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### Original Article

# The relationship between self-concept and positive feeling to spouse with marital satisfaction among married women in Education Department of Bojnord city

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between self-concept and positive feeling to spouse with the marital satisfaction in married women.

**Materials and Methods:** This research was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population were about 1700 married women in Education Department of Bojnord city in 2015-2016. 313 cases were selected through simple random sampling. The research tool in this study included Beck self-concept questionnaire (1978), Positive Feelings Questionnaire (1975) and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire. Multi-variables regression test with stepwise method and one-variable regression test were used to analyze data.

**Results:** The results showed that there was a relationship between self-concept and positive feeling to spouse with the marital satisfaction. Also, there was a relationship between self-concept and marital satisfaction and the same relationship was seen between positive feeling to spouse with the marital satisfaction.

**Conclusion:** The results of the study revealed that self-concept and positive feeling to spouse can affect on marital satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Marital satisfaction, Self-concept, Spouse

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## Introduction

Family formation is a natural and innate human reality. The family is the most important social unit of any society, formed by making a marriage contract between a man and a woman (1).

People get married for different reasons. In addition to sexual desires, which are primary issues, love, economic security, meetings, protection, emotional security, escape from

loneliness, shared interests, and having children are some factors that can make a person marry (2). From the very beginning days of a couple's shared life, serious and frequent disagreements arise, which, if not resolved, can seriously threaten marital satisfaction and stability (3). Many factors can directly or indirectly affect the compatibility, satisfaction, and stability of marriage and family strength. When the husband

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and wife are satisfied with their married life, the family has good strength, and they can deal with issues and problems properly and stay safe from harm (4). Marital satisfaction is a state of satisfaction in the marriage defined by an intrapersonal or interpersonal perception (5). Marital satisfaction is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits, costs, and materials of being married to a particular person. The more a person feels they have paid much money in their marriage with their partner, the less satisfied they will be with that person and their marriage.

On the contrary, they think they have more benefits from marrying their partner. He will be more satisfied with her and their life together. Considering the importance of marital satisfaction in life, the scientific study of marital satisfaction has received interesting attention since the 1990s. Marital satisfaction is an essential and complex aspect of a marital relationship. In other words, one of the vital aspects of a marital system is the satisfaction that spouses feel and experience in their relationship. However, divorce statistics, the most reliable indicators of marital turmoil, indicate that marital satisfaction is not easily achieved (6). Gutman's research has shown that it is possible to understand the level of marital satisfaction by considering the ratio of positive and negative interactions between couples. For example, if the ratio of a couple's positive and negative interactions is 5 to 1, these couples are delighted. In this way, from the point of view of some, marital satisfaction requires the optimal functioning of both parties (7).

Various factors have been identified as factors affecting marital satisfaction, such as personal, cognitive, and religious factors. Individual cognitive factors that affect marital satisfaction include self-concept, self-esteem, etc. Self-concept is a cognitive framework through which we organize what we know about ourselves and process information based on it (2). Therefore, self-concept and positive feelings towards the spouse and marital satisfaction are essential concepts that psychologists have studied in order to understand human behavior. Despite this, when we examine the research literature, there are few findings about the interrelationships of the variables. Therefore, the present study has

tried to investigate the mutual relations of the above variables.

Another variable studied in this research is the positive feeling towards the spouse. Positive emotions mean a personal feeling about a partner in aspects such as friendship, marital relations, understanding, honesty, trust, pleasantness, and sexual pleasure. Marital satisfaction is a positive and enjoyable attitude that a husband and wife have in various aspects of marital relations. It should be emphasized that understanding the sensitivities and needs of the other party, reaching similar decisions, and finding ways to enjoy more solves many family problems, which are the root of misunderstandings (8).

Considering that many variables such as the way children are raised, economic issues, religious beliefs, religiosity, individual cognitive factors such as self-concept, feelings for a spouse, etc., have an effect on marital satisfaction, and also research on the relationship between self-concept (self-image) and positive feelings toward spouse with marital satisfaction have not been done in married women of Bojnourd Education Department, therefore, in this regard, this research aims to find the relationship between self-concept and positive feelings toward spouse with marital satisfaction.

## Materials and Methods

The present research method is a descriptive correlation. The statistical population of this research is the married women of Bojnourd Education Department in 2014-1395, whose number is about 1700. According to the size of the community and using the Jersey and Morgan table, 313 people were selected as a sample. The random sampling method is simple. In this way, first, a list of married women of Bojnourd Education Department, whose number is 1700, 313 people were randomly selected. In this research, three questionnaires were used to collect data.

### Research instruments

A) *Beck Self-concept Questionnaire*: This questionnaire, prepared in 1978 by Beck and Steer based on Beck's cognitive theory, has 25 items. Based on the research of Beck and his colleagues, this scale investigates and measures five aspects of characteristics, which are: mental

ability, job efficiency, physical attractiveness, social skills, flaws, and virtues. Beck and his colleagues reported the validity of this questionnaire using the test-retest method after one week and three months, with a coefficient of 0.88 and 0.65, respectively. Also, the internal consistency of this scale has been reported as 0.80. The validity of this questionnaire in comparison with the Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire has been reported as 0.55. In addition, the researchers reported the validity of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 for depressed men, 0.76 for depressed women, 0.75 for anxious men, and 0.78 for anxious women. In a study conducted on an Iranian sample of 14 to 18 years old, the validity of this questionnaire using the binomial method and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was reported as 0.65 and 0.68, respectively. In addition, in a study on students, the validity of this test Using Cronbach's alpha method was reported as 0.79 (10).

*B) Questionnaire of Positive Feelings towards Spouse:* This questionnaire has 17 questions to measure the positive feelings of a person toward his spouse, which was created in 1975 in the couples therapy clinic of the State University of New York. Its reliability was reported as 0.93 through retesting with an interval of 1 to 3 weeks, and the correlation coefficient of this questionnaire with marital compatibility was reported as 0.7. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part contains eight questions marked with numbers 1 (for strongly negative feeling) to 7 (for strongly positive feeling). The second part contains nine statements. Furthermore, it is scored high in the same way. This questionnaire has been translated and re-translated into Farsi. The internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study was calculated as 0.89 (9).

*C) Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire:* This questionnaire has been used as a reliable tool in various researches to measure marital satisfaction. This questionnaire consists of 12 scales that include contractual response, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital relationship, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relations, marriage and children, relatives and friends, roles related to Equality of men and women, and ideological orientation. The questions were presented to experts to determine the validity and reliability of this questionnaire after translation. Thus its content validity was confirmed. In the next step, the questionnaire was implemented in a group of 11 people, and its reliability coefficient was 0.93. However, due to the large number of questions in the questionnaire (115 questions), which caused too much fatigue for the subjects, it was decided to prepare a short version. For this purpose, first, the correlation of each question with the whole questionnaire was calculated through the correlation coefficient.

Then, the questions with a relatively high correlation were selected in an equal number from different scales of the questionnaire, and a total of 47 questions were selected. Again, the reliability coefficient of the 47-question version in a group of 11 people was calculated using the alpha coefficient, which was 0.95, which indicates the high reliability of this questionnaire. In this research, the 47-question form of this questionnaire was used (10).

## Results

The findings related to the research are presented in the following tables.

**Table 1.** Mean and standard deviation of self-concept scores and marital satisfaction and positive feeling toward the spouse

Self-concept	Variable	Min	Max	Standard deviation of mean	Standard deviation	Mean
	Marital Satisfaction	15	61	0.398	7.039	31.44
	Mental ability	5	25	0.261	4.625	16.75
	Job efficiency	6	25	0.242	4.275	16.78
	Sexuality	5	25	0.228	4.030	17.60
	Social skills	5	25	0.236	4.184	16.38
	Benefits and faults	5	25	0.263	4.646	15.47
	Positive feeling to spouse	24	119	1.160	20.529	83.18

**Table 2.** The variables entered into the multivariate regression analysis equation

The criterion variable	Model	Step to step model	Entered variables
Marital Satisfaction	1	Model 1	Benefits and faults
	2	Model 2	Subjective Self-concept
	3	Model 3	Positive feeling to spouse

**Table 3.** Table of coefficients

Model	Changed statistics					Modified R square	Square R	R
	Significant of changed F	Df2	Df1	changed F	changed R-square			
Benefits and faults	0.000	311	1	305.450	0.495	0.494	0.494	0.704
Benefits and faults and subjective self-concept	0.000	310	1	58.539	0.080	0.573	0.579	0.759
Benefits and faults and subjective self-concept and positive feeling to spouse	0.000	309	1	27.634	0.035	0.607	0.610	0.781

**Table 4.** ANOVA table

Model	P	F	df
1			1
Total remaining regression	0.000	305.450	311
			312
			2
Total remaining regression	0.000	210.251	310
			312
			3
Total remaining regression	0.000	161.421	309
			312

**Table 5.** Variables included in the equation of multivariate regression analysis regarding marital satisfaction and self-concept

The criterion variable	Model	Step to step model	Entered variables
Marital satisfaction	1	Model 1	Benefits and faults
	2	Model 2	subjective self-concept
	3	Model 3	Job self-concept

**Table 6.** The results of the ANOVA test and coefficient of determination about positive feelings toward the spouse and marital satisfaction

Model	Changed statistics					Modified R square	Square R	R
	Significant of changed F	Df2	Df1	changed F	changed R-square			
Benefits and faults	0.000	311	1	305.450	0.495	0.494	0.495	0.704
Benefits and faults and subjective self-concept	0.000	310	1	58.539	0.080	0.573	0.576	0.759
Benefits and faults and subjective self-concept and job self-concept	0.048	309	1	3.940	0.005	0.577	0.581	0.762

**Table 7.** Table of coefficients

Predictor variables	Non-standard factor		Standard factor	T
	B	Standard error	Beta	
Fixed	14.550	1.342		10.842
Positive feeling to spouse	0.203	0.16	0.592	4.963

In the adjusted correlation coefficient squared column in the first model, where the flaws and virtues subscale of the self-concept variable was entered into the equation, this variable could predict marital satisfaction to the extent of 0.495. In the second model, by entering and adding the subjective self-concept subscale from the self-concept variable to the first model, the square of the correlation coefficient increased by 0.080, i.e., the variance explanation of our dependent variable and they are able to explain and predict 0.573 percent of the criteria variables. In the third model, by entering and

Adding the occupational self-concept subscale from the self-concept variable to the model has added 0.005 to the square of the correlation coefficient, i.e., the variance explanation of our dependent variable, and they can explain and predict 0.577% of the criterion variable. Therefore, it can be stated that the self-concept variable can predict 0.577 of the changes in the criterion variable.

According to the findings, the relationship between positive feelings towards the spouse and marital satisfaction is confirmed at the 95% confidence level, which shows a linear relationship between positive feelings towards

the spouse and marital satisfaction. The adjusted R square is also equal to 0.349, which indicates that positive feelings towards the spouse make 0.34 changes in marital satisfaction. Also, the correlation coefficient value of 0.592 shows the role of the positive feeling variable towards the spouse in predicting the dependent variable of marital satisfaction. Considering the positive sign of the coefficients, it can be said that the relationship between these two variables is positive. That is, an increase in one causes an increase in the other.

**Discussion**

Based on the obtained results, the squared correlation coefficient has become significant in both variables of positive feeling towards spouse and self-concept.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the variables of self-concept and positive feelings towards the spouse have sufficient power to predict marital satisfaction, and together they can predict 0.61 of marital satisfaction changes.

These results are consistent with the research of Bakhshi et al. (11) and Rezaei and Cheraghi (12). The result of the research showed that there is a relationship between positive feelings towards

the spouse and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction can be defined as the amount of satisfaction that couples receive from each other. One factor that plays an important role in couples' marital satisfaction is positive feelings towards each other. A positive feeling towards a spouse is a positive emotion that includes positive feelings and emotions such as (pleasure, joy, happiness, and pride) and a negative emotion includes negative feelings and emotions such as (guilt, shame, sadness, anxiety and worry, anger and tension) (5).

Another result of this research showed a relationship between self-concept and marital satisfaction of women. Among the variable subscales of self-concept, self-concept of faults and advantages, mental self-concept, and occupational self-concept, they can explain and predict 0.577% of the marital satisfaction variable. In explaining these results, it can be said; that the flaws and virtues subscale generally tells a person's positive and negative characteristics (greed, selfishness, cruelty, kindness, and temperament). Marriage is a social affair that is based on communication. Effective communication leads to flourishing and improving the quality of people's relationships, and ineffective communication hinders human flourishing and destroys relationships. Researchers believe that there is a general agreement that personality traits play an essential role in the negative or positive results of marital relationships. In this regard, it seems that many marital relationships originate from people's mental makeup, thinking style, and personality traits. Because it is the way of thinking that determines the quality of married life, on the other hand, mental and occupational self-concept shows abilities and efficiencies such as intelligence and memory, effort and hard work, etc. Rogers has spoken about the importance of "self" in adapting human behavior. He considered himself the central core of personality and the most fundamental factor in human behavior and environmental adaptation. The level of adjustment and mental health results from the degree of congruence with the existing compatibility between our self-concept and our experiences. Psychologically healthy people can perceive themselves, others, and events in their environment as they are. Such people are freely

open to all experiences. Because, in their opinion, nothing is threatening their self-concept. They consider their experiences as reality, and reality is what they experience. Behavior results from a person's perception, and a person reacts to it in how he perceives and describes reality.

On the other hand, satisfaction is an attitudinal variable. Therefore, it is considered an individual characteristic of husband and wife. According to the definition above, marital satisfaction is a positive and enjoyable attitude that a husband and wife have regarding various aspects of their marital relationship. The total factors of success, worth, ability, and importance of a person can affect his satisfaction with life (9).

There is a relationship between positive feelings towards the spouse and marital satisfaction, and the variable of positive feelings toward the spouse can explain and predict 0.592% of marital satisfaction. A person who experiences more positive feelings can present himself more favorably in relationships and express his needs more effectively to his partner and spouse. Marital satisfaction can be seen as a closeness, similarity, and personal romantic or emotional relationship with another person, which requires deep knowledge and understanding of the other person, as well as the expression of thoughts and feelings, which is a sign of the couple's similarity with each other.

Regarding this research, it should be noted that its results can only be generalized to married women of the Bojnourd Education Department and do not include other places and age groups. In order to achieve more complete and accurate results, it is suggested that research like this research be conducted on other groups of the society and on a more extensive level to increase the generalizability of the results. Also, in another research, the relationship of self-concept dimensions with the overall marital satisfaction score can be done. Based on the results of the research, it is suggested that specialists and counselors should teach this important subject in family education classes. Also, by teaching life skills and how to express positive feelings to the spouse through group meetings, it helped improve the quality of married life. Despite the relative increase in literacy level in society, people are still not familiar with important national concepts such as positive feelings

towards their spouse. They consider it equivalent to satisfaction and underestimate the importance of an essential factor such as intimacy. This important requirement is public education at the community level to understand that the purpose of marriage is not only one-sided satisfaction and that more factors are involved in married life. This research proposes to examine these concepts

separately without generalizing their meanings to everyone so that knowing these dimensions helps in the details of married life and its improvement.

### Conclusion

Self-concept and positive feelings towards a spouse can explain marital satisfaction.

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