                | 0.593 | 0.352| 0.38| 106.12** | 0.638 | 0.541 | 14.94** |
|        | perception of and communication with the origins of the universe | 0.609 | 0.371| 0.37| 41.85** | 0.153 | 0.113 | 5.42** |
| M      | spiritual life with inner core                | 0.575 | 0.331| 0.40| 53.67** | 0.593 | 0.518 | 11.12** |
|        | perception of and communication with the origins of the universe | 0.596 | 0.355| 0.39| 22.74** | 0.144 | 0.107 | 2.42*  |
| F      | spiritual life with inner core                | 0.602 | 0.363| 0.28| 58.28** | 0.631 | 0.546 | 16.73** |
|        | perception of and communication with the origins of the universe | 0.620 | 0.384| 0.26| 34.79** | 0.182 | 0.176 | 8.84** |

P<0.05*  P<0.01**

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study indicated that the component of spiritual life in reliance on inner core of spiritual intelligence had the largest contribution in predicting marital satisfaction and after that the component of “perception of and communication with the origins of the universe” increased this contribution significantly. This finding is consistent
with the study results of Hashemi (2004), Hatami et al (2009), and Haditabar et al (2011), who showed that the components of spiritual intelligence have positive influences on marital satisfaction.

Social support provided by religiousness helps increase marital satisfaction. Moreover, religious experience and praying cause the person to sense a social communication with the God. This communication is similar to communication with people in some way, in that it causes satisfaction in married life. Individuals, who believe in religion by heart and are successful in acting based on their religious beliefs will be more prosperous in terms of empathy, perception, responsibility and flexibility. Therefore, such individuals have great capabilities in improving their relationships and interactions and as a result, they will have more consistency and satisfaction in their marital relationships (Roohani & Manavipoor, 2008). In Durkheim’s view, by setting values and common norms, religion and spirituality create common behaviours and these common behaviours among the family members cause family dependency and inner integrity through the integrative function. Religion function is a semantic function which covers the aspect of inner tranquillity in the family. Integrative and semantic functions are related to several different aspects of married life such as integrity, interdependency between spouses, inner tranquillity of family, security of family, etc (Hatami et al 2009).

Mahouni et al, (1999) found that as spouses establish a sacred aspect for their relationships, marital satisfaction increases and conflicts decrease and they can solve their challenges better.

In addition, the results showed that components of spiritual intelligence explain marital satisfaction differently among men and women. To explain this finding, one could say that spiritual intelligence talent is different in different individuals and by exposing to enriched environments which stimulate spiritual questions, the talent will evolve and form gradually.

Moreover, it seems that gender and age have an influence on the spiritual intelligence. Jung believed that significant changes occur in unconsciousness after the age of 35 among most of the individuals, which may influence the spirituality and spiritual intelligence process. In addition, some researchers such as Jung believed that the mentioned evolution is different in women compared with men (Qobari Bonab et al, 2007).

Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that family therapists also consider the impact of religious beliefs as an important factor both in the incidence of marital conflicts and in solving them. In addition, using spiritual strategies such as encouraging people to pray, discussing about divine affairs, using holy books in treatment and helping people to be coordinated with spiritual values are recommended.

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