The Role of Job Satisfaction and Ego Strengths in Marital Satisfaction in Military Staff in Tehran

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Abstract

Aims: The present study was an attempt to examine the predictive ability of job satisfaction and ego strengths regarding marital satisfaction in military personnel in Tehran, Iran.

Methods: It was a correlational study carried out on 330 military staff selected using random cluster sampling. For the purpose of data collection, three questionnaires were used: ENRICH Couple Scale, Job Descriptive Index (JDI), and the Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES). Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used for data analysis.

Results: Job satisfaction and ego strengths were observed to have a positive and significant relationship with marital satisfaction. Results from regression analysis indicated that ego strengths such as wisdom, fidelity, love, care, and job satisfaction including rights and benefits can predict marital satisfaction.

Conclusion: It seems that being aware of the effects of job satisfaction and ego strengths can help increase marital satisfaction in military personnel and prevent from family problems in them.

Keywords: Marital Satisfaction, Job Satisfaction, Ego Strengths, Military Personnel
Introduction
A successful marriage requires three elements: commitment, appeal, and mutual understanding. Marriage can meet one’s both physical and emotional needs in a safe environment and greatly affect an individual’s mental health [1]. The quality of marital relationship is much more important than marriage itself. Such a quality is a multi-dimensional concept which encompasses various relations between couples like rapport, satisfaction, happiness, solidarity, and commitment [2, 3]. One of the most commonly used concepts for indicating the level of happiness and the strength of marital relations, is marital satisfaction which is a general evaluation of the status of the bond between couples [4].

Larson and Holman believe in three major sets of factors in marital satisfaction: the first category includes social and cultural factors, the second category involves the couples’ individual characteristics, and the third category encompasses the interactional processes between couples. They believe that all factors falling in the above-mentioned categories can be good predictors of marital satisfaction [5]. To name an example of factors in the first category, one can point to job status of the couples and the related issues regarding their job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a complex and multidimensional concept which interacts with mental, physical, and social factors. A combination of certain variables can cause an individual to feel satisfied with his or her job. Based on the emphasis one puts on issues such as income, social status, and working environment at different points in time, one can have job satisfaction. There has been a positive relationship between having problems at workplace and having problems at home [7]. An increase in marital conflicts and problems can significantly decrease job satisfaction, and improving marital satisfaction can significantly increase job satisfaction [8].

Marriage, as an important stage in life, has always been important for meeting one’s emotional needs. At different stages in life, one may encounter situations which challenge their cognitive and psychological abilities. These abilities help an individual find out the needed strategies for facing such challenges, have a realistic evaluation of the present situation, adjust the interpersonal relations, form defensive mechanisms, and control agitations. One of such abilities is the transformed and strong ego which covers a significant portion of one’s actions and reactions in different parts of his or her life [9]. Ego strengths are believed to be the key to a successful management of psychosocial stages in the life cycle. In Ericson’s classification of psychosocial stages of life, marriage occurs in the stage when one’s major challenge is between intimacy and isolation. Intimacy, as the sixth stage in the psychosocial stages of life, occurs after an individual successfully overcomes the identity crisis and the fidelity is formed in his or her ego. The ability to make and keep interpersonal commitments is the basis of this stage [10]. A young adult who has a stable identity prepares for intertwining with another person’s identity. Isolation, as opposed to intimacy, occurs when due to sharing real intimacy one finds his or her identity in danger [11]. Such
people are also afraid of reproduction and taking care of children.

It is assumed that there is a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and ego strengths as an indicator of social and cognitive development and a mature personality. Due to lack of an appropriate questionnaire, there have been very few attempts to investigate such a relationship. In other words, there is theoretical justification for the relationship between marital satisfaction, job satisfaction, and psychosocial development. It is predicted that marital satisfaction has a significant relationship with more positive psychosocial indices. As such, the aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and both ego strengths and job satisfaction.

**Methods**

The present study was a cross-sectional descriptive piece of research carried out on the personnel of a military organization in Tehran, Iran. Based on Morgan’s Table, the number of participants was determined to be 350. The participants were selected using random cluster sampling. From among the collected questionnaires, 20 were excluded from analysis due to not matching the data inclusion/exclusion criteria of the research. Participants’ age ranged from 24 to 49 with a mean of 34.35 (SD = 4.92). The minimum and maximum job experience was 3 and 29 years respectively with a mean of 14.24 (SD = 5.29). The minimum and maximum marriage length was 3 and 27 years with a mean of 9.5 (SD = 5.41). Regarding the participants’ educational degree, 30.6% had a diploma, 15.2% had an AA degree, 44.8% had a BA or BSc, and 9.4% had an MA or MSc or higher. In addition, in the case of the number of children, 54.5% of the participants had one child only, 33.7% had two children, 9.8% had three children, and 2% had four children.

Data were collected using four different types of questionnaires. The first one was a researcher-made questionnaire for checking the participants’ demographical information including their age, marital status, length of marriage, job experience, number of children, educational degree, record of mental or physical illnesses, etc. The inclusion criteria for participants were: being male, having a degree higher than diploma, not using drugs in the past or at the time of the study, not suffering from any mental or physical illnesses, the minimum marriage length of 3 years, and having children.

The second questionnaire was ENRICH Marital Satisfac tion questionnaire which is a valid and reliable research tool with a high sensitivity to any slight changes in the marital relations between couples. It considers issues whose evaluation can describe the potential problems in couples’ marital relationships. This questionnaire consists of 35 items in 4 subscales, namely marital satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and idealistic distortion. After it was administered on 25,501 couples by Olson and Olson in 2000, the reliability (Cronbach alpha) of the mentioned subscales was reported as 0.86, 0.80, 0.84, and 0.83 respectively. The correlation coefficient between this scale and marital satisfaction ranged from 0.41 to 0.60, with a correlation coefficient of 0.32 to 0.41 with
life satisfaction, which demonstrates its construct validity. All the subscales in this questionnaire could distinguish between compatible and incompatible couples, which confirms its criterion validity. In a study by Asoudeh in 2010 on 365 couples, the reliability of the subscales was found to be 0.68, 0.78, 0.62, and 0.77 respectively.

The third questionnaire was the Psycho-social Inventory of Ego Strengths which is a self-report of 8 ego strengths derived from the eight stages in one’s psychosocial development. Each subscale in this questionnaire acts as an index for solving conflicts in a psycho-social stage related to an individual’s ego [11]. It was constructed on the basis of an exact analysis of Erickson’s writings on the subject. The construct validity and content validity of this questionnaire were confirmed by a number of Erickson’s students. The internal consistency of the scale has been demonstrated in various studies. Its convergent validity has also been shown by the evaluation of identity development, self-esteem, life objectives, internal locus of control, and the sexual roles. In addition, the discriminant validity of this scale was demonstrated by detection of a negative correlation between ego strengths and disappointment, identity crisis, delayed identity, and personal despair [10].

The first version of the questionnaire included 128 items assessed using a five point Likert scale. After initial analysis, the eight weakest items in each subscale were deleted. As a result, 64 items in 8 subscales remained with a Cronbach alpha of 0.83 for Hope, 0.69 for Will, 0.52 for Purpose, 0.78 for Competence, 0.62 for Fidelity, 0.64 for Love, 0.84 for Care, and 0.80 for Wisdom. Only the Goal subscale had a low reliability index (α = 0.52); the rest were at an acceptable level. The Cronbach alpha for the whole scale was found to be 0.93. Other investigations have shown that the 32 item version of this scale has an acceptable reliability and validity (α = 0.91) [10]. This shorter version has shown a Cronbach alpha of 0.86 in Iran [12].

The last questionnaire used was the Job Satisfaction Questionnaire by Smith, Kendal, and Hulin in 1969. This questionnaire examines job satisfaction in five domains including type of work (10 items with 0-54 points), pay (6 items with 0-27 points), promotion (5 items with 0-27 points), supervision (10 items with 0-54 points), and coworkers (10 items with 0-54 points) with the whole questionnaire having 0-216 points. According to Kendal and Hulin, the results of this questionnaire have a direct and significant relationship with other measures of job satisfaction. The internal consistency of this scale has been checked in Iran and the Cronbach alpha for the total questionnaire was obtained to be 0.66 with each subscale showing a reliability estimate of 0.67 for satisfaction with the work, 0.67 for satisfaction with pay, 0.70 for satisfaction with promotion, 0.76 for satisfaction with supervision, and 0.68 for satisfaction with coworkers [13].

For data collection, the required permissions and consent forms were obtained. Before data collection, the participants were ensured about the anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data. The collected data were analyzed using
correlation coefficient and stepwise regression analysis using SPSS.

**Results**

In order to check the relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Ego Strengths and Job Satisfaction, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used. In addition, to predict Marital Satisfaction using other variables, a regression test was performed. The descriptive statistics for the research variables are presented in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ego Strengths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>117.75</td>
<td>12.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>15.57</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>14.77</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>15.34</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>13.48</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>121.84</td>
<td>29.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction</td>
<td>37.29</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>30.71</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>35.31</td>
<td>6.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealistic distortion</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total score</td>
<td>122.16</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
<td>33.99</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>34.32</td>
<td>8.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>32.41</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>11.57</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The Correlation Coefficients Obtained among Research Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ego strengths</th>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ego strengths</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>0.303**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction</td>
<td>0.369**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**P<0.01

As it is evident in Table 1, Total Ego Strengths was observed to have a mean of 11.75 (SD = 12.66), with Marital Satisfaction having a mean of 121.84 (SD = 29.28), and Job Satisfaction showing a mean of 122.16 (SD = 25). Table 2 also presents the correlation coefficients obtained among these variables. The observed correlations were significant in case of all comparisons. The correlation between ego strengths and marital satisfaction was slightly stronger than others (r = 0.37, p < 0.01). There was a positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and marital satisfaction (r = 0.19, p < 0.01). Also, the ego strengths was observed to have a positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction (r = 0.30, p < 0.01).

After the correlation between the two variables and marital satisfaction was confirmed, the predictive ability of their subscales for marital satisfaction was checked. To do so a stepwise multiple regression analysis was run. Table 3 presents the related information.

As it is evident in Table 3, from among the eight subscales in ego strengths and the five subscales in job satisfaction, four in the first variable and one in the second one were able to significantly predict marital satisfaction in the participants. Fidelity in ego strengths had the highest contribution to the model (β = 0.395, p < 0.0001). Wisdom was second (β = 0.375, p < 0.0001) with Love being third (β = -0.224, p < 0.0001), Care standing fourth (β = -0.146, p < 0.002), and Pay coming last (β = -0.145, p < 0.003). At the first step, Wisdom alone in the model...
explained 18% of the variance in marital satisfaction. After Fidelity was added, this amount changed to 26%. At the third step when Love also entered the equation, 30% of the variance in the dependent variable could be explained. Then, Care was added. This resulted in explaining 32% of the variance. Finally, after Pay was added to the model to the previous variables, the model could explain more than 34% of the variance in marital satisfaction. The rest of subscales in job satisfaction and ego strengths could not significantly predict marital satisfaction.

### Table 3. Regression Analysis for Predicting Marital Satisfaction based on Job Satisfaction & Ego Strengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>R^2</th>
<th>Adjusted R^2</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>0.180</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>2.676</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>2.222</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.352</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>2.412</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.382</td>
<td>7.292</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.539</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>6.578</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.596</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>-0.194</td>
<td>-4.131</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>2.876</td>
<td>0.301</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>7.716</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.614</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>0.356</td>
<td>7.281</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.352</td>
<td>0.381</td>
<td>-0.197</td>
<td>-4.235</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.423</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>-3.193</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>2.365</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>7.942</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.188</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>7.904</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.841</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td>-0.224</td>
<td>-4.797</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.309</td>
<td>0.418</td>
<td>-0.146</td>
<td>-3.128</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.604</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>-0.145</td>
<td>-3.040</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

The results showed that there exists a relationship between job satisfaction and ego strengths on one hand and marital satisfaction on the other hand, which is in line with other studies carried out in this regard [7,8,14-18]. Marital conflicts are believed to be the cause of most severe emotional disorders [18]. Moreover, such events as being made redundant at work, moving, marital conflicts, and financial problems can help worsen such diseases [19].

In recent years, many researchers have focused on factors important in marital satisfaction. Based on the results of such studies, the effective factors in couples’ marital satisfaction have been divided into two groups: (a) interpersonal issues among couples including interational behaviors, quality of sexual behaviors, intimacy, commitment, and understanding; (b) the environmental or external issues such as children, living background, working environment, and job satisfaction [20].

Scholz et al., studying individuals’ working schedule during the day and their general mood when leaving workplace at the end of working day in conjunction with their violent marital behaviors at night, concluded that such effects are different in men and women. Women were observed to show more violent behaviors when they had a hard day at work and left workplace in a negative mood. For men the same situation was reflected in the form of less aggressive behaviors but they were less willing to have sexual relations [21].

In general, military personnel face numerous physical dangers and need more vigilance. Due to the sensitivity of their job, the dangers they face, the possibility of the unexpected to happen, and the important
role they have in the safety and security of the country, military personnel related issues should be given special attention. In such a situation, it is quite logical that job dissatisfaction can be built up if they have financial problems, communication problems with coworkers or their supervisor, and problems in getting promotion. Since job satisfaction and marital satisfaction are correlated, such dissatisfaction with job can be conveyed to their family. Having marital conflicts can affect other aspects and domains of life and result in damages to their social relations, religious beliefs, child brought-up, and general health [22,23].

Ego strengths are considered as important elements in developing a mature personality for having intimate relationships. Forming and keeping intimate relations are the major concerns of most marriage and family counselors at the moment. Cultural, social, and economical changes as well as changes in the realm of religion have an important effect on the functioning of marriage which includes love, affection, and intimacy between couples [24]. According to Erikson’s theory, having a mature personality for having intimate relationships requires a successful resolution of the crises faced at different stages of life and gaining ego strengths [10]. Based on Erikson’s psychosocial development theory which holds that success in one stage needs success in the resolution of the crises in the previous stages, those who have better ego strengths have a better ability to face their marital conflicts and have a higher marital satisfaction as a result. In addition, those with a stronger ego have a more intimate relationship with their spouse, are more committed to their partner and family, and feel more responsible for their family and children. They are also better in sharing their virtues and ideas, having sexual relations, understanding each other, and showing emotional behaviors such as caressing [25].

Ego strength entails self-awareness. This means that an individual with a strong ego can present themselves much better in their relationships and express their needs to their partner more efficiently [25].

Conclusion
Considering the importance of social, economical, and personal factors important in marital satisfaction, it is necessary that military organizations attempt to positively affect marital satisfaction in their personnel by identifying and understanding their personal, social, economical, and job-related situations.

The present study like all studies carried out in the field of psychology and behavioral sciences face some limitations. Not being able to control all factors, studying only male spouses, and not checking marital satisfaction of participants’ partners were among the limitations of this study. As such, it is suggested that in future research more attention be given to the marital satisfaction of participants’ partners. Conducting research in organizational towns can help alleviate this problem.

Based on previous research, sexual differences have a crucial role in the stability of relation between couples. In other words, women care more about interpersonal relations in comparison with men [26]. As such, women are more likely to be affected and hurt by marital conflicts. They are also more likely to attempt to resolve such conflicts and try to make use of external sources like family counseling. Therefore, it is possible to help couples and families use specialized psychological aids and services by establishing and strengthening psychological and counseling clinics in towns for military personnel. It is also possible to inhibit marital dissatisfaction and actually increase couples’ marital satisfaction by holding courses and
seminars for instructing the needed communication skills to couples.

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References