



## AN ANALYSIS OF PREDICTIVE POWER OF PERSONAL LIFESTYLES AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE LEVEL OF MARITAL SATISFACTION OF COUPLES

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### ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence along with autonomy and sociotropy personality traits is an important factor in predicting marital satisfaction of couples. The objective of this paper is to determine the predictive power of personal styles (i.e. Autonomy and Sociotropy traits) and Emotional Intelligence on marital satisfaction.

**Methodology:** The nature of this research is cross-section analysis and the multiple correlations have been used in regression context and comparison. The statistical population consists of all Zaboli couples. Using available sampling method, they have been selected from 100 couples seeking help from counseling centers. The data has been collected using Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire, Robins personal styles inventory (PSI-II) and Bar-on emotional intelligence. In order to analyze the data and also investigate the predictive power of each variable, the stepwise regression has been used.

**The results:** The regression analysis results indicate that personal styles and emotional intelligence when used either separately or together, have meaningful role in predicting marital satisfaction of men and women.

**Conclusion:** The marital satisfaction of couples can be predicted using emotional intelligence and autonomous and sociotropic personal styles. Thus they have to be considered while selecting a mate or giving marriage counseling.

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### Introduction

Existing since the dawn of mankind, family is the oldest social core. It has been the cradle of child nurturing, the cause of maintaining social traditions and the factor of social stability in the lives of mankind. Human beings are sociable creatures and male and female and their living together has been always present in history. Analysis of the facilitating factors in spouse's relationship causing it to endure has always been at the center of attention. Considering the ever-increasing complexity of societies and lives, the need to newer researches is felt more than ever[1].

The health of family and society is correlative. Thus in having a healthy society, we need to be careful about the first unit of society i.e. family[2]. Over the last years it has been pointed out that couples who have common habits, interests, tastes, social, economic and cultural status and other factors in their family of origin, are more satisfied [1].

Couple satisfaction is one of the most important sections in a marriage experienced by couples and it may have the highest effect in its endurance and stability[3].

With regards to the couple satisfaction there has been proposed two theories: the first theory deals with interpersonal relations and is more popular among behavioral psychotherapists. According to this theory the fundamental problem of troubled couples lies in their non-compatibility, that is, their behaviors are punished instead of being rewarded, since the troubled spouses have low social skills and have negative actions and reactions in connecting with their partners. On the other hand the second theory, more popular among psychoanalysts, suggest the intrapersonal factors. That is, the personality traits of partners is the cause of either endurance and stability along with satisfaction or non-stability along with dissatisfaction[4]. It seems that the above mentioned confictions is not the result of a lack of love between the couples nor a fundamental problem, but the couples, despite their loving one another, face problems either unwantedly or owing to a lack of knowing one another's personality traits, which in fact raise more problems or even causes the divorce[3]. Over the last decades the influence of personality on the emotional and intimate relations have been paid attention to, too much [5]. Beck has introduced two personality traits named Autonomy and Sociotropy [6]. The Sociotropic, crave positive relations with others and their behaviors are influenced by getting others' confirmation and support. Autonomous people, on the other hand, crave independence and are so sensitive about failure and not getting what they want[6]. Therefore, for a sociotrop, the priority is always for the interpersonal relationships and he considers his own value dependent upon the love received by others, and responds negatively to social acceptance and personal attractiveness. The autonomous, on the other hand, emphasize on the independence, liberty, solitude and rediscovering him/herself, and therefore is sensitive to those situations which challenge his/her own autonomy, activity and physical or psychological function[7]. Some researchers have stated clearly that inclination towards dependence on others (Sociotropy) or independence (Autonomy) affect interpersonal relations including interaction models in couples [8]. These interaction models may be related to confliction relations, connection problems, marital dissatisfaction and depression. Thus these personality traits causes not only a sensitivity to a specific category of stress, but also make stress-building events happen, cause special interpersonal conflicts and depression-making interaction models [8]. In a research Toru Sato showed that both sociotropy and autonomy increase the vulnerability to depression and this depression influences intrapersonal relations [9]. Having Carried out a study on the elderly, Thomas Lunch concluded that the intrapersonal relations differ among sociotropic and autonomous personalities, i.e. sociotropic patients explained their behavior as relationship-oriented and their partner's as withdrawal. Likewise autonomous patients explained their behavior as withdrawal and their partner's as relationship-oriented; likewise due to high criticism of his/her partner, the autonomous personality had more powerful relation with couple dissatisfaction [10].

Marriage is one of the aspects of life in which emotional intelligence plays a key role in its success. In other words if there were anything in which emotional intelligence would be most important, that would be marriage. That is because the foundation of a fulfilling relationship depends on understanding and controlling the emotions; and it is an important part in marital satisfaction[11]. Bar-on has defined emotional intelligence thus: "The collection of non-cognitive capabilities, skills and efficiencies which enables one to succeed in opposing environmental pressures and expedients" [12]. According to Fitness, emotional intelligence or at least some levels of it has the potential of enriching a stable marriage conjoint with satisfaction and desired compatibility, and people with higher emotional intelligence experience more satisfactory marriages compared to those with lower emotional intelligence[13]. The results of a research carried out by Heaven & Smith, Ciarrochi on 45 couples over a year, show that emotional intelligence not only is an effective factor in marital satisfaction but it also has a high influence on marital satisfaction[14]. Likewise, the study carried out by Berrocal&Extremera indicates that emotional intelligence predicts the marital satisfaction [15]. Mahanyan[11], Dokanei [16], Hosenisade[17], Abdollahi and colleagues [15] have shown that emotional intelligence has a meaningful relation to marital satisfaction. Since personality traits and emotional intelligence can be related to marital satisfaction, we have strived to answer to the question that if the personality traits (Sociotropic and Autonomous) and emotional intelligence has predictive power in marital satisfaction or not?

### **Materials and Methods**

This research is analytical and cross-section in nature, and the multiple correlations have been used in regression context. The statistical population consists of all Zaboli couples seeking help from counseling centers. The research samples consists of 200 individuals (100 couples) and have been selected using available sampling method. In order to measure the variables we have used Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire, Robins personal styles inventory (PSI-II) and Bar-on emotional intelligence.

**Personal styles inventory (PSI-II)**

In order to evaluate the personal styles of couples ( Sociotropy and Autonomy ) we have used the re-evaluated form of the PSI-II questionnaire [18] . This questionnaire consists of 48 questions , of which 24 questions is in regards to autonomous personal styles and the other half is about sociotropic personal styles. Depending on the respondent agreement , each article is rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Almost never) to 6 (Almost always) . Using a sample of university students , Robins and his colleagues have reported a good internal consistency for this scale. Corenbach`s alpha coefficient for the sociotropy has been reported as 0/88 and for autonomy 0/86 respectively . Likewise correlating the questionnaire with Beck Depression Inventory its construct reliability has been calculated. The amount of correlation was 0/20 (p < 0/01) for sociotropic style and 0/27 ( p< 0/01) for the autonomous style. Also , In other researches the Corenbach`s alpha coefficient of this measure has been obtained from 0/79 to 0/89 [18].

**Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire**

Made in 1989 , America by Olson , this questionnaire was designed to measure the marital satisfaction level and consists of 115 and 12 subscale.The short version of this questionnaire is consisted of 47 questions standardized by Soleimanian and its reliability is 95% . Each questions has 5 answers on a Likert scale ( Absolutely Agreed , Agreed , Neutral , Opposed , Absolutely Opposed ) . Some of the questions are rated directly and some are rated reversely. The rating for Enrich questionnaire is T-scale in which the median is 50 and standard deviation is 10[3].Olson has reported Corenbach`s alpha coefficient for its subscales from 48% to 90%[2].

Carrying out a research on 182 Damghanicouples ,Abdollahzade reported the Corenbach`s alpha coefficient of Enrich questionnaire to be 93% and repeated the research on 35 couples 12 days later. The consistency of the first test with the second one was 78% and 83% for men and women respectively[19].The validity coefficient of this questionnaire has been calculated using the Corenbach`s alpha coefficient and bisection[2].

**Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire**

This questionnaire , based upon Bar-on social and emotional intelligence , is a self-report scale to evaluate behaviors related to social and emotional intelligence. Bar-on emotional intelligence questionnaire is consisted of 117 items and each of them is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 [20] .The test has been standardized in Iran - Isfahan by Samuee and his colleagues in 90-question format, and by calculating Corenbach`s alpha , its validity coefficient is reported to be 0/93 for the overall test and 0/88 in even/odd method. The median of validity coefficient of components is from 0/58 (self-expression) to 0/9 ( bearing mental stress)[21]. In this paper, we have used the Bar-on questionnaire to measure the emotional intelligence and it components. The validity coefficient of this questionnaire is calculated by Corenbach`s alpha and bisection and its amount is 0/93 and 0/85 respectively .

**The results:**

The information included in this section is about the median and standard deviation. The maximum and minimum ratings in the research variables include marital satisfaction, emotional intelligence, autonomous and sociotropic personal styles among the sample members.

**Chart 1 .** The explanatory results of the research variables in the sample individuals

Variable	median	Standard deviation	Minimum rating	Maximum rating
Marital satisfaction	118/85	21/02	125	227
Emotional intelligence	330/14	32/80	263	441
Autonomous	81/53	13/35	51	125
sociotropic	95/51	13/80	35	119

The median and standard deviation for marital satisfaction variable has been reported 85/118 and 02/21 , for emotional intelligence 14/330 and 80/32 , for autonomous personal style 53/81 and 35/13 and sociotropic personal style 51/91 and 80/13 respectively.

In order to investigate the predictive power of personal styles and emotional intelligence in this section, we have used stepwise regression analysis .the analysis has been done separately for men and women.

**Chart 2.** The results of regression analysis of personal styles and emotional intelligence with regards to marital satisfaction in women

Regression indexes		F P	R Square	R	indexes
Y-intercept	Regression coefficients				Predictive variables
42/72	25/0= $\beta$ 39/0= -b 49 /2= -t 01/0= P	28/8 = F 005/0= P	07/0	27/0	Autonomous personal style
	27/= 0 $\beta$ 42/0=b 85 /2= t 005/0= P	93/0 = F 0001/0= P	15/0	39/0	Sociotropic personal style
	41/= 0 $\beta$ 30/0=b 57/4= t 0001/0= P	15/14 = F 0001/0= P	30/0	55/0	Emotional Intelligence

The results indicate that multiple correlation among autonomous and sociotropy personal styles and emotional intelligence with marital satisfaction in women is equal to 0/55 which is meaningful at  $p < 0/001$  .Likewise the R Square shows that these three variables predicts 30 percent of marital satisfaction in women. The results of T-Test of standard and non-standard regression weights show that when these three variables start to analyze together, they have a meaningful role in prediction marital satisfaction.

**Chart 3.** The results of regression analysis of personal styles and emotional intelligence with regards to marital satisfaction in men

Regression indexes		F P	R Square	R	indexes
Y-intercept	Regressio coefficients				Predictive variables
	25/0= $\beta$ 39/0= -b 49/2= -t 01/0= P	28/8 = F 005/0= P	07/0	27/0	Autonomous personal style

42/7 2	27/=0 β 42/0=b 85/2= t 0/005=P	93/8 = F 0001= 0/P	15/0	39/0	Sociotropic personal style
	41/= 0 β 30/0=b 57/4= t 0001/0= P	15/14 = F 0001= 0/P	30/0	55/0	Emotional Intelligence

The results indicate that multiple correlation among autonomous and sociotropy personal styles and emotional intelligence with marital satisfaction in men is equal to 0/66 which is meaningful at  $p < 0/001$  . Likewise the R Square shows that these three variables predict 43 percent of marital satisfaction variance in men. The results of T-Test of standard and non-standard regression weights show that when these three variables start to analyze together, the autonomous personal style has not a meaningful role in predicting marital satisfaction in men , but the sociotropy and emotional intelligence has a meaningful role in predicting marital satisfaction in men.

**Conclusion**

The results indicated that the marital satisfaction in men and women can be predicted using personal styles ( sociotropy and autonomy) . Personal style has a major influence upon the behavior of individuals especially their interpersonal relations. Sato and McCann have investigated the relation of autonomous and sociotropy personal styles with interpersonal relation problems. They believe that each personal style can be either facilitating or resisting in terms of experiencing events. In other words non-compatibility of every individual’s personal style with events experienced by him/her can be intimidating to an intimate relationship and decrease its satisfaction[22]. Also, Beck in his compatibility theory has indicated to this issue and says that non-compatibility of personal style of every individual with his/her everyday experiences can wind up in depression. Therefore the personal style plays a key role in predicting interpersonal relations especially matrimonial relationships [22].

A sociotropic individual always gives the priority to interpersonal relationships and considers his/her own value dependent on the love received by other people and he also responds negatively to issues related to social acceptance and personal attractiveness. An autonomous individual on the other hand emphasizes the independence, freedom and liberty, solitude and expressing him/herself , therefore is more sensitive to those situations which challenged his/her autonomy , activity and physical or psychological functions[7]. Depending on each individual’s personal style , the events in life can have different effects , for instance , what is important to a sociotropic individual and he/she seeks that , can be intimidating to an autonomous . For example staying away from family members can be traumatic for the sociotropic but for an autonomous might be satisfying [7] . Some researchers have stated clearly that inclination towards others` confirmation ( sociotropy ) or independence ( autonomy ) influence interpersonal relations including interaction models in couples[8] . These interaction models can be related to conflicting relationships, relationship problems, marital dissatisfaction and depression. Thus these personality traits cause not only a sensitivity to a specific category of stress, but also make stress-building events happen, builds special interpersonal conflicts and depression-making interaction models [8]. Thomas Lunch concluded that the intrapersonal relations differ among sociotropic and autonomous personalities, i.e. sociotropic patients explained their behavior as relationship-oriented and their partner’s as withdrawal. Likewise autonomous patients explained their behavior as withdrawal and their partner’s as relationship-oriented; likewise due to high criticism of his/her partner, the autonomous personality had more powerful relation with couple dissatisfaction [10].

According to Fitness, emotional intelligence or at least some levels of it has the potential of enriching a stable marriage conjoint with satisfaction and desired compatibility, and people with higher emotional intelligence experience more satisfactory marriages compared to those with lower emotional intelligence[13]. As a result , emotional deficiency , wrong thoughts and behaviors which can collapse a marriage proves the vital role played by emotional intelligence[23]. Marriage is one of the aspects of life in which emotional intelligence plays a key role in its success. In other words if there were anything in which emotional intelligence would

be most important, that would be marriage. That is because the foundation of a fulfilling relationship depends on understanding and controlling the emotions; and being aware of one's partner emotions is an important aspect of marital satisfaction[11].

Considering all the results gained from the research, we can conclude that the marital satisfaction of couples can be predicted using emotional intelligence and autonomous and sociotropic personal styles. Thus they have to be considered while giving marriage counseling. Since the results of this research have been analyzed separately for men and women, we can use the personal styles and emotional intelligence in predicting marital satisfaction of both men and women.

One of the limitations of this research is the insufficient resources with regards to the personal styles role in predicting marital satisfaction. There has never been carried out a research in Iran about this issue. In almost every research done at home or abroad, there has only been pointed out to the personal styles relation to depression. Since this is the case, we suggest that in future researches, with the depression factor in mind, the role of personal styles in marital satisfaction or conflictions in marriages be considered. The results showed that emotional intelligence has a meaningful role in predicting marital satisfaction and we suggest to family counselors and even the couples to pay enough attention to EI and make appropriate curriculum in understanding and controlling emotions.

According to the results, since the personal styles play a key role in predicting marital satisfaction, it may be suggested to the couples and marriage counselors to examine them closely while seeking a partner.

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