

The Study of the Religious Behavior and Faith in Relation with Student's Marital Satisfaction

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Abstract: The main purpose of the present research, was to determine religious behavior and faith relationship with marital satisfaction in married students. The samples of this study included 214 male and female married students from both universities of Mohaghegh Ardabili and Azad in 2008, which were selected through classified random sampling. This study was a correlative study and for data collection, researcher's made questionnaire, Enrich's marital satisfaction questionnaire, faith and religious behavior scale were used. The results of the study showed that, on the whole, 44 individuals (20.6%) had marital dissatisfaction and 170 of them (79%) had marital satisfaction. The results of the study showed that there was a positive significant correlation between personal religious behavior and marital satisfaction in students. The results, also indicated the positive significant correlation between religious ceremonies and marital satisfaction, between science behavior and marital satisfaction and finally between faith and marital satisfaction.

Key words: Marital satisfaction, faith, religious behavior

INTRODUCTION

Faith and religious behavior refer to the set of the beliefs, habits, functions and reactions, which are relatively stable, visible, measurable and predictable (Maltby and Day, 2003). Religious behavior in dealing with the life's significant points has positive value. Those behaviors like praying, trusting God, fasting and etc can, by creating hope and encouraging individuals to a positive attitude toward the mental stressful situations, cause an inner tranquility in individuals (Ellison, 2001). The complexity of the present era makes human beings to consistently show lack of satisfaction and adjustment in difficult situations. Likewise, marriage, which is the initial core in creating a family and a unit in the building stone of the human society can be affected, to a great extent, by these problems and life's challenges. According to the reports of psychologists and sociologists, in recent years in many countries, the structure of the family has had many changes (William and Lawler, 2003) and the rate of divorce has increased (Roberts, 2000). For example, in England, the report from one of the researchers called Gillian Miles indicated that one out of four families is a single-parent family and most of the children are living with parents with the second or more number of marriage (Varma, 1996). Also, in the US, most of the murders have

a family root and the rate of the conflict and divorce has increased significantly. Scurrility, beating or in other words family violence has become one of the most important social worries (Smith and Mackie, 2007). Although, in our country, Iran, due to religious beliefs and cultural texture and ethical values, the severity of family problems is not equal with those of other countries, it is undeniable that there are problems and different dissatisfactions regarding this matter in our country. Recent reports are showing the increase of conflict, violence and even divorce in Iran country (Noorbala *et al.*, 2004). The existence of divorced couples and children without parents has made sociologists, philosophers and scientists find the source of marital problems from their own viewpoints. Likewise, psychologists and religion scientists try to do human society a favor by investigating the relationship between religious factors and marital satisfaction. As a result, there have been tendencies among psychologists toward religion in order to get mental health and treat interpersonal problems. These tendencies will be defined as in religion psychology whose aim is to consider the role of religion in existence and humans' mental health. From a psychological viewpoint mental relaxation and satisfaction with life are fundamental qualities of healthy normal people. Faithful persons' manners and moods

show or reflect their sense of satisfaction and peace and the heart of the pious man is bright with light of truth and full of spiritual enjoyment (George *et al.*, 2002). Also, these studies show that the rate of self-esteem, interpersonal adjustment and life satisfaction in religious men is higher than those people with internal religious activity (impious people) (Baker and Gersach, 1982; Nelson, 1990; Loewenthal, 1995; Maltby and Day, 2001, 2004). The study of effective factors on family conflicts and divorce showed that there was a negative significant relationship between weakness in religious beliefs and divorce (Sacher and Fine, 1996). Moreover, he indicated that religion increases marital adjustment in couples. The role of proximal and distal religious constructs in marital functioning showed that there was a significant relationship between religious, ethical understanding and divorce (Mahoney *et al.*, 1999). The results show, controlling for other selected variables known to be associated with the likelihood of divorce, that higher divorced rates are significantly related to a lower concentration of moderate Protestants, miscellaneous Protestants, Catholics and Mormons (Larry *et al.*, 2006). Also, studies show that people with great religious tendencies, are more satisfied and happier with life and in life's stressful events they show less negative psycho-social outcomes (marital conflict) (Ellison, 2001). Lovin and Vandrepool (1991) indicated >300 essays about correlation between religion and health and showed that religious development has a great correlation with mental health, socialization, adjustment, friendship, commitment and obligation. Pargament (1997) found that religion makes people live happier. Religion and the sanctification of family relationships-discovered that there was a negative correlation between divorce and being religious (Mahoney *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, there is positive meaningful relationship between religion and satisfaction of family relationships. In a study, Low and Handal (1995), among 500 students whose age was 16-47, found a significant relationship between religion and students' adjustment. Sullivan (2001) in an investigation of the immediate and longitudinal effects of religiosity on newlywed couples, found that interesting effects of religion and ethical agreement on marital adjustment. Furthermore, found that most studies have reported positive effects of religion on marital adjustment and yet, some studies have reported the minimal or neutral effect. No study has ever reported a negative effect of these programs. Mosher and Handal (1997) in a study showed that those students who practiced spiritual elevation, in spite of the problems and several changes in life, experienced less psychological distress. Also, different studies have reported that psychologists use religion in

the treatment of individual, family and marital problems (Schwartz, 1995). By considering these studies, if one of the factors of marital conflicts can be related to faith and religion, it is necessary that marriage be done with sufficient knowledge because we see families, after marriage, have several problems. Also, there is a general agreement that family has an important effect on emergence of conduct disorders. Clinical studies Khadivizand *et al.* (1999), showed that inappropriate relations between parents are the main sources of their inappropriate relations with their children. Many experts and child psychologists believe that children's and teenagers' mental, emotional, behavioral and social problems are the reflection of their parents' problems and their inappropriate relations with the children. These problems appear as the lack of emotional bond between parents and psychological tensions due to dissatisfaction with life and divorce (Rogers, 1970; Whisman, 1999; Whisman *et al.*, 2004). Also, findings show that marital satisfaction has an important role in the rate of stress and the quality of relation with the spouse has an important role in the happiness and marital satisfaction and is an important parameter in the men's' mental health (Blum and Mehrabian, 1999).

Therefore, it is clear that relation and marital satisfaction are very important from different dimensions. Due to the importance of above factors and since students are one of the most important assets of a nation, they must enjoy more marital satisfaction. It is necessary to inform girls and boys, before marriage and later in life, of the religion and its remarkable effects on having healthy or unhealthy relations. Hence, considering the above mentioned, this question rises that what relationship, if any, is there between religious behavior and faith and marital satisfaction?

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were made:

- There is a positive relationship between faith and religious behavior and marital satisfaction among married students.
- There is a difference among those students with marital satisfaction and those with marital dissatisfaction in the interaction with sex in terms of faith and religious behavior mean.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Subjects: The population for this study included all the male and female married students of both Mohaghegh Ardebili and Azad universities. Two hundred and fourteen male and female students were selected by classified random sampling and questionnaires were filled out by

groups. The reason for selecting 214 subjects was that in correlation studies, 50 subjects are adequate. Therefore, at the present study for increasing the external validity of the research and decreasing the effect of intervening factors, a larger number of samples were selected.

Data collection apparatus: Instruments used for data collection in this study included researcher-made questionnaire, marital satisfaction test and faith and religious behaviors questionnaire.

Researcher-made questionnaire: Age and sex, spouse's education and their field of study, date of marriage and the number of children, family relationship and other socio-individual variables were evaluated within the researcher-made questionnaire.

Marital satisfaction test (ENRICH): Marital satisfaction questionnaire consists of 115 objective questions and 14 scales that included personality traits and dimensions, communication, conflict solving, financial problems, leisure times, sexuality, child's training, relation with one's own family and friends, wife or husband's roles and spiritual and religious behavior. Olson and his colleagues have reported the validity of this questionnaire by Alpha coefficient method to be 0.92. Because of the length of the scale's questions, several forms have been extracted from it. At first, Olson introduced the form of 15 questions and then the form of 47 questions and in the end, the form of 25 questions, respectively (Fowres, 1998). In the present study, the short form of this questionnaire was used. This form included 47 items (Fowres, 1998).

Faith and religious behavior scale: Faith and religious behavior scale has been made by Nielsen (1995) with factor analysis method. Religious behavior scale has 23 items and each subject's score's range will be from 23-161. Religious behavior scale will test four parameters, which include: personal religious behavior, church behavior, science behavior and faith.

The Alpha Cronbach of Faith and religious behavior scale has been reported 0.92. The Alpha Cronbach of personal religious behavior has been reported 0.88, church behavior 0.88, science behavior 0.89 and faith 0.95 (Nielsen, 1995).

Research method and statistical methods: This study was a correlative study, in which the relationship between faith and religious behavior with marital satisfaction was determined by Pearson Correlation method. For data analysis, 2-way factor (multiple-variables) variance analysis test was used.

RESULTS

Descriptive findings indicate that present samples included the age range of 18-40 with the mean of 24.5 and S.D = 4.22 and 98 male subjects (45.8%) and 116 female subjects (54.2%). Since, the beginning of the study, 116 of the subjects (54.2%) were engaged and 98 subjects (45.8%) were married and live with each other. Fourty four subjects (20.6%) had marital dissatisfaction and 170 subjects (79.4%) had marital satisfaction. Also, correlation results and data analysis have been shown on Table 1.

Table 1 shows faith and religious behavior correlation with marital satisfaction among students. The results of this table indicate that there is a positive and significant correlation between faith and religious behavior with marital satisfaction among students ($p < 0.001$). It means that the increase in one of the variables is followed by the increase in other variables and vice versa. Another result of this table was that there is a positive and significant correlation between four scales of church behavior, science behavior and personal religious behavior with student's marital satisfaction.

The results of the Table 2 indicated that faith and religious behavior in group with marital satisfaction are with mean of 135.47 and S.D = 17.07 and in group with marital dissatisfaction the mean is 122.31 and S.D = 24.98. Also, faith and religious behavior in male students have the mean of 132.30 and S.D = 22.64 and in female students it is 133.15 and S.D = 16.77.

According to the results of Table 3, using two-way factor (multiple-variables) variance analysis, it has been

Table 1: Pearson correlation to show the relationship between personal religious behavior and students' marital satisfaction

Variable	Marital satisfaction
Religious behavior and faith	R = 0.27** p < 0.001
Religious behavior	R = 0.25** p < 0.001
Faith	R = 0.28** p < 0.001
Church behavior	R = 0.64** p < 0.001
Science behavior	R = 0.17* p < 0.013

Table 2: Mean and S.D of faith and religious behavior in students with marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction in interaction with gender

	Gender	Mean	S.D.	N
Dissatisfied group	Male	114.30	25.55	26
	Female	133.88	19.45	18
	Total	122.31	24.98	44
Satisfied group	Male	138.80	17.58	72
	Female	133.02	16.34	98
	Total	135.47	17.07	170
Total	Male	132.30	22.64	98
	Female	133.15	16.77	116
	Total	132.76	19.64	214

Table 3: The results of two-way factor (multiple-variables) variance analysis mean of faith and religious behavior in students with marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction in interaction with gender

Source of changeability	SS	d.f.	Mean square	F	Sig.
A (group with satisfaction)	427.35	1	427.35	14.05	0.001***
B (gender)	1611.47	1	1611.47	04.79	0.030*
AB (interactive effect)	5447.89	1	5447.89	16.19	0.001***
Error variance	70652.55	210	336.44		
Variance of all groups	3854324.00	210			

***p<0.001 *p<0.05

indicated that F1 about group with marital satisfaction is 14.05 and it is significant at the level of 0.001 and this means the increase in the mean of faith and religious behavior of students with marital satisfaction (135.47) in comparison with students with marital dissatisfaction (122.31). F2 of the type of gender is 4.79 and is significant at level of 5%. That is, the average of faith and religious behavior among female students (133.15) is greater than the mean of religious behavior and faith among male students (132.30). The F interaction of group with satisfaction and gender is also significant and they indicate the difference between faith and religious behavior among students with marital satisfaction (135.47) in comparison with students with marital dissatisfaction.

DISCUSSION

Descriptive findings indicate that totally 44 (20.6%) students have marital dissatisfaction and 170 (79.4%) students have marital satisfaction.

The reason why 20% students are dissatisfied with their marriage is probably due to some variables in this study such as low religious behavior and faith, poor economical situation, universities' expenses and having children during their education.

The first hypothesis of this study predicted that there was a positive relationship between faith and religious behavior and students' marital satisfaction.

The results of this study, indicated that there is a positive and significant correlation between faith and religious behavior with student's marital satisfaction. It means that the increase in one of variables is followed by the increase of the other variables and vice versa. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study is confirmed. Other results of this table showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between four scales of church behavior, faith, science behavior and personal religious behavior with student's marital satisfaction.

The results of this study correspond with those of Baker and Gersach, 1982; Nelson, 1990; Mahoney *et al.*, 1999; Loewenthal, 1995; Low and Handal, 1995; Sacher and Fine, 1996; Larry *et al.*, 2006; Mosher and

Handal, 1997; Schwartz, 1995; Sullivan, 2001; Ellison, 2001; George *et al.*, 2002; Mahoney *et al.*, 2003; Maltby and Day, 2001, 2004).

To explain these findings, one can refer to such mechanism in the religious behavior like relaxation and catharsis. These mechanisms can be very helpful in increasing individual's mental health and wellbeing séance (Alvarado *et al.*, 1995; Ellison, 2001; Hackney and Sanders, 2003; Maltby and Day, 2003; Leslie *et al.*, 2004; Dezutter *et al.*, 2006) and this increase makes better the relation between individuals (Maltby and Day, 2001).

Relaxation: Religious relaxation is mainly a desirable way for decreasing human's pains. One of the best ways in alleviating the pains is prayer. In many traditions, prayer has been considered as something, which makes humans calm. For example, it is said that when Imam Ali was praying God, others could take the arrow off his leg or at the time of prayer Prophet Muhammad (peace upon him) used to tell Balal: Balal give us peace through your prayer. Also, about other great scientists like Avicenna, it is said when he was unable to solve a problem he used to pray God. Prayer has an important role in relaxation and mental relaxation. Furthermore, a pious man after saying his prayer goes on with more prayers and this will give him peace and comfort.

Catharsis: One of the most valuable and important aspects of religious structure is the strong spiritual connection that followers of the religion believe to have. One of the best examples of this love is seen on holy places such as holy Mashhad. Being a believer, being faithful to life values, searching for the real meaning of life are old concepts, which are being ignored in the industrial age. However, apart from the effects these concepts have in the individual's life, their positive and constructive effects have gained their importance in life again. As a result, today they are used for treating patients. Turner *et al.* (1998) write that: 20-60% of individual's mental health variables are determined by religious beliefs. Since, human being is a mental, cultural and social being, to treat his diseases all the effective factors should be explored. On the other hand, there is some evidence, which indicate that religion and religious beliefs should gain more attention to improve health, treatment and prevention from social problems. Getting familiar with religion's rudiments will prevent humans to have wrongful thoughts, deviations and social problems.

The second hypothesis predicted that there was a difference between students with marital satisfaction and marital dissatisfaction in interaction with gender in terms of the mean of faith and religious behavior.

The results indicated that there is a significant difference in the mean of faith and religious behavior in students with marital satisfaction (135.45) in comparison with student who have marital dissatisfaction (122.31). Also, the mean of faith and religious behavior in female students (133.15) is significantly higher than male students' faith and religious behavior (132.30). The interaction between students with marital satisfaction and students with marital dissatisfaction and gender showed a significant difference in the mean of faith and religious behavior. Thus, according to these findings, the second hypothesis is also correct and confirmed. To explain the significance of difference between students with marital satisfaction and students with marital dissatisfaction regarding the mean of faith and religious behavior, it can be said that since marital relation is a stressful relation, couples need adjustment. Human's reaction towards stress is influenced by mental stressful events. Mental stress is a network of stimuli, understandings and reactions, which require humans to use their own adaptability source so that they can have conformity with internal or external desires (Masse *et al.*, 1998). It seems that religious or non-religious people will experience a similar stress. Yet, religious people can better confront the life's negative events and mental stressful factors. Pargament (1997) believes that religious people for the first and second type of assessment (Is this event potentially dangerous? Can I overcome this event?) Use religion to overcome stress. Because their reaction towards stress is influenced by some factors like: social support, personal hard work, the style of problem solving and things like that and this can result in the decrease in stress in religious people. Therefore, the most important effect of religion in overcoming stress is the role it has in the process of evaluation.

CONCLUSION

Religion, using the above relieving factors, affects the style of overcoming the stress and religious people's beliefs will help them to overcome stress. Beliefs like God is all-right, He is kind and can rescue humans from wretchedness and attention to Koran's message about marital problems such as don't be too hard on them, or Keep them either in a good manner or release them in a good manner and do not expel women from their homes can prevent marital conflicts to a great extent. Furthermore, honesty and true praying of God bring on confidence and relaxation in individuals. It is clear that after such activities, people can think better and find

better ways for solving problems and also by crying they can get rid of much of their stress. Also, this belief, that God has created human beings free and they are responsible for what they do, causes pious men to have more control of their deeds. This strategy can influence emotional, cognitive and behavioral reaction to overcome stress. For this reason, the mean of faith and religious behavior is greater in students with marital satisfaction.

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