

Original research

Predicting sexual satisfaction of married women with marital conflict based on emotional regulation with resilience meditationSahar Sadeghian^{*1}**Abstract**

Introduction: Sexual satisfaction has positive consequences for married life and strengthening the foundation of the family and marital conflicts can lead to sexual dissatisfaction. The purpose of this study was to predict the sexual satisfaction of married women with marital conflict based on emotional regulation with the mediation of resilience.

Method: The research method was descriptive-correlation type of structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the present study included all married women with marital conflict who had referred to the clinics and counseling centers of Roudehen city in 2021. Among them, 250 people were selected by non-random and available sampling method. The main data for this research were obtained using the Sanaie's marital conflicts questionnaire Hudson et al.'s Index of sexual satisfaction, Garnefski & Kraaij's cognitive emotion regulation, Connor & Davidson's resilience. The obtained data were analyzed through correlation test and structural equation modeling.

Findings: The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotion regulation and resilience with sexual satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). The results showed the confirmation of the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between emotional regulation and marital satisfaction in married women with marital conflict ($p < 0.01$). Also, the modified model had a favorable fit.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, resilience and emotion regulation variables can play an important role in sexual satisfaction and the need to pay attention to these important variables in counseling programs for women with marital conflict should be considered.

Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Marital Conflict, Resilience, Sexual Satisfaction

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Introduction:

Marriage and conjugal relationship are the source of mental health, support, intimacy and pleasure of human beings and it causes cooperation, sympathy, unity, interest and responsibility towards the family (1). The fulfillment of the goals of marriage after the establishment of a marital relationship makes a person feel satisfied and happy and contrary to this, it will lead to marital disputes and ultimately dissatisfaction with marriage (2). In cases where the couple's interactions are inappropriate; marital conflicts occur which is one of the common problems of couples in today's world and it has a significant impact on the quality of life together (3). Marital conflict can be defined as a state of tension or stress between marital partners (4). Unfulfilled expectations, differences in equality of rights and power, personality of each spouse and their relatives, money, sexual relations, kinship relations, friends, children, drug use, leisure time, religious differences, sexual infidelity, ending Mutual love, emotional problems, material problems, physical abuse, communication pro

blems, marriage at a young age, work conflicts and the like are some of the factors that can cause marital conflicts (5-6). Conflicts can lead to the weakening of marital relations, the weakening of children's adaptation, the possibility of increasing conflicts between parents and children and also between relatives. In general, the marital conflict that occurs in the family; it creates issues and problems at individual, institutional and social levels (7). One of the important issues in the quality of married life, satisfaction and stability of the relationship is sexual satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction is the emotional response resulting from a person's subjective evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of a romantic relationship with their life partner (8). if the person's sexual satisfaction is at a higher level; it will have a more positive effect on emotional intimacy, communicative intimacy and satisfaction in the relationship with the life partner (9). Research results have shown that sexual satisfaction will lead to lower levels of marital conflict, satisfaction from marital relationship, satisfaction with life, and high physical and psychological health (6). Therefore, sexual satisfaction is a key aspect of a person's sexual health as well as an essential component of quality of life for both men and women (10). Razzaghi et al. (5) showed that there is a significant negative relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital conflicts.

Another variable related to sexual satisfaction is emotion regulation (11). Emotion regulation is an intrinsic aspect of emotional response tendencies; and refers to strategies which are used to reduce, increase or maintain emotional experiences to cope with stressful situations (12). Also, emotion regulation can be defined as a process that is responsible for controlling, evaluating and modifying emotional responses by initiating, restraining or modulating them (13). Emotional skills can be effective in the relationships of couples and their marital satisfaction in a sustainable way and they can predict marital compatibility over time (14).

Fisher et al. (11) showed that emotion regulation problems were associated with poorer sexual health outcomes, problems in the sexual response cycle, and overall less sexual satisfaction. Dobb et al showed that women's sexual well-being is positively related to adaptive emotional strategies (such as problem solving, acceptance, reappraisal) and negatively related to negative emotional strategies (such as worry, rumination, avoidance, suppression, distraction). Rick et al.,

(16) showed that the use of effective emotion regulation strategies, such as cognitive reappraisal, is associated with greater marital satisfaction, and the use of ineffective emotion regulation strategies, such as catastrophizing and rumination, is associated with lower marital satisfaction. Amini et al. (17) showed that the correlation between cognitive regulation of negative emotion and marital satisfaction was negative but the correlation between cognitive regulation of positive emotion and marital satisfaction was positive. The findings of the research of Karegar et al (18) showed that the difficulty in regulating emotions can predict women's sexual satisfaction. Several factors can play a role in sexual satisfaction. One of these factors is resilience. Resilience is a potential concept for helping married people to maintain or regain adjustment despite challenges in married life (19). Resilience or the ability to recover and Bounce back in the face of adverse life conditions has been studied (20). This structure is a set of personal and process characteristics; which helps the successful adaptation of people in unfavorable life conditions (21). Some experts consider resilience as a dynamic process; which is variable according to the opportunities that arise in the process of life and from time to time. And they believe that resilience has a flexible and changeable quality (22). People with a high level of resilience are more likely to experience positive emotions in their lives. they have more self-confidence and compared to people who have a low level of resilience, they have better psychological adaptation (23). Oliva et al. (24) showed that resilience was related to sexual health. Thus, resilience scores were significantly higher among women with high sexual performance scores. Also, sexual performance was significantly worse among participants with low resilience. Vahedi and Iqbali (25) showed that the components of resilience have a significant correlation with marital satisfaction. Moghadsali et al. (26) showed that there is a direct and significant relationship between resilience and marital satisfaction.

Many researchers define resilience as the ability to overcome unfortunate events and it has been mentioned as one of the protective factors against future risk factors (27). Therefore, considering the role of resilience in solving problems and also the importance of the multi-dimensional role that women have in the field of society and family; Also, due to the importance of sexual satisfaction in life, it seems necessary to investigate the underlying and predictive factors of sexual satisfaction. And it has a tremendous effect on the family and a wide reflection on the society level. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to predictive factors; that are relatively stable over time; and on the other hand, they can be seen and controlled from the early years of a person's life. Since sexual satisfaction has positive consequences for married life and strengthening the foundation of the family, Carrying out this research has practical results; and family counselors and psychologists can use the results of this research in their planning to improve the sexual satisfaction of couples. In this way, it is possible to increase public awareness about marital conflicts; and also developed the right skills to deal with problems in couples and stability of joint life. Therefore, according to what was said; and so far, no comprehensive research has been done regarding the role of emotion regulation and resilience in sexual satisfaction. The purpose of this research was to predict the sexual satisfaction of married women with marital conflict based on emotional regulation with mediation of resilience.

Research method:

The research method was descriptive-correlation type of structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the research included all married women with marital conflict referring to the clinics and counseling centers of Roudehen city in 2021. Roudehen city has 9 counseling centers and psychological clinics licensed by the Psychology and Counseling System Organization that in this research, women with marital conflict referring to this center were invited randomly and accessible. Also, the minimum sample size required to collect data related to structural equation modeling is 200 people (28). By calculating the overestimation due to the prediction of dropout of participants, finally 250 people were selected using the non-random and accessible method. The criteria for entering the research included female gender, obtaining a score of at least 120 in the marital conflict questionnaire, having at least a diploma, having at least one year of married life experience, age between 18 and 60 years; and the exit criteria included: not completing the questionnaire, withdrawing to continue participating in the research. From the ethical aspects of the research, it was the fact that the information of the participants will be kept confidential with the researcher. To collect data, the following questionnaires were used:

1. Marital conflict questionnaire (MCQ): This questionnaire was developed by Sanai (29) with the purpose of measuring marital conflicts. The questionnaire included 42 questions. And the subject's answers were set on a 5-point Likert scale (always=5 - never=1). it measures seven areas of marital conflicts (decrease in cooperation, decrease in sex, increase in emotional reactions, increase in child support, increase in personal relationship with relatives, decrease in family relationship with spouse's relatives and friends, and separating financial affairs from each other). The score range of the questionnaire is between 42 and 210. In Sanai's research (29) to determine the content validity and face validity of the questionnaire, this scale was implemented on a group of 111 people consisting of 53 men and 58 women with marital conflict and also on a control group of 108 people of normal couples consisting of 53 men and 55 women. The comparison of the mean of two compatible and incompatible groups showed a significant difference in different aspects of marital conflict; which indicated the discriminating power of the test in distinguishing conflicting and non-conflicting couples. The reliability of the questionnaire was reported as 0.53 for the entire questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha method (29). In Parvai et al.'s research (30), the reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in coefficient of 0.88 for the entire questionnaire. In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.79.

2. Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS): This scale was developed by Hudson et al. in 1981 to assess the levels of marital satisfaction. This scale has 25 questions and it is considered part of the self-report questionnaires. The subject's answer to each test item is determined on a 7-point scale between 0 and 6. In general, the scores of the subjects in the whole test fluctuate between 0 and 150. Also, some of the scale items have reverse scoring. Reverse scoring includes questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 1, 14, 15, 20, 18, 24 and 25. High score in this scale reflects sexual satisfaction. The internal consistency of this scale was 0.91 through Cronbach's alpha and the test- retest

coefficient after one week was 0.93 (31). Hidaka et al. (32) reported the convergent validity of the questionnaire using confirmatory factor analysis. in such a way that the goodness of fit index was equal to 0.98 and the root mean square error was equal to 0.062. In Purakbar's research (33), the 15-day retest coefficient was reported to be 0.96. The validity of this scale was also calculated through its correlation with the subscale of sexual satisfaction of the Enrich questionnaire and its value was 0.74 (33). In the research of Sidi and Shah Nazari (34); The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.91 using the dichotomization method which confirms the high reliability of the questionnaire. In this research, the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.89.

3. Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (GERQ): This questionnaire is a self-assessment index that was designed in 2006 by Garnefski and Kraij and it measures the cognitive regulation strategies of emotions in response to threatening and stress-causing events in life. This questionnaire includes 18 items and 9 sub-components of self-blame, focus on thinking/rumination, other-blame, catastrophizing, underestimating, acceptance, positive re-evaluation, positive re-focus, re-focus on planning. The scoring of this questionnaire is done on a five-point Likert scale (1=never - 5=always). The range of scores was between 36 and 180 and a higher score indicates that the person uses that cognitive strategy more. To determine the convergent and divergent validity, the correlation of the components of the questionnaire with the Beck depression questionnaire showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between the components of self-blame, catastrophizing and blaming others with depression with values of 0.2, 0.29, 0.45 and 0.38 respectively and between the components of acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive reappraisal and perspective-taking with depression, there is an inverse and significant correlation with values of -0.21, -0.23, -0.19, -0.26 and 17 respectively. Garnefski and Kraij (35) obtained the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93. In Iran, the criterion validity of questionnaire components (self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive reappraisal, perspective-taking, catastrophizing, and blaming others) with Beck's depression inventory is 0.38, -0.25, -0.36, -0.27, -0.29, -0.32, -0.25, 0.48 and 0.42 respectively; which indicates the desirability of the criterion validity. In Parham et al.'s research (37), the reliability of this questionnaire was obtained with Cronbach's alpha method of 0.78. The reliability rate in the present study was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.83.

4. Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): This questionnaire was prepared by Connor & Davidson in 2003. This questionnaire consists of 25 questions and measures the five dimensions of individual competence, trust in individual instincts, tolerance of negative emotion, positive acceptance of change and secure relationships, control and spiritual influences. it is scored on a five-point Likert scale between zero (completely false) and four (always true). The total score of this test is between 0 and 100. Higher scores indicate greater resilience of the subject. Connor and Davidson (38) reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the resilience scale as 0.89. Also, the reliability coefficient obtained from the test- retest method in a four-week interval was 0.87. Naderi et al. (39) obtained the correlation of this scale with Ahvaz

psychological stubbornness scale of 0.64; It shows that this scale has relatively high validity. Also, in the research of Vismradi et al. (40), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was 0.93. The reliability level in this study was obtained using Cronbach's alpha method of 0.88.

Finally, the structural equation model was used to analyze the data; which were analyzed by SPSS version 26 and AMOS version 18 software.

Findings

1 person (0.2 percent) of the people participating in the research were under 20 years old, 71 people (17.7 percent) were between 20 and 30 years old, 185 people (46.1 percent) were between 31 and 40 years old, 87 people (21.7 percent) were between 41 to 50 years old, 52 people (13 percent) were between 51 to 60 years old, and 5 people (1.2 percent) were over 60 years old. The duration of marriage of 57 people (14.2 percent) was 1 to 3 years, the duration of marriage of 47 people (11.7 percent) was between 4 and 6 years, and the duration of marriage of 45 people (11.2 percent) was between 7 and 9 years, the duration of marriage of 45 people (11.2 percent) was between 10 and 12 years old, and the period of marriage for 22 people (5.5 percent) was about 1 year. 136 people (33.9 percent) had no children, 114 people (28.4 percent) had 1 child, 133 people (33.2 percent) had 2 children, 16 people (4 percent) had 3 children and 2 people (5.5 0 percent) had 5 or more children.

Table 1. Correlation coefficient between research variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Acceptance	-										
2. Positive refocusing	0.44*	-									
3. Refocus on the program	0.39*	0.31*	-								
4. Positive reassessment	0.41*	0.29*	0.30*	-							
5. Point of view	0.41*	0.44*	0.33*	0.51*	-						
6. Self-blame	-	-	-	-	-	-					
7. Blaming others	0.14*	0.05	0.08	0.09	0.08						
8. Rumination	-	-	-0.11	-	-	-	-				
9. Catastrophizing	0.25*	0.07		0.08	0.10	0.13					
	0.22*	0.18*	0.02	0.12	0.09	0.07	0.11	-			
	0.20*	0.07	-0.11	0.09	-	0.05	0.07	0.08	-		
					0.12						

10. Resilience	0.35*	0.43*	0.41*	0.23*	0.28*	-	-	-	-	-	-
	*	*	*	*	*	0.34*	0.26*	0.34*	0.29*		
11. Sexual satisfaction	0.28*	0.25*	0.34*	0.41*	0.25*	-	-	-	-	0.37*	-
	*	*	*	*	*	0.23*	0.38*	0.34*	0.26*	*	
Average	6.74	7.87	8.01	7.89	7.44	6.35	5.25	6.82	11.78	52.9	49.3
standard deviation	3.79	2.50	2.10	2.44	2.95	3.67	3.53	3.56	4.03	7	9
you are crooked	-	-	1.19	0.93	-	1.76	-	-	1.47	0.31	-
	0.56	0.88			0.93		0.91	1.24			1.04
Elongation	0.74	-	-	-	0.87	-	0.11	0.92	-0.63	-	0.83
		0.76	0.94	0.57		0.73				1.64	

As seen in Table 1, The correlation coefficient between the dimensions of positive emotion regulation (acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on the program, reevaluation and perspective-taking) with sexual satisfaction is positive at a significant level of 0.01. And the correlation coefficient between the dimensions of negative emotion regulation (self-blame, blame others, rumination and catastrophizing) with sexual satisfaction is negative at a significant level of 0.01. The correlation coefficient between resilience and sexual satisfaction is positive at a significant level of 0.01.

According to Table 1, the skewness and elongation index of the variables is in the range (2, -2).. Therefore, they can be considered normal or approximately normal. Also, a negative and significant relationship was reported between all the variables except behavior inhibition with sexual satisfaction at the level of 0.01. Before the path analysis, the normality of the criterion variable (sexual satisfaction), the independence of the errors and the collinearity of the predictor variables were examined. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with statistics 0.29 and $p < 0.05$, indicate the normality of the sexual satisfaction variable. Also, the amount of Durbin Watson for predictor variables in predicting sexual satisfaction (1.59) indicates the independence of errors.

On the other hand, in this research, the variance inflation factor was smaller than 10 in all variables. Missing data were identified and corrected using SPSS software and the analysis section (missing data). Also, box plot was used to identify outlier data for univariate values and Mahalanobis index was used for multivariate values. Path analysis method was used to test the desired model and investigate the mediating role of resilience. The relationship measurement parameters are directly presented in Table 2.

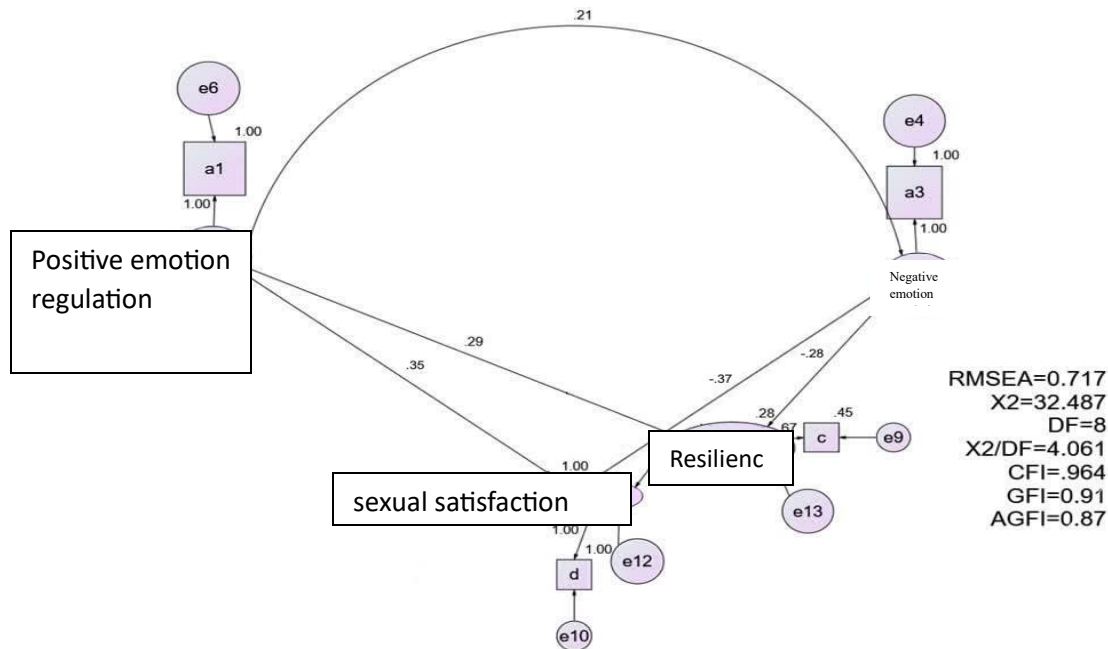


Figure 1. Modified model of predicting sexual satisfaction based on emotional regulation with the mediation of resilience in married women with marital conflict.

In Figure 1, the modified model of the present study is drawn after removing non-significant paths. In fact, paths that were not significant ($p < 0.001$), those paths were modified and removed. Significant direct and indirect paths between research variables and sexual satisfaction are listed in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Direct path coefficients of variable effects and significance of estimated parameters

Predictor variable	Criterion variable	Standard coefficients	standard deviation	Statistic (t)	S.E.	C.R.	Significance level
Negative emotion regulation	sexual satisfaction	-0.37	0.07	-5.28	0.123	3.734	0.001
positive emotion regulation	sexual satisfaction	0.35	0.05	7.09	0.120	-5.486	0.001
Resilience	sexual satisfaction	0.65	0.15	4.27	0.121	5.462	0.001

As seen in Table 2; All variables whose their direct paths to the criterion variable have a T value greater or smaller than ± 1.96 ; They have a significant effect ($p < 0.001$) on the criterion variable and non-significant paths were removed from the model. According to the findings of the table, the path coefficient between negative emotion regulation and sexual satisfaction is negative and

significant, and resilience and positive emotion regulation is positive and significant with sexual satisfaction ($p < 0.01$).

Table 3. Indirect path coefficients of variable effects and significance of estimated parameters

Predictor variable	Mediator	Criterion variable	Standard coefficients	Standard deviation	Statistic (t)	S.E.	Significance level
Negative emotion regulation	Resilience	sexual satisfaction	0.73	0.03	19.60	0.019	0.001
positive emotion regulation	Resilience	sexual satisfaction	-0.48	0.04	-10.24	0.025	0.001

According to Table 3, all the variables whose their indirect paths to the criterion variable have a T value greater or smaller than ± 1.96 ; they have a significant effect ($p < 0.001$) on the criterion variable. Also, the findings showed that both indirect coefficients are significant. In other words, positive emotion regulation and negative emotion regulation indirectly affected sexual satisfaction by influencing resilience.

Table 4. The fit indices of the modified model

index	X ² /d	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	IFI	GFI	P
Initial model values	256.94	0.88	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.66	0.001
Modified model values	1.16	0.02	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.672
Limit	Less than 5	Less than 0.08	Above 0.9	Above 0.9	Above 0.9	Above 0.9	Above 0.05

The fit indices in Table 3 indicate the excellent fit of the data with the modified model. According to Figure 1 and Table 2, positive emotion regulation was able to predict sexual satisfaction indirectly and through resilience. Also, negative emotion regulation both directly and indirectly and through resilience could predict sexual satisfaction.

Discussion and conclusion:

The purpose of the this study was to predict the sexual satisfaction of married women with marital conflict based on emotional regulation with the mediation of resilience. The results

showed that resilience is able to significantly mediate between emotion regulation and sexual satisfaction in married women with marital conflict. This finding was consistent with the findings of (24-26).

In explaining this finding, it can be said that when couples have less resilience in the face of issues related to sexual relations, their marital conflicts remain strong. And these problems and conflicts cause their sexual dissatisfaction. People who have low resilience; to deal with negative emotions, they engage in maladaptive behaviors and they try to reduce their excitement by creating tension and violence. An emotion-based coping strategy such as aggression may cause people to quickly run away from their negative emotions but over time, it can increase people's problems. Although this strategy is considered a good strategy for people who have low resilience (41). People with low resilience find excitement unbearable and they can't deal with their confusion. These people do not accept the existence of excitement and feel ashamed and disturbed by its existence. These people do not accept the existence of excitement and they feel ashamed and disturbed by its existence because they underestimate their ability to deal with emotions. The low resilience of these people forces them to find an immediate way to get rid of their emotions (42). People with a low level of resilience make less effort when faced with stressful situations; they often show avoidance behaviors; or limit the expression of their emotions and feelings, and they try to prevent negative emotions and immediate relief of experienced negative emotions. It should be noted that if these people are not able to relieve these emotions, all their attention is drawn to this disturbing emotion and their performance decreases significantly, which may cause marital conflicts (41) and then reduce sexual satisfaction. People with high resilience look at problems creatively and flexibly, and plan to solve them. If needed, they do not hesitate to ask for help from others. They have complete resources to deal with the problems and tensions of life and they are less exposed to mental and emotional disturbances (43), which increases the mental health and well-being of these people. Couples with low resilience are also weak in regulating their emotions and due to physical arousal and intensity of negative emotions, they are more likely to consider any criticism of the other party as hostile or criticize their spouse aggressively.

A resilient person in the cognitive regulation of emotions is able to control and reduce her/his stress by controlling and adjusting her/his emotions and adjust his relationship with his wife in such a way as to strengthen marital relations (44) and as a result causes increase sexual satisfaction and reduce marital conflicts. Therefore, it is logical that there is a relationship between sexual satisfaction and emotional regulation with the mediating role of resilience. On the other hand, the research results showed that emotion regulation can significantly predict sexual satisfaction. This finding was consistent with the findings of (11-15, 18).

In explaining this finding, it should be said that emotion regulation requires an optimal interaction of cognition and emotion to deal with negative situations. Emotional regulation strategies (Compatible with incompatible) are used to reduce negative emotions, cognitions, and behaviors associated with them (45). Sexual issues are a part of human life and behavior. A large part of the relationship between spouses is related to emotional and emotional issues. And the

inability to express these emotions in a timely and appropriate way initially leads to emotional withdrawal and loss of intimacy, and finally marital conflict and disruption in their sexual satisfaction (46). Positive emotion regulation decreases negative feelings and increases positive feelings and adaptive behavior and the regulation of negative emotion increases negative emotions and decreases positive emotions in married life. In other words, failure to regulate emotions causes interpersonal conflicts and these people do not try to express their emotions such as anger and hatred and oppress them, they respond less flexibly to diverse environmental conditions. they are unable to control their impulses and experience many negative emotions, therefore, they have lower mental health (17). A person who is skilled in regulating his emotions can reduce and control negative emotions; And the positive and rational use of emotions increases the possibility of forming constructive communication behaviors, repairing damages and constructively solving marital problems and improving marital satisfaction; and as a result take a positive step towards increasing the level of sexual satisfaction. In general, it can be said that resilience and emotion regulation as influential components can improve the level of sexual satisfaction in women with marital conflict. Therefore, the results obtained from this research will be useful for family counselors and psychologists in individual consultations to improve sexual satisfaction and reduce marital conflicts. Among the limitations of the current research, we can mention the following: Using non-random sampling, the results are limited to women in Tehran. Using self-reporting tools, differences in demographic characteristics such as age, education and income. Therefore, it is suggested to conduct research in larger samples and in other cities to lead to broad results. Also, in addition to self-reporting tools, other tools such as interviews should also be used to avoid possible orientations. It is suggested to investigate the role of demographic variables as moderating variables in future researches. It is also suggested to carry out this research in other cities and different cultures of the country and other businesses that are in contact with clients and also, training classes related to marital conflict management should be held in order to increase sexual satisfaction in couples; To create a basis for creating a beneficial relationship between couples.

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Conflict of interest: The authors also declare that there is no conflict of interest in the results of this research.

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