

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Marital Satisfaction: 10-Year Outcome of Partners from Three Different Economic Levels

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Back ground: Emotional communication and economic factors play an important role in having a satisfying relationship and a more successful marriage. In this regard, we investigated the 10-year outcome of partners from three different economic levels regarding the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and marital satisfaction.

Objective: The research was designed as a descriptive-correlative survey and data were analyzed using Pearson correlation test and stepwise regression.

Methods and Material: Participants were 159 couples (N = 318) who were randomly selected through clustered sampling. The questionnaires included: Bar-on Emotional Intelligence (1997) and Enrich Marital satisfaction (1989).

Results: The findings revealed that the average values of emotional intelligence (m = 333.1) and marital satisfaction (m = 300.77) were high in the under-rich region (p<0.05). Moreover, there was no significant relationship between interpersonal and marital satisfaction within the under-rich region. On average, emotional intelligence accounted for 40.8% of marital satisfaction within those three regions (p<0.01).

Conclusion: The results of the regression analysis showed that general mood is the most effective factor changing marital satisfaction in the three studied regions (R²= 0.34), rich (R²= 0.42) and semi-rich (R²= 0.52) regions (p<0.01). The most influential factor changing marital satisfaction in the under-rich (R²= 0.28) region was found to be stress management (p<0.01).

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Marital Satisfaction, Economic Status.

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Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the set of skills that allow us to use emotions to adapt, in other words, to perceive, understand and regulate our moods and use emotional information to improve cognitive resources (1).

Bar-on in his model of translation not only studies intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, he also considers factors such as adaptability, impulse control and general mood to be parts of emotional intelligence (2). Bar-On posits that EI develops over time and that it can be improved through training, programming and therapy. He considers emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence to contribute equally to a person's general intelligence, which then offers an indication of one's potential to succeed in life (3). The process and outcomes of emotional intelligence development also contain many elements known to reduce stress for individuals and therefore interpersonal relationships by moderating conflict,

promoting understanding and relationships, and fostering stability, continuity and harmony. Last but not least, it links strongly with concepts of love and spirituality (4)

Marital Satisfaction depends upon the individuals' expectations, needs and desires in their marriage. It refers to the degree of satisfaction between couples (5). Many experts believe that emotional intelligence or at least some of its aspects have the ability to develop a more satisfying marriage (6). When a person gets angry, he/she needs to use advanced emotional skills and high level of empathy and self-control as well as having a deep understanding of other people's needs and emotions. Interestingly, these skills are quite similar to the components of EI (7). People who are not able to manage their emotions struggle with their inner conflicts and are not able to use their ability to do an efficient and focused job (8).

Having some emotional skills_ being calm, moderating conflicts, listening and sympathy_ can increase the possibility of solving disagreements between the couples over different issues such as child training, sexual relationships, financial problems and other home issues (9).

In a review of seven studies the link between emotional intelligence and interpersonal relation was examined. This study indicated that the participants with higher scores on emotional intelligence had higher scores for empathic perspective taking, self-monitoring in social situations, social skills, cooperative behaviour, close and affectionate relationships and greater marital satisfaction (10). Also, some studies showed a strong correlation between the couples' emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction (11-16). In another study the results of multistage regression analysis showed that attention accounted for 19% of marital satisfaction, clearance component accounted for 7% and emotional reconstruction for 3% of marital satisfaction (15). It seems that considering the efficacy and role of EI in the domain of marital relationships, EI may help resolve or eliminate the problems of discordant couples (14).

One study on pre-marital preparedness on marital satisfaction of women indicated that compared to the middle or high income group, the low income group had a poorer attitude towards marriage and less marital knowledge while having higher marital apprehensions and expectations. They also had lower marital satisfaction (17). It is indicated that higher neuroticism, lower agreeableness, lower conscientiousness and less positive expressivity are tied to marital dissatisfaction (18). Furthermore, the evidence suggests that positive affect—the hallmark of well-being—may be the cause of many of the desirable characteristics, resources and successes correlated with happiness (19). Another study investigated the positive correlation between marital satisfaction and happiness (20). In another study among Brazilian couples “closeness” was the most important predictor for marital satisfaction (21). On the other hand, values, communication, commitment, decision-making, emotional intimacy, sexual relationships and forgiveness had the strongest impact on marital satisfaction (22,23). Another factor affecting marital satisfaction is economic factor. For example, the lack of communication and financial planning has been the cause of marital money problems among Brazilian couples (24). Another study on marital satisfaction in oil-rich regions and financial and social factors indicated that an increase in socioeconomic status causes a decrease in marital satisfaction (25). One study indicated that couples with low incomes scored significantly lower on five of the six dimensions of marital quality: overall satisfaction, commitment, divorce proneness, feelings of being trapped in a marriage and negative interaction (26). Another interesting survey showed

that there were no significant relationships between duration of marriage and family income and women's marital satisfaction (27).

Moreover, the most satisfied couples were those who did not avoid discussion of relationship problems and who rated their partners high in EI (28). The findings also partially supported the hypothesis that on average, participants of high EI would engage more in effective and less in ineffective conflict resolution styles and have unsuccessful arguments less frequently with their partners (29). Satisfied couples tend to use constructive problem-solving strategies. They rarely use destructive strategies like escalation of conflict or withdrawal. Dialogue is the strategy connected with satisfaction in a most positive manner. Loyalty to oneself is a significant positive predictor of male satisfaction (30).

In another survey comparing Americans and Brazilians, their common problems were money, children and sex, but jealousy and family-of-origin marital problems were more common in Brazilian couples (31). In this regard, research has shown that level of marital satisfaction varied across ethnic cultures. Higher emotional intelligence was a stronger predictor for higher marital satisfaction among Korean-natives compared to Korean-Americans as a function of minority/majority culture (32). In conclusion, even fewer cultural differences existed in the degree of couple consensus on relationship standards (33).

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in three different economic levels. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate whether these components can explain the percentage of variance in marital satisfaction.

Material and Methods

Since the current study aimed to investigate the relationship between EI and marital satisfaction in married individuals in Isfahan descriptive statistical methods was used to determine the correlation coefficient. In addition, the stepwise regression method was used to determine the predictive power of each component of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. In this study, emotional intelligence was considered as the predictive variable and marital satisfaction as the criterion one. The descriptive results are presented in Table 1 in forms of mean and standard deviation. The statistical population was the Isfahanian couples with at least one 9-year-old child or in other words, with at least a 10- year marriage. In this study, 318 individuals (159 couples) participated and were selected through multi-stage random cluster sampling method.

Considering the results other scholars have obtained (17, 25, 26, 34), we attempted to control the economic level variable in the participating groups. Therefore, we considered socioeconomic measures

(34) including health, medical, pharmaceutical, educational and welfare facilities such as parks and open spaces available to study economic level within each region.

In this respect, five regions of Isfahan have been divided in terms of economic status. Searches revealed that several Organizations of Education and Training have classified regions as rich, semi-rich and under-rich, but there was no such classification for the five regions of Isfahan. Therefore, the researcher classified each region, being defined by Organization of Education and Training, to three categories of rich, semi-rich and under-rich by considering economic measures and then chose six schools (three male schools and three female schools) randomly. Then an equal number of 9 couples were randomly chosen out of the third-year students of each school. To observe ethical issues, the questionnaires were confidentially delivered to the students in a sealed envelope accompanied with a supplementary guide to be passed to their parents and after that they were collected after a certain time by a follow-up. Two questionnaires of Bar-on Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire were used.

Bar-on Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

The individual's responses render the total EQ score and the scores on the following 5 composite scales that include 15 subscale scores: intrapersonal (Self-regard, emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, independence and self-actualization); interpersonal (empathy, social responsibility and interpersonal relationship); stress management (stress tolerance and impulse control); adaptability (reality-testing, flexibility and problem-solving); and general mood (optimism and happiness). A brief description of these emotional-social intelligence competencies, skills and facilitators measured by the 15 subscales is found in the appendix as was previously mentioned. In brief, the EQ-i contains 133 items in the form of short sentences and employs a 5 point response scale with a textual response format ranging from "very seldom, or not true for me" (1) to "very often true for me or true for me" (5).

Coefficients of reliability and validity of the questionnaire have been obtained with different methods. The mean score of Cronbach's alpha coefficients in calculating the internal consistency for all subscales is high from low Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.69) for the subscale of social responsibility to the high alpha coefficient (0.86) for the subscales of self-regard with the overall mean score of internal consistency coefficient (0.76). Bar-on in his studies relying on subjects' responses and experts' opinions concluded that the Bar-on Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire has high face and content validity (35). In Iran, Dehshiri has evaluated the validity and reliability of this

instrument. In his research, reliability was calculated for an interval of four months as 0.73 (36). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was obtained as 0.92.

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Enrich questionnaire includes 115 questions and is used to assess potential problem areas or to identify methods of enriching marital relationships. This questionnaire was developed by Olson, Fournier and Druckman. It is also used for couples who need advice to improve their relationship. In addition, this questionnaire has been used as a valid instrument in numerous studies to examine marital satisfaction, and it consists of 12 subscales. The first scale contains 5 questions and each of the other scales contains 10 questions. The subscales of this questionnaire are as follows: idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles and religious orientation. In the form of 115 questions implemented in Iran, 5 choices are intended for each of the questions in this questionnaire. Alpha coefficients of the Enrich Questionnaire interpretation for the subscales of idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles and religious orientation are 0.90, 0.81, 0.73, 0.68, 0.75, 0.74, 0.76, 0.48, 0.77, 0.72 and 0.71, respectively. The alpha coefficient of Enrich subscales in several different studies was from 0.68 (for equalitarian roles) to 0.86 (for marital satisfaction) with the mean score of 0.79(37). In Iran, Soleimani assessed the validity and reliability of this test using internal correlation of the questions, by selecting 47 questions having the greatest correlation with the overall score and presented it as the short form questionnaire of marital satisfaction. The reliability coefficient of this test in his study was obtained as 0.93(38). However, the validity of this questionnaire was calculated as 0.96 by alpha coefficient method in our study.

Results

Descriptive findings in Table 1 refer to the level of marital satisfaction mean and standard deviation (criterion variables) and emotional intelligence (predictive variable) separately for each region (rich, semi-rich and under-rich).

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores for emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in three regions

Regions Index of Frequency Variables	Three Regions		Rich		Semi-rich		Under-rich		F	P
	Mean	Mean deviation	Mean	Mean deviation	Mean	Mean deviation	Mean	Mean deviation		
Emotional Intelligence	325.61	31.37	314.51	33.12	331.65	29.17	333.10	28.85	9.193	0.001
Marital satisfaction	289.09	60.37	296.60	59.85	270.95	58.99	300.77	58.84	4.354	0.014

Table 2: correlation coefficient of components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in three regions

Regions Index of statistic Predictive variable	Three regions		Rich		Semi-rich		Under-rich		Pearson Correlation Square
	Pearson Correlation	Pearson Correlation Square	Pearson Correlation	Pearson Correlation Square	Pearson Correlation	Pearson Correlation Square	Pearson Correlation	Pearson Correlation Square	
Emotional intelligence	0.639**	0.408	0.753**	0.567	0.663**	0.439	0.552**	0.304	
Intrapersonal	0.509**	0.259	0.656**	0.430	0.496**	0.246	0.509**	0.259	
Interpersonal	0.364**	0.132	0.641**	0.410	0.291*	0.084	0.158	0.024	
Stress Management	0.467**	0.218	0.509**	0.259	0.542**	0.293	0.420**	0.176	
Adaptability	0.482**	0.232	0.610**	0.372	0.409**	0.167	0.471**	0.221	
General Mood	0.604**	0.364	0.632**	0.399	0.762**	0.580	0.422**	0.178	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: multiple correlation coefficient of components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in three regions

Regions	Index of statistic Criterion variable	Predictive variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig	F	Sig.
						Beta	T				
Three regions	Marital satisfaction	One Step (Constant)						1.058	0.292		
		General Mood	0.583	0.340	0.336	0.538	8.644	0.001	74.722	0.001	
		Two Step (Constant)						-1.159	0.874		
		General Mood Stress Management	0.673	0.453	0.445	0.402 0.382	7.46 5.452	0.001 0.001	59.626	0.001	
Rich	Marital satisfaction	One Step (Constant)						.612			
		General Mood	0.658	0.433	0.423	0.658	6.483	.543.000	42.031	0.001	
		Two Step (Constant)						-	0.018		
		General Mood				0.442	2.442.	0.000	31.828	0.001	
		Interpersonal	0.736	0.541	0.524	0.393	4.009 3.562	0.001			
		Three Step (Constant)						-	0.005		
		General Mood Interpersonal Stress Management	0.790	0.623	0.602	0.269 0.374 0.341	2.948 2.383 3.699 3.404	0.021 0.001 0.001	29.242	0.001	
Semi-rich	Marital satisfaction	One Step (Constant)						-0.647	0.521		
		General Mood	0.727	0.528	0.518	0.727	7.330	0.000	53.726		
		Two Step (Constant)						-2.070	0.044		
		General Mood				0.569	4.929	0.000	32.376		
		Adaptability	0.761	0.579	0.562	0.276	2.394	0.021			
		Three Step (Constant)						-0.496	0.622		
		General Mood Adaptability Interpersonal	0.802	0.644	0.620	0.819 0.333 -0.382	5.931 3.048 -2.881	0.000 0.004 0.006	27.702		
Under-rich	Marital satisfaction	One Step (Constant)						3.363	0.002		
		Stress Management	0.546	0.298	0.280	0.546	4.018	0.000	16.148	0.001	
		Two Step (Constant)						-1.228	0.227		
		Stress Management Intrapersonal	0.659	0.434	0.403	0.428 0.387	3.291 2.976	0.002 0.005	14.171	0.001	

The F value observed as $p < 0.05$ for emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in terms of location showed significant differences, and the highest mean score of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction were 333.10 and 300.77 for under-rich region, respectively.

The results of the bivariate analysis in Table 2 revealed a significant relationship among all the components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction of couples in three regions of Isfahan. Based on the coefficient of determination of 40.8%, the variance of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction was shared in the three regions so that the shared variance of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction was 56.7% in the rich region, 43.9% in the semi-rich and 30.4% in the under-rich region. Despite the correlation between all the components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in the three regions, no significant association was found between interpersonal relationships and marital satisfaction in the rich and semi-rich regions. In addition, the highest correlation coefficient was 36.4% in overall three dedicated to general mood, 43% in the rich region devoted to interpersonal component, individual components within the 43%, 58% in semi-rich region dedicated to general mood, and 25.9% in under-rich region for interpersonal component.

Table 3 demonstrates the results of the stepwise regression analysis in the three regions separately and overall. These data depict that among the studied variables, the best predictor for marital satisfaction within these three regions was general mood in the first step, and in the second step stress management was added to the general mood. Based on the results of the stepwise regression analysis, the relationship between general mood and stress management with marital satisfaction was significant in the three regions. Accordingly, in the first step, general mood coefficient explained 34% of the variance and in the second step, general mood and stress management totally accounted for 45.3% of the variance of marital satisfaction in the three regions. The value of observed F was significant at the level of $p < 0.01$, so the regression was statistically generalizable to the population. The findings suggest that increasing beta coefficient for 1 unit caused an increase of 0.402 units in marital satisfaction in the three regions.

The predictive equation relating to the three regions of this study is presented as follows:

Marital satisfaction in three regions = constant coefficient (-4.514) + general mood component (3.855) + stress management (3.098)

Table 3 also shows that among the variables of the regression, the best predictors of marital satisfaction in the rich region was general mood in the first step and interpersonal component besides general mood in the second step, and general mood, interpersonal component and stress management in the third step. Based on this, general mood explained 42.3% of the variance in the first step, general mood and

interpersonal relationships explained 52.4% in the second step and general mood, interpersonal component and stress management accounted for 60.2% of the variance of marital satisfaction within the rich region in the third step. The observed F was significant at the level of $p < 0.01$ and therefore the regression is generalizable to the whole population.

Continuing the study for the semi-rich region, among the studied variables under regression, the best predictor for marital satisfaction within this region was general mood in the first step. Adaptability was added to general mood in the second step and interpersonal component added itself to the two aforementioned variables as the best predictors in the third step. Based on the results of the stepwise regression there was a significant relationship between general mood, adaptability and interpersonal component within the semi-rich region. Accordingly in the first step the coefficient of general mood explained 51.8% of the variance, general mood and adaptability accounted for 56.3% of the variance in the second step, and general mood, interpersonal component and stress management accounted for 60.2% of the variance of marital satisfaction within the semi-rich region in the third step. The observed F was significant at the level of $p < 0.01$ and therefore the regression is generalizable to the whole population. Regarding the semi-rich region, the findings suggest that for each unit of increase in general mood, the beta coefficient lowers marital satisfaction by 0.819 unit; for each unit of increase in adaptability component, it lowers marital satisfaction by 0.333 unit; and for each unit of increase in interpersonal component, it lowers marital satisfaction by 0.382 unit

The predictive equation relating to the semi-rich region is as follows:

Marital satisfaction in the semi-rich region = constant coefficient (-27.436) + general mood component (7.235) + adaptability (2.773) + interpersonal component (-2.795)

Table 3 also shows that among the variables of the regression, the best predictor(s) of marital satisfaction in the under-rich region was stress management in the first step and it was intrapersonal component besides stress management in the second step. Based on the results of the stepwise regression, there was a significant relationship between variables of stress management and intrapersonal component with marital satisfaction within the under-rich region. Based on this, the component of stress management explained 28.0% of the variance in the first step and stress management and intrapersonal component explained 40.3% of the variance of marital satisfaction within the under-rich region in the second step. The observed F was significant at the level of $p < 0.01$ and therefore the regression is generalizable to the whole population. Regarding the under-rich region, the findings suggest that for each unit of increase in stress management component the beta coefficient heightens marital satisfaction by 0.428 units and for each unit of increase

in intrapersonal component it boosts marital satisfaction by 0.387 units. The predictive equation relating to the under-rich region is as follows:

Marital satisfaction in the under-rich region = constant coefficient (-116.634) + stress management component (3.375) + interpersonal component (2.670).

Discussion

In considering whether there is a difference between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in the three regions studied, it should be mentioned that the highest mean scores of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction belonged to the under-rich region. Since the regions were classified by economic level, economic status had an inverse relationship with marital satisfaction. In this regard, general mood was the most influential factor in overall, semi-rich and rich regions while stress management was the effective factor in the under-rich region. Moreover, there was no significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and marital satisfaction in the under-rich region. In this section, we will discuss the reasons and explanations behind consistencies and inconsistencies with other related works conducted so far, and some thoughtful ideas will also be presented about the obtained results.

The first half of the analysis was dedicated to Pearson correlation test whose results are presented here. It is noteworthy to mention that the income factor as an indicator of economic status determines emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction. This point is inconsistent with other researches on the relationship between income and marital satisfaction (17, 21, 24, 26, 27) but is consistent with the work of Iman et al. on the inverse relationship between income and marital satisfaction (25). In order to explain this inconsistency it can be said that these researches were carried out in India, Sao Paulo and the United States which are far different from Iran in terms of values, culture, jealousy and religion. Affirming this viewpoint, some scholars have put emphasis on the impact of culture (24, 31-33). Henry and Miller stressed on the influence of values (22), while Araujo Nunes revealed the impact of jealousy on marital satisfaction (31) and others emphasized the effect of spiritual maturity and religion (13, 21, 22). Therefore, the difference in culture, values and religion can justify this inconsistency.

In order to explain the inconsistency with the research conducted in Iran on women (27), we could point to the questionable efficacy of its subject as women are not generally considered as revenue sources in Iran. Furthermore, the work of Iman et al. concluding an inverse relationship between income and education level confirms this explanation (25).

Our second result indicates a significant relationship between all the components of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction in all regions, except for interpersonal component. This means that the higher emotional intelligence, the more marital satisfaction the

couples have. Many experts have confirmed the relationship between these two components (10-16, 22, 28, 29, 32). Interestingly, although the mean score of emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction was higher in the under-rich region, emotional intelligence alone could explain the lowest percentage of marital change in this region. Even though we have found no relationship between interpersonal components and marital satisfaction, previous studies and the relationship between EI and marital satisfaction led us to some more explanations. The cause of this discrepancy appears to be other variables explaining marital satisfaction in line with emotional intelligence (10). These variables may be culture (24, 31-33), values (22), jealousy (31), economic factors (17, 21, 25-27) and spiritual factors (13, 21, 22). There is a possibility that in explaining marital satisfaction, many of these factors overlap with some components of emotional intelligence.

In an attempt to determine which of the components of emotional intelligence have a greater role in predicting marital satisfaction, stepwise regression analysis was performed. Checking the compatibility of our findings is just targeted at those studies which analyse EI and marital satisfaction directly. Here, Tirgari et al. introduced interpersonal component and Soleymani & Mohammadi pointed to attention, clarity and reconstruction or in other words intrapersonal component, interpersonal component and stress management as predictive components (14, 15). While in our study general mood and stress management had the most power to predict changes in marital satisfaction in these three regions, two studies reported expression and positive attitude (17, 18) and two others reported happiness as factors affecting marital satisfaction in line with this finding (19, 20).

There are several explanations to elaborate the inconsistency of this new finding with previous results as well. The first explanation is the use of Bar-On Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire that includes general mood as its fifth component, with two comprising subscales of optimism and happiness. Another explanation is that despite the usage of Soleimanian's short questionnaire containing 47 questions by numerous marital satisfaction studies conducted in Iran, this research utilized the Enrich Questionnaire containing 115 questions. The third explanation includes selecting homogenous statistical universe and limiting the interventions through participation of parents who had at least one 9-year-old child, which means that they were in the second decade of their marriage and both parents participated in the research. We should also note that this finding does not conclude that other variables have no effect on marital satisfaction, but there is an overlap and a relationship between the components of EI which is natural for the components defining a concept. That is to say other variables influence the prediction indirectly.

Our finding regarding the components of EI general mood which have the most predictive power on marital

satisfaction in the rich region (interpersonal and stress management) is consistent with previous findings. We could particularly observe its consistency with other findings pointing to the influence of happiness and positive attitude (17-20), good communication, commitment and intimacy (10, 14, 21, 22), attention, clarity and reconstruction (15) and lack of family involvement, the possibility of a joint recreation and family relations (25) on marital satisfaction. Therefore, more attention should be paid to financial independence, separate living, family interference, more leisure facilities, making friends, commitment, joint recreation, travelling as well as intimacy and happiness.

For the finishing discussion about the Pearson correlation analysis, we direct our discussion to the second half, in which we used stepwise regression to provide information about the most prediction power of the components of emotional intelligence within all the three regions. Another result reveals that general mood, adaptability and interpersonal components (in an order of impact) have the most predictive power on marital satisfaction in the semi-rich region; the observed differences with the findings of the three regions were slightly wider than the previously mentioned regression results. We observed a significant difference in the prediction power of the adaptability component and the inverse relationship between intrapersonal component and marital satisfaction in the semi-rich region. This finding is inconsistent with the influence of happiness and positive attitude (17-20), problem solving and reconstruction (15, 21, 30), adaptability (18, 33) and forgiveness (23). Also, it has inconsistency with the findings believing the influence of interpersonal, communication, commitment, decision-making and empathy (10, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22). It is most probable that because more than half of the inhabitants of the semi-rich region are native and have close relationships with families, relatives, friendship groups and that couples mostly spend their leisure time with friends and relatives, as a result there is no opportunity left for couples to be together, to talk about problems and solve them. In the view of the fact that talking (28, 30) is one of the factors affecting marital satisfaction, lack of opportunities for talking and family interferences in interpersonal relationships lead to an inverse relationship between the interpersonal component and marital satisfaction (25). However, due to the strong interpersonal relationships, the adaptability power is increased; thus, the component of adaptability has shown the ability to predict marital satisfaction.

In the under-rich region we observed a more significant difference compared with rich and semi-rich regions. In this region, the components of intrapersonal and stress management had the most power to predict marital satisfaction, and general mood had no prediction power at all. Therefore, it can be argued that happiness cannot be considered as a predictive variable due to the low economic level, lack of recreational facilities and traveling. Couples living in this region had more

financial problems in their family of origin, high jealousy and different spirituality than other regions, so they had more positive attitudes towards marriage and since their economic status was low their expectation was low as well. They made use of all facilities and opportunities to provide a better living and to reduce their concerns and achieve higher impulse control and stress tolerance. Additionally, they had a more positive attitude towards marriage and more preparedness for marriage as well; thus, they had more marital satisfaction (17). These couples could spend more time together and had more opportunities to discuss and talk to one another and achieved high assertiveness and stress management (28-30).

Although previous studies strongly support the relationship between EI and marital satisfaction, there seems to be a considerable difference between these results regarding the impact of the components of emotional intelligence. One of the reasons is the different research tools utilized. This research used Bar-On 15-component research tool of emotional intelligence to include the impacts of positive and negative emotions, consistency and adaptability in addition to interpersonal and intrapersonal components, whose results affirmed their indirect influences on intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Distinguishingly, this study also considered other influential demographic factors and their differences by dividing the population into three socioeconomically defined regions and surveying just those parents who had long relationships (marriage of over 10 years). However, due to the different results of this study compared with other studies and the impacts of spiritual factors on behavior, we recommend further studies pay more attention to spirituality and cultural factors in addition to socioeconomic factors. Regarding the influence of the components of EI on the components of marital satisfaction, path analysis and structural equation modeling could be used to achieve a more ideal and comprehensive explanation of the influential factors on marital satisfaction. Caution should be taken in generalizing the results obtained from Isfahan to other parts of the world. Also, the results are limited to the components studied and are not generalizable to other components without further investigation.

Conclusion

In general, the findings of this study depicted a significant difference between all components of emotional and marital satisfaction in the three socioeconomically defined regions (rich, semi-rich and under-rich). Further analysis also revealed significant relationships between these components within each region, except that interpersonal component had no significant relationship with marital satisfaction in the under-rich region. In order to find which component had the most prediction power over marital satisfaction,

stepwise regression analysis was utilized which illustrated that overall (all three regions) general mood and stress management had the greatest influence. Separate results for each region showed that general mood, stress management and interpersonal components had the most predictive power for marital satisfaction in the rich region, while general mood, adaptability and interpersonal components stood at the top in the semi-rich region followed by the intrapersonal and stress management components in the under-rich region.

In comparison with previous studies, we encountered some inconsistencies which were attributable to the various ways of life within different cultures. These differences impact behaviour and in turn affect the level of emotional intelligence and thus marital satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct researches to examine the cultural scales and variables.

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