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**THE EFFECT OF NEUROSIS PERSONALITY TRAIT ON MARITAL SATISFACTION  
COUPLES**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study is aimed to investigate couples similarity or dissimilarity in neurosis personality trait on marital satisfaction and its components (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 roles). The causal-comparative method is used in this study. Research sample includes 380 married couples from Tehran 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. 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.

**Key words: similarity or dissimilarity, neurosis personality trait, marital satisfaction**

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## 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 (Castro-Marthin and Boumpes, 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 (Bloom et al., 1978). Therefore, over the years, many studies have examined predictions of marital satisfaction and quality of marriage. (Spayner and Cool, 1974). These studies mainly focused on two themes including choice of spouse and marital success. (Eysenck & 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; Dale et al., 1992; Eysenck and Wakefield, 1981; Kordek, 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 (such as: Toan and Sina, 1995; Boss, 1985; 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(trait) 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), Mack Karry and Casta (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 (Noftel and Shawel, 2006).

There sult is that the differences and personality traits are important and effective factors informing and maintaining intimate relationship. It seems that personality traits also influence the choice of spouse (Priger, 1995). Traits such as shyness and social anxiety may interfere in the formation of an intimate relationship (Broch et al., 1988; 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 (Shawer and Brennan,

1992), empathy (Davis and Othus, 1992) and self-esteem (Hendrik, et al., 1988) affect the quality of intimate relationship (Priger, 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 (Mack Karry and Casta, 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 (Donlan, et al., 2004; Gatys, et al., 2004; Watson et al., 2000), and conscientiousness (Gatys et al., 2004) of big five. On the other hand, the researchers similarly have reported negative relationship between satisfaction and neuroticism (Donlan et al., 2004; Getyset al., 2004; Carney and Bradbory, 1995; 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 is for both sexes was a predictor of

satisfaction (Botvin, et al., 1997; Donlan et al., 2004; Koozak, 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, Koozak (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 been 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?

## **METHODOLOGY**

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 Tehran 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. 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 (1999). 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 (2002) has reported the reliability of this test through Cronbach's alpha between 0.66 and 0.90.

ENRICH <sup>6</sup>marital satisfaction questionnaire: this questionnaire has been made by Olson (1989) in the United States to evaluate and

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<sup>6</sup>Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues  
communication Happiness Enrich

identify potential problem areas as well areas of strength and richness of marriage (Sanaei, 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 et al. (2003) have reported Cronbach's coefficient and split-half reliability of the questionnaire and reliability as 0.92 and 0.87 respectively.

## FINDINGS

**Table1: The results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on eleven components of marital satisfaction in four groups**

P significance level	df error	df assumption	F ratio	Value	Statistical index Tests	Analysis unit
<0.001	1053	33	22.61	1.244	Pillai's trace	Couples
<0.001	1028.92	33	27.18	0.158	Wilks 'Lambda	
<0.001	1043	33	32.79	3.11	Hotelling's trace	
<0.001	351	11	75.28	2.35	Roy's Largest Root	
<0.001	1053	33	16.17	1.09	Pillai's trace	Women
<0.001	1028	33	19.89	0.234	Wilks 'Lambda	
<0.001	1043	33	24.49	2.32	Hotelling's trace	
<0.001	351	11	60.26	1.88	Roy's Largest Root	
<0.001	1053	33	18.27	1.09	Pillai's trace	Men
<0.001	1028	33	20.72	0.223	Wilks 'Lambda	
<0.001	1043	33	23.40	2.22	Hotelling's trace	
<0.001	351	11	50.04	1.56	Roy's Largest Root	

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.

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

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

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.

**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**

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

**Table4: 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**

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

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

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); Donlan et al. (2004); Kozak (1996); Laster et al. (1989); Zalski and Galcoca (1978); Kaflin et al. (2000); Barn et al. (2007); Ren Shaw et al. (2005). Olys (1989) 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 reconsidered. 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); Donlan et al. (2004); Kozak (1996); Laster et al. (1989); Zalski and Galcoca (1978); Kaflin et al. (2000); Barn et al. (2007); Ren Shaw 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 (1993) 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.

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