

## The Effect of Neurosis Personality Trait on Marital Satisfaction Couples

Ezat Asadi Makiabadi

Department of Psychology, Science and Research University, Sirjan Branch, Sirjan, Iran

**Abstract:** The present study is aimed The Role of neuroticism features in marital satisfaction. The causal-comparative method is used in this study. Research sample includes 380 married couples from Sirjan education staff which has been gathered using cluster approach among all employees who worked during the academic year of 2013-2014. Neurosis subscale in NEO personality questionnaire, short form, (NEO-FFI) and ENRICH marital satisfaction questionnaire is used to measure the variables in this study. The results indicate that there is significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) between 4 groups of couples (presumed combined types of marriage in neurosis personality trait) in terms of eleven components of marital satisfaction.

**Key words:** Similarity or dissimilarity, neurosis personality trait, marital satisfaction, NEO, ENRICH marital

### INTRODUCTION

Family is the first core and the most basic foundation of every society that people are grown in its bed and enter into society. Family is the most effective entity of the society as an educational-cultural entity. If this entity properly informs its duty, prosperity and success of the community would not be far-fetched. When two people marry and begin their life together, in fact, they have begun the perfection and development. If the choice is correct and the couple is able to reach an agreement and sympathy, they will form a quiet and balanced family (Mousavi, 2001). Marriage is also as one of the most important factors affecting the family performance which is influenced by several factors; including economic situation, religion, number of children, age of marriage and employment status especially for women (Sinha and Mukherjee, 1999).

For most people, marriage begins with an important source of happiness and well-being, but while almost everyone marry at least once in their lives, a significant percentage of marriages end in divorce last (Marthin and Boump, 1989) and most likely, following marriages end in divorce too (Cherlin, 1992). Divorce is a main and cons event in human life (Ruschke, 1987) which often has negative consequences for physical and psychological well-being of the person. Therefore, over the years, many studies have examined predictions of marital satisfaction and quality of marriage (Spanier and Cole, 1974). These studies mainly focused on two themes including choice of spouse and marital success. (Eysenck and Wakefield, 1981). The first studies on the choice of spouse had focused on the similarity and dissimilarity

between the couple in a number of psychological, social and physical variables. Most studies about choice of spouse support the idea that the similarities between the couple, despite the complementary approach (Antilles, 1983), is an important factor in achieving the preservation and maintenance of marital satisfaction (Banta and Hettrington, 1963, Bentler and Newcomb, 1978; Deal *et al.*, 1992; Eysenck and Wakefield, 1981; Kurdek, 1993; Lutjin, 1994).

On the other hand, studies of marital success have study the extent to which psychological, physical and social variables impact on the quality of intimate relationships. However, in most studies, there is no clear distinction between these two issues (Eysenck and Wakefield, 1981). Based on Popno and Whitehead (2010) study, the United States is one of the countries with the highest divorce rate in the world, so that 40% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages and 73% of third marriages will result in divorce. In addition to the cause of this concern, only 25% of couples have satisfied of their relationship after ten years marriage (Popno and Whitehead, 2010). But what makes the prevalence of lack of satisfaction in the relationship between spouses? Many studies have reported that similarities between spouses has predicted a high rate of marital satisfaction with regard to intelligence, education, values, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and physical attractiveness (Sprecher and Duck, 1994) but what makes us «we» in many humanity aspects is the personality. Recent growth in the field of personality psychology has shown that personality traits could have a powerful effect on marital satisfaction and even the forecasting effects of the people have been absorbed to whom.

The majority of personality psychologists believe that people have basic structures (traits) that lead to the tendency to respond to the environment in a predictable manner (Sullivan, 1997). As a result, many traits theorists have tried to regular organize thousands «adjectives» in the English dictionary in a reliable parsimony classification, including Alport and Alport (1921), Wiggins (1979) and McCrae (1985). The purpose of these researchers during the development of the big five theory, was to determine how describe effectively people behavior in any language, with a primary focus on the mood foundations based on genetic of personality traits (Nofel and Shaver, 2006).

The result is that the differences and personality traits are important and effective factors in forming and maintaining intimate relationship. It seems that personality traits also influence the choice of spouse (Prager, 1995). Traits such as shyness and social anxiety may interfere in the formation of an intimate relationship (Davis and Othus, 1992) while traits such as consensus-seeking, emotional stability and openness to experience, are traits that people tend to be in their spouse (Botwin *et al.*, 1997). Also, personality traits have their impact on the quality of their relationship. Personality traits among others affect the way couples perceive each other, interact with each other and the way in which events of marriage are assessed and explained (for example, according to the quality of the married life, these results obtained that personality traits such as neuroticism, openness to experience, empathy (Davis and Othus, 1992) and self-esteem (Hendrik, *et al.*, 1988) affect the quality of intimate relationship (Prager, 1995).

Big five personality factors include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism are still unique and fundamental personality aspects that are used to describe human personality. Big five personality traits are investigated identical to marital satisfaction and most studies on these aspects have been done in recent decades (McCrae and Costa, 1985). In researches was carried out in order to predict marital satisfaction, researchers have reported positive relationship between satisfaction and extraversion factors (Watson *et al.*, 2000), seeking agreement (Donnellan *et al.*, 2004; Gattis *et al.*, 2004; Watson *et al.*, 2000) and conscientiousness of big five. On the other hand, the researchers similarly have reported negative relationship between satisfaction and neuroticism (Watson *et al.*, 2000) and between satisfaction and openness to experience. For both men and women having a partner who was high in the compromise-seeking, conscientiousness and openness to experience, but was low in neurosis for both sexes was a

predictor of satisfaction (Donnellan *et al.*, 2004; Kosek, 1996; Lester *et al.*, 1989). Interestingly, however, Lester *et al.* (1989) found that in both sides (spouses) the high extraversion is associated with dissatisfaction of the other spouse, Kosek (1996) later found that wife and husband satisfaction were positively correlated with spouse extraversion scores. It is possible that high levels of spouse extraversion make problems, when it leads to that spouse spent too much time with others. According to the importance of marital satisfaction influence on spouses, children, family and society performances and trait factors are most important factors on marital satisfaction and given the relatively fixed relation between trait and its predictability, research on personality traits and marital satisfaction will lead to beneficial results. Considering the foregoing, a gap can be found which is as follows, the research that particularly evaluates the effect of similarity or dissimilarity of spouses neurosis on marital satisfaction has not be done yet. So, the present study has tried to answer this question that does similarity or dissimilarity of spouse's neurosis affects their marital satisfaction?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present study is a practical and field research due to the nature of its topic and regarding its purpose and is non-experimental in the term of control variables. This study is causal-comparative or post events where researcher according to dependent variable investigates its potential causes (independent variable). Subjects are classified in tow groups (high neurosis and low neurosis), above and below the middle, based on the score were achieved in neurosis scale. According to the purpose of the research, sample includes all married couples from Sirjan education staff who worked till the end of academic year of 2014. Based on one-stage cluster approach, at first 20 units are selected from different units of population, then married employees are asked for participating in the study which 500 person have agreed. The 380 couples' questionnaires (employees and their spouses) have been returned to the researcher from 500 employees who have accepted to involve the research which have been used to statistical analysis. All samples have been guaranteed to respect ethical standards including anonymity and privacy and confidentially their information. Independent and dependent variables of the present study are (resiliency, optimism) and (tolerance distress), respectively. Descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis of variance has been used to analyze the data and post hoc test is used to track differences.

**Two questionnaires are used to data collection:** NEO personality questionnaire, short form (NEO-FFI): short form of NEO is used to study personality traits of couples with 60 questions and has been prepared in Persian for the first time by Kiamehr. In the present study Davoodi (2004) has been used. This test measures the big five personality traits including Nervousness (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). Each of these traits is measured with 12 questions. To answer these questions the participant selects the response among different options of a Likert type five grades range (strongly disagree, disagree, have no comment, agree, completely agree). Grades in this test include 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and vice versa. The minimum and maximum scores of each individual in each of the subscales are 12 and 60, respectively. Khojaste Mehr has reported the reliability of this test through Cronbach's alpha between 0.66 and 0.90.

ENRICH(Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issus communication Happiness Enrich) marital satisfaction questionnaire: this questionnaire has been made by Olson in the United States to evaluate and identify potential problem areas as well areas of strength and richness of marriage (Sullivan and Bradbuny, 1997). This questionnaire consists of 115 items and 12 subscales. For each item there is 5 options (strongly disagree, disagree, have no comment, agree, completely agree) as Likert scheme which are grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, respectively. 12 subscales include: distorted ideal, marital satisfaction, personal issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure, sex, children and parenting, relationships with family and friends, egalitarianism and religion orientation. Atari have reported Cronbach's coefficient and split-half reliability of the questionnaire and reliability as 0.92 and 0.87, respectively.

**RESULTS**

As it can be seen in Table 1, the assumption of equality of the average of four groups of couples (as well as men and women) can be rejected based on the dependent variables eleven components of marital satisfaction (marital satisfaction, personal issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure, sex, children and parenting, relationships with family and friends, egalitarianism and religion orientation) in significant level of 0.001. This means that among four groups of couples (as well as men and women) there is a significant difference at least in terms of one of the dependent variables. Therefore, this hypothesis that there are differences between the four groups of couples (as well as men and women) has been approved in terms of marital satisfaction components.

As can be seen in Table 2, there is a significant difference between couples in four groups (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of eleven components of marital satisfaction (personal issues, communication, financial management, leisure, sex, parenting, relationships with family and friends, egalitarianism and religion orientation). Therefore all hypotheses have been approved.

As can be seen in Table 3, the comparison of average scores using Scheffe's follow-up test showed that the test groups A, C, D and B respectively have earned more scores in marital satisfaction components. Also, due to the significant level ( $p < 0.05$ ) all paired comparisons between the groups is significant, so we can say that marital satisfaction in couples where the male and female have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is more than other groups.

As can be seen in TOctober 28, 2016 Table 4, the comparison of average scores using Scheffe's follow-up test showed that the test groups D, C, A and B

**Table 1: The results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on eleven components of marital satisfaction in four groups**

Analysis unit	Statistical index Tests	Value	F ratio	df assumption	df error	p significance level
<b>Couples</b>	Pillai's trace	1.244	22.61	33	1053.00	>0.001
	Wilks' Lambda	0.158	27.18	33	1028.92	>0.001
	Hotelling's trace	3.110	32.79	33	1043.00	>0.001
	Roy's Largest Root	2.350	75.28	11	351.00	>0.001
<b>Women</b>	Pillai's trace	1.090	16.17	33	1053.00	>0.001
	Wilks' Lambda	0.234	19.89	33	1028.00	>0.001
	Hotelling's trace	2.320	24.49	33	1043.00	>0.001
	Roy's Largest Root	1.880	60.26	11	351.00	>0.001
<b>Men</b>	Pillai's trace	1.090	18.27	33	1053.00	>0.001
	Wilks' Lambda	0.223	20.72	33	1028.00	>0.001
	Hotelling's trace	2.220	23.40	33	1043.00	>0.001
	Roy's Largest Root	1.560	50.04	11	351.00	>0.001

Table 2: The results of univariate analysis of variance 1(ANOVA) on the eleven marital satisfaction components of four groups of couples

Statistical index variable	Total squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F ratio	Significance level
Marital satisfaction	2603.57	3	867.85	65.94	>0.001
Personal issues	924.06	3	308.02	16.05	>0.001
Communication	1869.66	3	623.22	71.07	>0.001
Conflict resolution	2892.83	3	964.27	120.96	>0.001
Financial management	3459.29	3	1153.09	38.67	>0.001
Leisure	1840.01	3	613.33	56.03	>0.001
Sex	2743.32	3	914.44	26.97	>0.001
Parenting	1774.74	3	591.58	24.36	>0.001
Relationships with family and friends	3096.51	3	1032.17	46.46	>0.001
Egalitarianism roles	2412.48	3	804.82	23.49	>0.001
Religion orientation	3780.40	3	1260.13	76.09	>0.001

Table 3: The results of Scheffe follow-up test related to the differences between average marital satisfaction component scores of four groups of couples based on similarity and dissimilarity of neurosis personality traits of couples

Group	Number	Average	B	C	D
Man high-woman high (A)	133	39.16	2.29*	-1.94*	-4.99*
Man high-woman low (B)	50	36.87		-4.24*	-7.28*
Man low-woman high (C)	49	41.11			-3.04*
Man low-woman low (D)	131	44.15			

Table 4: The results of Scheffe follow-up test related to the differences between average personal issues component scores of four groups of couples based on similarity and dissimilarity of neurosis personality traits of couples

Group	Number	Average	B	C	D
Man high-woman high (A)	133	39.37	0.46	-0.64	-3.30*
Man high-woman low (B)	50	38.91		-1.11	-3.76*
Man low-woman high (C)	49	40.02			-2.56*
Man low-woman low (D)	131	42.67			

respectively have earned more scores in personal issues component. Also, due to the significant level ( $p < 0.05$ ) only the group D is significantly different with other groups, so we can say that personal issues score in couples where the male and female have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is more than other groups. It should be noted that other paired comparisons are not meaningful.

### DISCUSSION

The present study has investigated couples similarity or dissimilarity in neurosis personality trait on marital satisfaction of men and women in Lar city. The results of hypotheses analysis showed that there is a significant difference between four groups of couples (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of marital satisfaction component which means that couples with similar neurosis personality traits who both have earned low scores have higher marital satisfaction compared to other groups. The results of this hypothesis test are match to the results of Botwin *et al.* (1997), Donnellan *et al.* (2004), Kosek (1996), Laster *et al.* (1989), Zalski and Galkowska (1978), Baron *et al.* (2007) and Renshaw *et al.* (2005). Olys believes that marital satisfaction includes: feelings of real happiness,

satisfaction and pleasure experienced by the husband or wife, when all aspects of their marriage are considered. Based on description above it can be said that couples who earn low scores in neurosis personality trait, have reported more general marital satisfaction than those that both or one of couples have earned high scores. These persons report less frequently symptoms such as anxiety, anger, hatred, depression, self-awareness, impulsivity and vulnerability and can more easily adapt to the continuous changes of life. High level of compliance with environment could eventually lead to regard to standards of marriage by both spouses and be effective in enhancing mutual consent.

The other finding of the study showed that there is a significant difference between couples groups in terms of personal issues. It can be said that the score of personal issues satisfaction in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is higher than other groups. Although, a study which directly pay for such a comparison is not found but this hypothesis test results are close to the results of Botwin *et al.* (1997), Donnellan *et al.* (2004), Kosek (1996), Laster *et al.* (1989), Zalski and Galkowska (1978), Baron *et al.* (2007) and Renshaw *et al.* (2005).

Also there is a significant difference between groups of couples in terms of communication component. It means that communication level of couples who both earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is higher than other groups. There is a significant difference between groups of couples (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of conflict resolution component. It can be said that the capability of conflict resolution in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is higher than other groups. There is a significant difference between groups of couples in terms of general leisure. It can be said that the satisfaction of leisure in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is more than other groups. The need to have leisure is a basic need for general married couples. While many couples complain that they do not

spend enough time together, but the main problem is not the time, the problem is that this time of being together how spends, spending time with each other without correct using or having a conversation which improves the communication is ineffective or even negative in marital satisfaction.

There is a significant difference between groups of couples in terms of sex component. Satisfaction with sexual relationship in couples where man and woman have earned lower scores in neurosis personality trait is higher than female high-male high (group A) and male high-female low (group B) groups. Also there is a significant difference between four groups of couples (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of parenting component. Parenting in couples who both have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is better than other groups. Other paired comparisons are not meaningful. Lucky and Been (1989) in terms of the effect of children on the marital satisfaction believe that marital satisfaction declines with the birth of children and females feels that more than males, so that the arrival of children follows by some expectations which could lead to a deepening rift between couples. There is a significant difference between four groups of couples (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of relationships with family and friends component. It can be said that the satisfaction of relationships with family and friends in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is more than other groups. In explaining the findings of this study it can be stated that the couples who are lower in this feature, try to extend their social interactions with family members and friends and enjoy their social life. As a result, they will satisfy with the quality and the relationship with their and their spouse families. There is a significant difference between groups of couples in terms of egalitarianism component. The satisfaction of egalitarianism in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is better than other groups. When the neurosis is lower in a couple, they could better understand the needs of each other and show more fairness. As a result, they will have the sense of equality of rights and duties and can develop mutual trust and respect for each other. This sense of equality could be caused by temporary or permanent emotions of individual experiences and be caused by his personality traits or his wife's. There is a significant difference between four groups of couples (hypothetical combined types of marriage in the neurosis personality trait) in terms of religious orientation component. The satisfaction of religious orientation in couples where man and woman have earned low scores in neurosis personality trait is better than other groups. Bradford showed that couples

who have converge values show more consistency than those who have divergent values. Religious orientation forms social networks which increases spending time of couples with each other and provides some supports for them which lead to marital satisfaction. Results are recommended that in addition to self-report methods, other gathering information methods such as personal interviews with the participants should also be used. Given that in studies related to couples, collecting information from them is associated with many problems, it is recommended that the authorities offer facilities and appropriate solutions to researchers.

### CONCLUSION

The results showed that couples who are similar in neurosis personality trait and both spouses have earned lower scores have the higher marital satisfaction compared to other groups.

### REFERENCES

- Allport, F.H. and G.W. Allport, 1921. Personality traits: Their classification and measurement. *J. Abnormal Psychol.*, 16: 6-40.
- Antill, J.K., 1983. Sex role complementarity versus similarity in married couples. *J. Personality Social Psychol.*, 45: 145-155.
- Banta, T.J. and M. Hetherington, 1963. Relations between needs of friends and fiances. *J. Abnormal Social Psychol.*, 66: 401-404.
- Baron, K.G., T.W. Smith, J. Butner, J. Nealey-Moore, M.W. Hawkins and B.N. Uchino, 2007. Hostility, anger and marital adjustment: Concurrent and prospective associations with psychosocial vulnerability. *J. Behav. Med.*, 30: 1-10.
- Bentler, P.M. and M.D. Newcomb, 1978. Longitudinal study of marital success and failure. *J. Consult. Clin. Psychol.*, 46: 1053-1070.
- Botwin, M.D., D.M. Buss and T.K. Shackelford, 1997. Personality and mate preferences: Five factors in mate selection and marital satisfaction. *J. Pers.*, 65: 107-136.
- Cherlin, A.J., 1992. *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*. 2nd Edn., Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Davis, M.H. and H.A. Oathout, 1992. The effect of dispositional empathy on romantic relationship behaviors: Heterosocial anxiety as a moderating influence. *Personality Social Psychol. Bull.*, 18: 76-83.
- Davoodi, I., 2004. The role of cognitive, personality, family history and psychological pressure in anticipation of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Doctorate Thesis, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran.

- Deal, J.E., K.S. Wampler and C.F. Halverson, 1992. The importance of similarity in the marital relationship. *Family Process*, 31: 369-382.
- Donnellan, M.B., R.D. Conger and C.M. Bryant, 2004. The big five and enduring marriages. *J. Res. Personality*, 38: 481-504.
- Eysenck, H.J. and J.A. Wakefield Jr., 1981. Psychological factors as predictors of marital satisfaction. *Adv. Behav. Res. Therapy*, 3: 151-192.
- Gattis, K.S., S. Berns, L.E. Simpson and A. Christensen, 2004. Birds of a feather or strange birds? Ties among personality dimensions, similarity and marital quality. *J. Family Psychol.*, 18: 564-574.
- Hendrick, S.S., 1995. *Close Relationships: What Couple Therapists can Learn*. Brooks/Cole, Pacific Grove, CA., USA.
- Kosek, R.B., 1996. The quest for a perfect spouse: Spousal ratings and marital satisfaction. *Psychol. Rep.*, 79: 731-735.
- Kurdek, L.A., 1993. Predicting marital dissolution: A 5-year prospective longitudinal study of newlywed couples. *J. Personality Soc. Psychol.*, 64: 221-242.
- Lester, D., C. Haig and R. Monello, 1989. Spouses' personality and marital satisfaction. *Personality Individual Differences*, 10: 253-254.
- Luckey, T. and J. Bain, 1989. Children: A factor in marital satisfaction. *J. Marriage Family*, 62: 653-665.
- Luteijn, F., 1994. Personality and the quality of an intimate relationship. *Eur. J. Psychol. Assess.*, 10: 220-223.
- Martin, T.C. and L. Bumpass, 1989. Recent trends in marital disruption. *Demography*, 26: 37-51.
- McCrae, R.R. and P.T. Costa, 1985. Updating Norman's "adequacy taxonomy": Intelligence and personality dimensions in natural language and in questionnaires. *J. Personality Social Psychol.*, 49: 710-721.
- Mousavi, A., 2001. Marital satisfaction of educated women. Research Project of Social and Cultural Studies and Planning of the Presidential Office, pp: 100-106.
- Nofle, E.E. and P.R. Shaver, 2006. Attachment dimensions and the big five personality traits: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *J. Res. Personality*, 40: 179-208.
- Popenoe, D. and R.D. Whitehead, 2010. *The state of our unions 2010*. National Marriage Project, Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey.
- Prager, K.J., 1995. *The Psychology of Intimacy*. Guilford Press, New York.
- Raschke, H.J., 1987. Divorce. In: *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, Sussman, M.B. and S.K. Steinmetz (Eds.). Plenum Press, New York, pp: 597-624.
- Renshaw, K.D., G. Steketee and D.L. Chambless, 2005. Involving family members in the treatment of OCD. *Cognitive Behav. Therapy*, 34: 164-175.
- Sinha, S.P. and N. Mukerjee, 1990. Marital adjustment and personal space orientation. *J. Social Psychol.*, 130: 633-639.
- Spanier, G.B. and C.L. Cole, 1974. Toward clarification and investigation of marital adjustment. *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations*, October 1973, Toronto, Ontario -.
- Sprecher, S. and S. Duck, 1994. Sweet talk: The importance of perceived communication for romantic and friendship attraction experienced during a get-acquainted date. *Personality Social Psychol. Bull.*, 20: 391-400.
- Sullivan, K.T. and T.N. Bradbury, 1997. Are premarital prevention programs reaching couples at risk for marital dysfunction? *J. Consult. Clin. Psychol.*, 65: 24-30.
- Sullivan, K.T., 1997. Contributions of personality and behavior to change in marital satisfaction. Ph.D. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.
- Watson, D., B. Hubbard and D. Wiese, 2000. General traits of personality and affectivity as predictors of satisfaction in intimate relationships: Evidence from self-and partner-ratings. *J. Personality*, 68: 413-449.
- Wiggins, J.S., 1979. A psychological taxonomy of trait-descriptive terms: The interpersonal domain. *J. Personality Social Psychol.*, 37: 395-412.
- Zaleski, Z. and M. Galkowska, 1978. Neuroticism and marital satisfaction. *Behav. Res. Therapy*, 16: 285-286.