

## Investigation of Factors Affecting Marital Satisfaction among the Baloch Ethnic Group

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating and determining the role of some demographic variables, such as gender, level of education, number of children, and duration of marriage, age difference, family relationship, and employment of Baloch couples in marital satisfaction. The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population includes all Baloch couples living in the Balochistan region of Sistan and Balochistan province. The statistical sample is defined as 100 Baloch couples from the statistical population. To collect data on marital satisfaction, the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire was used. The SPSS.14 statistical program was used to analyze the data. The results of the chi-square test to determine the relationship between demographic variables and marital satisfaction showed that there is a significant relationship only between the variables number of children, age difference between couples, family relationship, and employment of couples with marital satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Marital satisfaction, demographic variables, Baloch ethnic group

### **INTRODUCTION:**

When intimate relationships between spouses are disrupted and marital understanding decreases, destructive and negative consequences emerge in the mental health of the family as well as the mental health of children. Therefore, increasing marital satisfaction and facilitating a supportive family environment is considered one of the primary mental health measures, which holds significant importance in educational domains (Nikoui, 2004).

Marital satisfaction is a state in which a husband and wife feel happiness and satisfaction from being married to each other and living together (Farasat, 2002). This state is influenced by various factors, including the mutual understanding of spouses regarding each other's behaviors and characteristics, their attitudes toward the role of communication in marital life, methods of resolving conflicts and disputes, satisfaction with financial management of the family, agreement on how to spend leisure time, satisfaction with sexual and emotional relationships, agreement on having children, harmony in feelings and interests related to friends and relatives, satisfaction with various marital roles, and religious beliefs and practices in marital life (Soleimanian, 1994). Marital satisfaction is one of the most important determinants of the healthy functioning of the family institution. It is defined as "the subjective feeling of pleasure, satisfaction, and enjoyment that spouses experience in their relationship." Numerous

factors influence marital satisfaction among couples, including satisfaction with a spouse's temperament (Alavi, 2007), trust, loyalty, love, income, and the spouse's employment (Khodayari Fard et al., 2007).

Marital satisfaction is among the factors that play an effective role in the stability of marriage and the family system. The marital relationship forms the foundation of the parental relationship. It is difficult for a couple to be inadequate as spouses yet function effectively as parents. Many problems that manifest in the behaviors of family members whether parents or children may be related to marital tensions (Barker, 1996). In a study conducted by Rogers (2003) on factors affecting marital satisfaction, it was concluded that, in general, older married individuals are more satisfied with their marital life. In another study, Takhti (2001), titled "Examination and Comparison of Rational and Irrational Beliefs and Marital Satisfaction among Working Couples with Diploma and Below, and Bachelor's Degree and Above," found that there is no significant relationship between couples' marital satisfaction and their level of education. Based on findings by Farasat (2002), there is a significant difference between the locus of control of employed and housewife women; in other words, homemakers tend to have a more external locus of control. Additionally, with an increase in the duration of marriage, marital satisfaction also increases.

Wang et al. (2001), in a meta-analytic study on parental roles and marital satisfaction, concluded that parents experience lower marital satisfaction compared to non-parent couples. They also observed a significant negative correlation between marital satisfaction and the number of children. The data indicated that the decrease in marital satisfaction after childbirth is due to role conflict and the restriction of parents' previous freedom. Rosen et al. (2004) examined the relationship between couples' characteristics, marital interaction processes, and marital satisfaction. Using structural modeling techniques in a sample of 201 individuals, they found that there is a relationship between couples' characteristics defined by three latent factors of love, commitment, and valuation—and two mediating variables: duration of marriage and participant gender. Whisman et al. (2004), in a study titled "Psychopathology and Marital Satisfaction with Emphasis on the Importance of Couple Assessment," examined the relationship between anxiety and depression in a sample of 774 husbands and wives using the standardized MMPI test. They found that both an individual's marital satisfaction and their spouse's satisfaction are predictors of marital satisfaction. The results showed no significant difference between gender and individual effects. The effects of depression were significantly stronger than those of anxiety, and only in the case of depression was there an interaction between an individual's functioning and that of their partner.

In a study conducted by Paris and Lucky (1966), it was concluded that marital satisfaction decreases during the middle years of marriage. In another study, Lewis and Cole (1975) found that marital satisfaction is higher when children leave the family to establish independent lives compared to when they are still living at home. Spanier (1975), who examined levels of satisfaction and happiness in marital life across different stages, concluded that the highest satisfaction occurs in the early years of marriage, while the lowest occurs when families have high school-aged children (Saif, 1989). Glenn and McLanahan (1982) conducted a study in the United States on the impact of children on parents' marital satisfaction. They used data from six national studies conducted between 1973 and 1978 and considered variables such as age, gender, race, education level, religious tendencies, employment status, and number of children for each family. The findings indicated that, on average, children have a negative impact on marital quality (Sedegh Amiz, 1997).

In a study conducted by Bagheri (2001), titled "The Relationship between Marital Quality and the Socioeconomic and Cultural Status of Families from the Perspective of Married Women in District 12 of Tehran," it was found that in the 30–40 age group, there is an inverse relationship between age and marital quality; that is, as age increases, marital quality tends to decrease. A similar inverse relationship was observed for husbands aged 30–57, although the relationship between the husband's age and marital quality was

stronger than that of the wife's age. Results from a study on 200 women showed that there is a significant relationship between age, number of children, and duration of marriage with women's marital satisfaction (Farasat, 2002).

When intimate relationships between spouses are disrupted and marital understanding declines, destructive and negative effects emerge on the mental health of both the family and the children. Therefore, increasing marital satisfaction and facilitating a supportive family environment is considered a primary mental health measure with significant importance in educational contexts (Nikoui, 2004). The present study aims to determine the effects of factors such as gender, age, number of children, level of education, age difference, kinship relation, spouse's employment, and the individual's own employment status on marital satisfaction among married men and women of the Baloch ethnic group. It seeks to identify these influential factors as well as the disruptive elements that hinder marital satisfaction within this population.

## **METHODS:**

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population includes all Baloch couples living in the Balochistan region of Sistan and Balochistan province. The statistical sample consists of 100 Baloch couples from the statistical population defined in this study. The sample distribution is presented as shown in Table 1. Given the existing limitations, the available sampling method was used to select the statistical sample.

**Table 1: Distribution of the research sample across different cities of Sistan and Baluchistan Province**

| City         | Zahe dan | Irans hahr | Sara van | Kh ash | Chab ahar | Sar baz |
|--------------|----------|------------|----------|--------|-----------|---------|
| Sam ple Size | 50       | 50         | 20       | 20     | 40        | 20      |

## **Research Instruments:**

To collect data on marital satisfaction, the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire was used. The main form of the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire consists of 12 scales (including 115 questions), except for the first scale, which has 5 questions; the rest of the scales include 10 questions. The answers to the questions are in the form of 5 options: (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree). In order to assess the level of marital satisfaction, the standardized form of the above test was used. This form was standardized by Soleimaniyan (Shabani, 2000) in Iran, and the number of questions was reduced from 115 to 47, and the validity of the shortened form of the questionnaire was reported to be 95% using the alpha coefficient. The validity of the main form of this questionnaire was reported to be 92% using the alpha coefficient method. The validity and

reliability of this questionnaire have also been confirmed in the research of Shabani (2000). The SPSS.14 statistical program was used to analyze the data.

### Findings:

To examine the level of marital satisfaction among the studied sample, the ENRICH questionnaire was used, and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Frequency distribution of marital satisfaction scores of participants based on the ENRICH questionnaire by gender**

| Marital Satisfaction Level    | Men (Frequency) | Men (%) | Women (Frequency) | Women (%) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| Severe dissatisfaction (<30)  | 0               | 0       | 4                 | 4.4       |
| Dissatisfaction (30–40)       | 15              | 13.8    | 9                 | 9.9       |
| Relative satisfaction (40–60) | 82              | 75.2    | 66                | 72.5      |
| High satisfaction (60–70)     | 10              | 9.2     | 9                 | 9.9       |
| Very high satisfaction (>70)  | 2               | 1.8     | 3                 | 3.3       |
| Total                         | 109             | 100     | 91                | 100       |

As Table 2 shows, in both male and female groups, the majority of the sample studied is at an average level (relative satisfaction) in terms of marital satisfaction.

**Table 3: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between gender and marital satisfaction**

|                                             | Gender             |                    | Total Score |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
|                                             | Male               | Female             |             |
| Dissatisfaction and extreme dissatisfaction | Fo=15<br>Fe=15,3   | Fo=13<br>Fe=12,7   | 28          |
| Partial satisfaction                        | Fo=82<br>Fe=80,7   | Fo=66<br>fe =67,3  | 148         |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction       | Fo =12<br>fe =13,1 | Fo =12<br>fe =10,9 | 24          |
| Total Score                                 | 109                | 91                 | 200         |

**$X^2 = 0,255$  ,df = 2 , p= 0,88**

Based on the data in Table 3, considering the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 0.255$ , df = 2, p = 0.88), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between gender and marital satisfaction.

**Table 4: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between age and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Age                |                    | Total score |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
|                                            | 30 and under       | 31 and above       |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo= 8<br>Fe= 15.7  | Fo= 20<br>Fe= 12.3 | 28          |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo= 91<br>Fe= 82.9 | Fo= 57<br>Fe= 65.1 | 148         |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo= 13<br>fe =13.4 | Fo= 11<br>Fe= 10.6 | 24          |
| Total score                                | 112                | 88                 | 200         |

**$X^2 = 10.390$ , df = 2 , p= 0,006**

Based on the data in Table 4, considering the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 10.390$ , df = 2, p = 0.006), at the 95% confidence level, there is a significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction.

**Table 5. Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between education level and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Level of education |                   | Total score |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|
|                                            | Diploma and below  | Above the diploma |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | fo=13<br>Fe=15.4   | Fo=15<br>Fe=12.6  | 28          |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=86<br>Fe=81.4   | Fo= 62<br>Fe=66.6 | 148         |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo=11<br>Fe=13.2   | Fo=13<br>Fe=10.8  | 24          |
| Total score                                | 101                | 90                | 200         |

**$X^2 = 2.224$ , df = 2, p = 0.329**

Based on the data in Table 5, considering the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 2.224$ , df = 2, p = 0.329), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between education level and marital satisfaction.

**Table 6: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Number of children   |                     | Total score |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------|
|                                            | 3 children and fewer | 4 children and more |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo=22<br>Fe=24.8     | Fo=6<br>Fe=3.2      | 28          |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=132<br>Fe=131.0   | Fo=16<br>Fe=17.0    | 148         |

|                                        |         |        |     |
|----------------------------------------|---------|--------|-----|
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction  | Fo=23   | Fo=1   | 24  |
|                                        | Fe=21.2 | Fe=2.8 |     |
| Total score                            | 117     | 23     | 200 |
| $X^2 = 4.049$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.132$ |         |        |     |

As shown in Table 6, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 4.049$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.132$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and number of children.

**Table 7: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between duration of marriage and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Duration of marriage |                   | Total score |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
|                                            | Less than 2 years    | More than 2 years |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo=3                 | Fo=25             | 28          |
|                                            | Fe=5.5               | Fe=22.5           |             |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=34                | Fo=114            | 148         |
|                                            | Fe=28.9              | Fe=119.1          |             |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo=2                 | Fo=22             | 24          |
|                                            | Fe=4.7               | Fe=19.3           |             |
| Total score                                | 39                   | 161               | 200         |
| $X^2 = 4.420$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.110$     |                      |                   |             |

As shown in Table 7, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 4.420$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.110$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and duration of marriage.

**Table 8: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between age difference and marital satisfaction**

|                            | Age difference    |           |                   | Total score |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|
|                            | Less than 2 years | 2-4 years | More than 4 years |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and | Fo=6              | Fo=11     | Fo=1              | 28          |
|                            | Fe=9.4            | Fe=6.9    | Fe=11.8           |             |

|                                         |         |         |         |     |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----|
| dissatisfaction                         |         |         |         |     |
| Relative satisfaction                   | Fo=57   | Fo=36   | Fo=55   | 148 |
|                                         | Fe=49.6 | Fe=36.3 | Fe=62.2 |     |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction   | Fo=4    | Fo=2    | Fo=18   | 24  |
|                                         | Fe=8.0  | Fe=5.9  | Fe=10.1 |     |
| Total score                             | 67      | 49      | 84      | 200 |
| $X^2 = 16.516$ , $df = 4$ , $p = 0.002$ |         |         |         |     |

As shown in Table 8, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 16.516$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and age difference.

**Table 9: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between kinship relations and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Kinship relation |              | Total score |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
|                                            | Relative         | Non-Relative |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo=12            | Fo=16        | 28          |
|                                            | Fe=17.6          | Fe=10.4      |             |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=01            | Fo=47        | 148         |
|                                            | Fe=93.2          | Fe=54.8      |             |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo=13            | Fo=11        | 24          |
|                                            | Fe=15.1          | Fe=8.9       |             |
| Total score                                | 126              | 74           | 200         |
| $X^2 = 7.423$ , $df = 2$ , $p = 0.024$     |                  |              |             |

As shown in Table 9, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 7.423$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and kinship relation.

**Table 10: Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between spouse's employment status and marital satisfaction**

|  | Spouse's employment status | Total score |
|--|----------------------------|-------------|
|--|----------------------------|-------------|

|                                            | Employed | Unemployed |     |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|------------|-----|
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo=12    | Fo=16      | 28  |
|                                            | Fe=13.3  | Fe=14.7    |     |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=66    | Fo=82      | 148 |
|                                            | Fe=70.3  | Fe=77.7    |     |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo=17    | Fo=7       | 24  |
|                                            | Fe=11.4  | fe=12.6    |     |
| Total score                                | 95       | 105        | 200 |

$$X^2 = 5.983, df = 2, p = 0.05$$

As shown in Table 10, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 5.983$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and spouse's employment status.

**Table 11. Chi-square test of independence for examining the relationship between participants' employment status and marital satisfaction**

|                                            | Participant's employment status |            | Total Score |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------------|
|                                            | Employed                        | Unemployed |             |
| Severe dissatisfaction and dissatisfaction | Fo=24                           | Fo=4       | 28          |
|                                            | Fe=22.1                         | Fe=5.9     |             |
| Relative satisfaction                      | Fo=113                          | Fo=35      | 148         |
|                                            | Fe=116.9                        | Fe=31.1    |             |
| Satisfaction and extreme satisfaction      | Fo=21                           | Fo=3       | 24          |
|                                            | Fe=19                           | Fe=5.0     |             |
| Total score                                | 158                             | 42         | 200         |
| $X^2 = 2.432, df = 2, p = 0.296$           |                                 |            |             |

As shown in Table 11, based on the observed chi-square value ( $X^2 = 2.432$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.296$ ), at the 95% confidence level, there is no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the individual's employment status.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The findings of the present study indicate that there is no significant relationship between gender and marital satisfaction. However, the mean level of marital satisfaction is higher among men than women, although this difference is not statistically significant. The findings of this study are consistent with some previous research indicating no significant difference between gender and marital satisfaction among men and women (Alavi, 2007; Neshat-Doust, Mehrabi, Kalantari, Palahang, & Soltani, 2006). In a study conducted by Walton (2000) on 600 African American couples, no significant difference was found between gender and marital satisfaction (Nikoui, 2004). However, the findings of Wood, Rhodes, and Whelan (1989), based on a meta-analysis of 93 studies, showed that women were, on average, more satisfied in marital life than men. The higher average marital happiness among women has also been confirmed by Campbell (2003). These findings are not consistent with the results obtained in the present study.

The findings show that there is a significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction. In explaining this finding, it can be stated that expectations and attitudes differ across age groups, and individuals of different ages also differ in culture and worldview. Therefore, large age differences may lead to substantial cultural and perceptual differences, which can affect marital

stability and well-being. On the other hand, in any ethnic or tribal group, it is evident that with increasing age and the passage of time, a greater understanding of one's partner develops. Couples, through increased familiarity with each other's personality traits and characteristics, become more successful in achieving satisfaction and mutual understanding. Supporting findings consistent with the present study include Parker (2002), who found that age can be an influential factor in marital interaction in a study of 20 couples. Another study involving middle-aged and older couples showed that marital interactions were more positive among older couples (Price, 2005). This finding is also consistent with Russell (2001), who reported increased marital satisfaction with age.

The findings indicate that there is no significant relationship between level of education and marital satisfaction. Takhti (2001), in a study titled "Examination and Comparison of Irrational Beliefs and Marital Satisfaction among Working Couples with Diploma and below and Bachelor's Degree and above," also found no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and education level. In explaining these results, it can be argued that differences in educational level may lead to differences in thinking patterns, values, and even interests. Additionally, increased educational opportunities for women may create further challenges. This may be due to two main reasons: first, historical and cultural factors in the region have made access to education easier for men, and thus the belief that men should have higher education in marriage has, at least until recently, been considered normal. Second, large educational differences between spouses may create disparities, especially among men who, due to a long history of patriarchy, may find it difficult to accept a more educated partner, potentially leading to feelings of inferiority toward educated women.

The findings of the present study show that there is no significant relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction. This finding is consistent with some previous studies that reported no significant relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction among men and women. Jalili (1996) found no significant relationship between the number of children and marital satisfaction among working and non-working women. Farasat (2002) reported similar findings, indicating that the number of children does not significantly affect marital satisfaction. However, Zamani Monfared (1997) found that childless men and women have higher marital satisfaction compared to those with children.

The findings of the present study indicate that there is no significant relationship between the duration of marriage and marital satisfaction. This result is consistent with the study by Reza-Nejad (2001). However, in a study conducted by Parker (2002), it was reported that couples with longer marital duration are better able to regulate their emotions in the face of difficulties and problems and experience greater satisfaction compared to younger couples. This may be because they have learned to manage their conflicts over

time, or because some conflicts become less important as time passes.

The findings of the present study show that there is a significant relationship between age difference and marital satisfaction. Considering that in most cases in this study the husband is older than the wife, a reasonable age difference (approximately 4–6 years) may lead the woman to view the man as a supportive figure with greater experience, making it easier for her to accept many of his decisions. On the other hand, it gives the man a sense of decision-making power and responsibility for supporting his wife. Together, these factors may have a direct impact on marital satisfaction. Obviously, an unreasonable and very large age difference between spouses, due to a lack of mutual understanding, may have the opposite effect.

The findings of the present study indicate that there is a significant relationship between kinship relations and marital satisfaction. Given that most marriages in Baluchistan are traditional and often occur before couples have sufficient acquaintance with one another, it appears that in kinship marriages—where families and partners already have some level of familiarity—couples may achieve better mutual understanding and, consequently, higher marital satisfaction.

The findings also show that there is no significant relationship between a spouse's employment and marital satisfaction. In a study by Hall (1996), it was found that increased role strain among employed women leads to increased marital dissatisfaction. Kramer (2006), based on research on marital satisfaction in relation to spouse employment, concluded that marital satisfaction is not affected by employment (Talebi, 1999).

Finally, the findings indicate that there is no significant relationship between an individual's employment status and marital satisfaction.

One of the limitations of this study is the wide geographical dispersion of Baluchistan and the scattered settlement of the Baloch population, many of whom live outside the region in areas such as North Khorasan, Hormozgan, and Kerman provinces. Therefore, it was not possible to include all individuals homogeneously.

Given that the younger generation of the Baloch ethnic group places significant importance on education, it is recommended that future studies consider the educational level of the spouse as an additional important variable in relation to marital satisfaction.

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