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**PREDICTING MARITAL SATISFACTION BASED ON RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION,  
POSITIVE THANKING, AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS AMONG MARRIED  
STUDENTS OF ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY OF ARSANJAN IN 2014**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate predicting marital satisfaction based on religious orientation, positive thanking, and problem solving skills among married students of Islamic Azad University of Arsanjan. To this end, a descriptive-correlational research design was used. The population under study included all married students of whom 100 couples (100 females and 100 males) were selected using availability sampling. The instruments used in the study were ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, George Religious Orientation Scale, Daniel et al.'s Positive Feeling Questionnaire (PFQ), and D'Zurilla & Nezu Problem-Solving Skills Inventory. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis. The results suggest that religious orientation, positive thinking and social problem solving skills with marital satisfaction have a positive significant correlation with a number of components of marital satisfaction. Besides, these variables are able to predict a large number of marital satisfaction components. As such, it can be concluded that several factors such as religious orientation, positive thinking and problem-solving skills may affect marital satisfaction in couples. So the contribution of such factors to the marital satisfaction must be taken into

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account. Besides, attempts must be made to foster positive feelings and thoughts and internalize religion and problem solving skills in the community.

**Keywords: Marital satisfaction, religious orientation, positive thinking, social problem-solving skills**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Family is one of the most fundamental social institutions in society in which most behaviors and thoughts are acquired by people and their attitudes to the world and social relations are shaped. Marriage is also a social environment that provides social support to individuals and is considered as a place for ethics, wisdom, kindness, gentleness, energy, and activity (Ibrahim, 2005).

Spirituality is a mental quality that is beyond all human beliefs, motivates human beings, and creates feelings such as understanding the divine grandeur and respect for the creation (Moreira, 2012). A spiritual person has a purpose and finds meaning in life. Even in cases where a person does not believe in the existence of God, spirituality makes a man to think about the creation and the endless universe. Spirituality becomes an important dimension in life when a person is facing emotional pressures, severe illnesses, and death (Janbozorgi, 2012). Piety and religion have an undeniable impact on couples' marital satisfaction and their intimate relationships. Faith and religion are

not only obstacles to free life but they are ways to lead people to a better life (Mohseni, 2010).

Another factor which is considered in this study positive thinking and positive feeling that has a great impact on the marital quality, compatibility, and satisfaction. Positive thoughts are constructive and invigorating thoughts that come to the mind through repetition, indoctrination, and practice and make the mind and thinking positively oriented so that we can have control over our thoughts. In contrast, negative thoughts are debilitating and destructive thoughts that when come to mind, they are extended and occupy the whole mind. In such cases, we are controlled by our negative thoughts. Therefore, we must learn to control our thoughts intelligently in order to achieve great success in life (Forrester, 2011). Positive behaviors and energies stem from individuals' good feelings and thoughts. Such thinking can be derived from both religiosity and can bring about a peaceful, positive, and optimistic mind for a person under the influence of satisfaction from

marital life and the ration behavior of the other party. However, it should be noted that the opposite may also be true as a person's positivism may result in marital satisfaction and adjustment. Therefore, based on what was mentioned religion, marital satisfaction, optimism, and social problem-solving skills can affect each other. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate predicting marital satisfaction on the basis of religious orientation, positive thinking, and social problem-solving skills to find out whether religious orientation, positive thinking and social problem-solving skills can predict marital satisfaction or not.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Khodayarifard and Qobari Bonab (2012), conducted a study on positivism application in psychotherapy with an emphasis on the Islamic perspectives. There results showed that interventions based on reinforcing an individual's positive perceptions can lead to a person's increased positive self-descriptions and the results of such new perceptions may be more efficient adjustment and more rational behaviors. It was also found that by applying positive thinking in treatment, the respondents explained their situation more positively and they become more self-confident. Besides, family conflict and depression were reduced significantly

and the clients' depression improved considerably.

Seraji (2005), investigated the relationship of religious beliefs and internal and external orientation with marital satisfaction. It was shown that there is a significant relationship between religious beliefs and marital satisfaction, so that marital satisfaction is higher among religious people than irreligious people (Seraji, 2005).

Begner (2014), studied the relationship between interpersonal effects, personality traits, psychological distress, attachment and romantic relationships among couples and concluded that women feel more frequently a sense of insecurity, inequality, depression, and lack of power than men. Besides, attachment to one of parents or the husband affects couples' helplessness.

Huston (2010), showed that training communication and conflict resolution skills to couples who had problems in marital relationships would improve their marital relationship, reduce conflicts and increase their mental health.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive-correlational method was employed in this study to investigate predictive power of the predictive variables on the criterion variables and examine the relationship or correlation between variables.

The population under study included all married students in the academic year 2014-2015 whose number was reported by the Department of Education to be 886 persons. Besides, a number of 200 married students (100 females and 100 males) were selected using availability sampling as the respondents in the research sample.

### 3.1. Instruments

The instruments used in the study to collect the data were ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, George Religious Orientation Scale, Daniel et al.'s Positive Feeling Questionnaire (PFQ), and D'Zurilla & Nezu Problem-Solving Skills Inventory.

#### George Religious Orientation Scale

According to George (1998), this scale is developed without any sectarian bias and it not based on any religious ceremony. It simply deals with the relationship with God. The scale contains 48 items, of which 33 items deals with the existence of God and 15 items address trust in God. Larensel et al., (2002) who used the scale reported the split-half reliability coefficient using Spearman-Brown correction to be 0.97 for the first section of scale and 0.91 for its second section. In this study, the reliability of the first section was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and was equal to 0.64 and the corresponding value through

split-half method using Spearman-Brown correction was 0.66. In addition, the reliability of the section section that was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient was equal to 0.77 and the corresponding value through split-half method using Spearman-Brown correction was 0.55.

#### RICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire

RICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire was developed by Olson, Fournier, Joanne, and Drankman in (1989) in the USA to evaluate and identify potential problematic areas and areas of strength in marital relations. The main version of the questionnaire contains 115 items but a 47-item version is also available. It consists of 47 closed items and 8 scale items, each with five choices (totally agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and totally disagree). Olson et al., (2002) reported a reliability of 0.93 for the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

#### Positive Feeling Questionnaire (PFQ)

The questionnaire contains 17 questions to measure a person's positive feelings toward his/her partner and it was developed at the Couple Therapy Clinic of th State University of New York. The test-retest reliability of the questionnaire over a 1-3 week interval was 0.93 and its correlation with marital

adjustment was 0.7 ( $P < 0.0001$ ). The internal consistency of the questionnaire in this study has been estimated to be 0.89.

### **Problem-Solving Skills Inventory (SPSI-Revised)**

Problem-Solving Skills Inventory (SPSI-R: D'ZURILA) is a self-report inventory for measuring social problem-solving skills. The inventory is based on the previous work of a number of authors (D'Zurilla, T. J.; Nezu, A. M.; & Maydeu-Olivares, A., 2002) and measures main components of social problem-solving theoretical model (D'Zurilla, 1999-1982). The long form of the inventory contains 52 items and 5 subscales, while its short form contains 25 items with the same 5 subscales which are scored based on a five-point Likert scale from *totally wrong* to *totally correct*. The test-retest reliability of the inventory was reported 0.68 to 0.91 and its alpha coefficient was 0.69 to 0.95 (D'Zurilla et al., 2000). The construct validity of the inventory was also validated using exploratory factor analysis and correlation with other problem solving scales and overlapping psychological constructs (D'Zurilla et al., 2000).

To test research hypotheses, the data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics including measures of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation,

Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS Software.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the descriptive results of the study concerning the research variables. Then the correlation matrix and the relationship between the variables are analyzed and the results of testing research hypotheses are presented.

### **Descriptive statistics for research variables**

Descriptive statistics present mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix for research variables as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for research variables including mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores. As the table shows, the minimum scores on the marital satisfaction subscales are related to personal issues and leisure time and the maximum score is related to conflict resolution. The lowest mean score is related to leisure time and the lowest standard deviation is related to personal issues. The minimum and maximum scores on religious orientation are related to trust in God. Table 2 shows the results of correlation coefficients for the research variables:

Correlation coefficients marked with an asterisk are significant at the level of 0.05 and those with two asterisks are significant at

the level of 0.001. In addition, coefficients without asterisk show that the relationship between the two variables is not significant. As can be seen in the above table, positive thinking is significantly associated with relationship, financial management, family and friends, personal issues, and leisure at level of significance of 0.001. Besides, trust in God is significantly correlated with relationship and sexual relationship at the significance level of 0.05. However, there is no significant relationship between the existence of God and marital.

As can be seen, there is a significant relationship between positive orientation and sexual relationship ( $P < 0.001$ ), between negative orientation and communication and personal issues ( $P < 0.001$ ), between rational problem solving, communication, and financial management ( $P < 0.001$ ), between impulsive style and communication ( $P < 0.001$ ), avoidant style, communication, and personal issues ( $P < 0.001$ ), and financial management and sexual relationship ( $P < 0.05$ ).

#### 4.2. Inferential statistics

To test the findings of the study, multiple regression analysis was used as shown in Table 4:

**Hypothesis I:** Religious orientation (the existence of God and trust in God)

significantly predicts marital satisfaction among married students.

As can be seen, the results (Table 4) of the synchronous multiple regression analysis showed that religious orientation (the existence of God) is not able to predict marital satisfaction.

As can be seen, the results (Table 5) of the synchronous multiple regression analysis showed that religious orientation (trust in God) is able to predict 21% of variances in communication and 31% of variances in sexual relationship.

**Hypothesis II:** Positive thinking significantly predicts marital satisfaction among married students.

The results of the synchronous multiple regression analysis in the above table 6 show that positive thinking is able to predict 14% of variances in communication, 33% of variances in conflict resolution, 56% of variances in financial management, 10% of the variance of family and friends, 57% of the variance of personal issues, 10% of variances in sexual relationship, and 86% of the variances of leisure times.

**Hypothesis III:** Social problem solving skills significantly predict marital satisfaction among married students.

The results of the synchronous multiple regression analysis in the above table 7

indicate that rational problems solving is able to predict 10% of variances in communication, 7% of variances in financial management, and 6% of the variance of children.

**Hypothesis 3.1:** Impulsive significantly predict marital satisfaction components.

As can be seen, results (Table 8) of the synchronous multiple regression analysis indicate that impulsive problems solving style is able to predict 32% of variances in communication, 4% of variances in conflict resolution, and 2% of personal issues.

**Hypothesis 3.2:** Avoidant problem solving style significantly predicts marital satisfaction components.

As can be seen, results (Table 9) of the synchronous multiple regression analysis show that avoidant problems solving style is

able to predict 11.7% of variances of personal issues.

**Hypothesis 3.3:** Positive orientation can significantly predict marital satisfaction components.

As can be seen, results (Table 10) of the synchronous multiple regression analysis show that positive orientation is able to predict 11.7% of variances in communication, 3% of variances in sexual relationship, and 47% of variances in personal issues.

**Hypothesis 3.4:** Negative orientation can significantly predict marital satisfaction components.

As shown in the above table 11, results of the synchronous multiple regression analysis show that negative orientation is able to predict 86% of variances in communication and 14% of variances in personal issues.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for research variables**

Variables	Components	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Marital satisfaction subscales	Communication	10	26	18.2	13.91
	Conflict resolution	15	36	25.86	14.18
	Financial management	8	27	18.45	3.95
	Sexual relationship	16	33	23.17	3.47
	Children	6	30	17.92	3.47
	Relatives and friends	3	18	11.96	25.3
	Personal issues	5	19	13.44	2.63
	Leisure	5	17	10.77	2.73
Religious orientation	The existence of God	28	113	77.38	13.48
	Trust in God	23	53	37.87	6.69
Social problem-solving skills		44	90	63.58	8.64
Positive thinking		18	119	90.14	21.66

**Table 2: Correlation matrix, religious orientation, positive thinking, and marital satisfaction**

Variables	Positive thinking	The existence of God	Trust in God	Communication	Conflict resolution	Financial management	Sexual relationship	Children	Relatives and friends	Personal issues	Leisure
Positive thinking	1										
The existence of God	0.233**	1									
Trust in God	0.277**	0.644**	1								
Communication	0.375**	0.390	0.146*	1							
Conflict resolution	0.182	0.030	0.018	0.099	1						
Financial management	0.237**	0.089	0.061	0.477**	0.013	1					
Sexual relationship	0.107	0.033	0.176*	0.021	0.230**	0.025	1				
Children	0.010	0.085	0.096	0.292**	0.036	0.482**	0.180*	1			
Relatives and friends	0.320**	0.035	0.006	0.371**	0.195**	0.001	0.167	0.007	1		
Personal issues	0.239**	0.054	0.014	0.030	0.010	0.119	0.126	0.268**	0.062	1	
Leisure	0.239**	0.077	0.072	0.154*	0.255**	0.116	0.123	0.165*	0.006	0.151*	1

**Table 3: Correlation matrix, social problem-solving skills, and marital satisfaction**

Variables	Communication	Conflict resolution	Financial management	Sexual relationship	Children	Relatives and friends	Personal issues	Leisure	Positive orientation	Negative orientation	Rational problem solving	Impulsive style	Avoidant style
Communication	1												
Conflict resolution	0.999	1											
Financial management	0.477**	0.013	1										
Sexual relationship	0.021	0.230**	0.025	1									
Children	0.292**	0.039	0.482**	0.180*	1								
Relatives and friends	0.371**	0.195**	0.001	0.167*	0.007	1							
Personal issues	0.030	0.010	0.1190	0.126	0.268**	0.0620	1						
Leisure	0.154*	0.225**	0.116	0.123	0.165	0.0060	0.151*	1					
Positive orientation	0.201**	0.011	0.064	0.218**	0.046	0.007	0.075	0.103	1				
Negative orientation	0.276**	0.088	-0.121	-0.149*	-0.014	0.036	0.353**	-0.095	-0.301**	1			
Rational problem solving	0.297**	0.016	0.356**	0.093	0.004	0.056	0.088	0.005	0.115	0.088	1		
Impulsive style	0.263**	0.045	0.119	0.089	0.005	0.063	0.097	0.004	0.119	0.074	0.142	1	
Avoidant style	0.201**	0.078	0.178*	0.143*	0.049	0.049	0.096	0.209**	-0.182**	0.447**	0.295**	0.293**	1

Table 4: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Religious orientation (Existence of God)	Communication	0.309	0.556	0.579	0.002	0.309	1-198
	Conflict resolution	0.030	0.428	0.669	0.001	0.183	1-198
	Financial management	0.089	1.25	0.210	0.008	1.58	1-198
	Sexual relationship	0.033	0.470	0.639	0.001	0.221	1-198
	Children	0.085	1.19	0.232	0.007	1.43	1-198
	Family and friends	0.035	0.489	0.626	0.001	0.239	1-198
	Personal issues	0.054	0.755	0.451	0.003	0.571	1-198
	Leisure	0.077	1.08	0.279	0.006	1.17	1-198

Table 5: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Religious orientation (trust in God)	Communication	0.146	2.07	0.039	0.21	4.32	1-198
	Conflict resolution	0.018	0.257	0.798	0.001	0.066	1-198
	Financial management	0.061	0.863	0.389	0.004	0.745	1-198
	Sexual relationship	0.176	2.52	0.012	0.31	6.35	1-198
	Children	0.096	1.35	0.178	0.009	1.82	1-198
	Family and friends	0.006	0.081	0.935	0.001	0.007	1-198
	Personal issues	0.014	0.198	0.843	0.001	0.039	1-198
	Leisure	0.072	1.01	0.311	0.005	1.03	1-198

Table 6: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Positive Thinking	Communication	0.375	5.69	0.001	0.141	46.32	1-198
	Conflict resolution	0.182	2.60	0.010	0.33	6.77	1-198
	Financial management	0.237	3.43	0.001	0.56	11.81	1-198
	Sexual relationship	0.107	1.51	0.132	0.10	2.29	1-198
	Children	0.010	0.143	0.886	0.001	0.020	1-198
	Family and friends	0.320	4.74	0.001	0.10	22.52	1-198
	Personal issues	0.239	3.46	0.001	0.57	12.02	1-198
	Leisure	0.293	4.31	0.001	0.86	18.64	1-198

**Table 7: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction**

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Social problem solving skills	Communication	0.232	2.75	0.006	0.10	0.074	1-198
	Conflict resolution	0.046	0.640	0.522	0.001	2.24	1-198
	Financial management	0.357	4.32	0.001	0.07	1.36	1-198
	Sexual relationship	-0.074	-1.03	0.302	0.003	2.41	1-198
	Children	-0.242	-3.06	0.002	0.06	0.083	1-198
	Family and friends	-0.046	-0.59	0.551	0.001	1.23	1-198
	Personal issues	0.114	1.64	0.101	0.004	3.55	1-198
	Leisure	-0.058	-0.85	0.359	0.001	1.45	1-198

**Table 8: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction**

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Impulsive style	Communication	-0.216	-2.38	0.018	0.32	2.42	1-198
	Conflict resolution	-0.204	-2.65	0.009	0.04	1.45	1-198
	Financial management	-0.021	-0.239	0.812	0.001	0.053	1-198
	Sexual relationship	0.030	0.391	0.696	0.001	2.55	1-198
	Children	0.075	0.889	0.375	0.003	3.69	1-198
	Family and friends	0.137	1.67	0.096	0.001	1.78	1-198
	Personal issues	0.166	2.24	0.026	0.02	1.67	1-198
	Leisure	0.065	-0.89	0.375	0.002	0.089	1-198

**Table 9: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction**

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Avoidant style	Communication	-0.108	-1.21	0.227	0.001	2.15	1-198
	Conflict resolution	-0.062	-0.810	0.419	0.003	1.16	1-198
	Financial management	-0.159	-1.81	0.071	0.001	0.785	1-198
	Sexual relationship	-0.113	-1.49	0.138	0.001	1.96	1-198
	Children	0.027	0.321	0.748	0.003	1.89	1-198
	Family and friends	-0.050	-0.616	0.539	0.001	0.560	1-198
	Personal issues	-0.204	2.79	0.006	0.117	2.45	1-198
	Leisure	-0.027	-0.373	0.710	0.004	0.095	1-198

Table 10: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Positive orientation	Communication	0.264	2.97	0.003	0.05	2.26	1-198
	Conflict resolution	0.071	0.938	0.350	0.001	1.89	1-198
	Financial management	0.032	0.371	0.710	0.001	0.786	1-198
	Sexual relationship	0.244	3.22	0.001	0.03	0.560	1-198
	Children	0.083	1	0.319	0.003	1.47	1-198
	Family and friends	0.027	0.333	0.739	0.001	2.36	1-198
	Personal issues	0.159	2.18	0.030	0.47	2.74	1-198
	Leisure	0.136	1.9	0.059	0.001	1.25	1-198

Table 11: Results of synchronous multiple regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction

Variables		Beta	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>	f	df
Negative orientation	Communication	-0.218	-3.26	0.001	0.86	3.27	1-198
	Conflict resolution	-0.073	-1.36	0.174	0.003	1.45	1-198
	Financial management	-0.046	-0.704	0.483	0.001	2.76	1-198
	Sexual relationship	-0.102	-1.59	0.112	0.001	1.47	1-198
	Children	-0.042	-0.590	0.556	0.004	0.890	1-198
	Family and friends	-0.044	-0.610	0.542	0.001	1.63	1-198
	Personal issues	0.371	0.458	0.001	0.14	2.58	1-198
	Leisure	0.110	4.56	0.154	0.001	3.36	1-198

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was to predict marital satisfaction based on positive thinking, religious orientation and social problem-solving skills among 100 couples of married students at Islamic Azad University of Arsanjan. This section discusses the results of the study. As was seen in tables 2 and 3, religious orientation (trust in God) has a significant relationship with communication and sexual relationship as components of marital satisfaction. However, it has no significant relationship with other components. In addition, religious orientation (the existence of God, See Table 4) had no

significant relationship with marital satisfaction components. As can be seen in Table 5, religious orientation (trust in God) is able to predict 21% of variances in communication and 31% of variances in sexual relationship. In explaining this finding, it can be said that religion is an important factor in individuals' life and can influence their marital life by penetrating in their beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and intrinsic characteristics of religious people. These findings are in line with the results of Patterson and Joseph (2012), Silberman (2010), Khodayari and Qobari Bonab (2012) and Seraji (2005). These studies showed that

religion is one of the factors having an undeniably positive impact on marital satisfaction. Concerning the second hypothesis (Table 2), the results of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between positivism and marital satisfaction components (communication, financial management, family and friends, personal issues, and leisure time). The findings of the study in Table 6 showed that positivism is able to predict 14% of variances in communication, 33% of variances in conflict resolution, 56% of variances in financial management, 10% of the variance of family and friends, 57% of the variance of personal issues, 10% of variances in sexual relationship, and 86% of the variances of leisure times as supported by Adams (2007), Fredrickson (2006), Norman (2003). The results also showed that positive thoughts, positive emotions, and positive thinking have a positive and significant impact on couples' adjustment and marital satisfaction. Besides, there is a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and positivism. Concerning the third research hypothesis (Table 3), our findings indicated that there is a significant relationship between social problem-solving skills and marital satisfaction. Besides, there is a significant relationship between positive orientation and

sexual relationship, between negative orientation and communication and personal issues, between rational problem solving, communication, and financial management, between impulsive style and communication, between avoidant style, communication, and personal issues, and between financial management and sexual relationship. In addition, the results of the study suggested that problem solving skills play a positive significant role in predicting marital satisfaction among married students. It was also noted that social problem solving skills components have a significant relationship with communication, sexual relationship, personal issues, financial management, and conflict resolution. Besides, the same components are able to predict a high percentage of these variables as suggested by Hanson et al., (2006), Vinstet et al., (2010), and Kang (2000). Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that problem solving components can be directly or indirectly educated to all age groups and they play a significant role in solving family and marital problems. One of the limitations of this study was that the data were only collected through questionnaires and this may have affected the results. Therefore, it is suggested that by conducting further studies

on wider populations, more variables affecting marital relationships are identified.

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