

## Predicting Marital Satisfaction based on Early Maladaptive Schemas, Social Support and Attachment Styles in Married Women

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Marital satisfaction is a personal experience in marriage that can only be evaluated by the individual in response to the level of enjoyment of the marital relationship, and there are many factors that affect marital satisfaction in a shared life, and this feeling plays an important role in the level of normal family functioning. , the present study was conducted with the aim of predicting marital satisfaction based on initial incompatible schemas, social support and couple attachment styles in married women of Sanandaj city.

**Method:** The current research is a descriptive study of the correlation type and the statistical population of those married women who referred to family counseling service centers in Sanandaj city in the middle of 1400 with a number of 440 people, who were selected by random sampling method and based on the sampling table of Karjesi and Morgan. 205 people were selected and studied. Research variables were conducted by Enrich's Marital Satisfaction Questionnaires, Young's early maladaptive schemas, Sherborn and Stewart's social support, and Collins and Reed's attachment styles. The obtained data were analyzed using multiple linear regression tests and Pearson's correlation coefficient test with the help of SPSS version 25 software.

**Results:** The research results showed that marital satisfaction can be predicted based on initial incompatible schemas, social support and couple attachment styles in married women of Sanandaj city ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, there is a negative and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and primary maladaptive schemas, and a positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and social support and attachment styles ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusions:** The results showed that marital satisfaction can be predicted based on the initial maladaptive schemas, social support and couple attachment styles in married women.

**Keywords:** attachment styles, marital satisfaction, primary maladaptive schemas, social support

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### Introduction:

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Marriage, as the most important and highest social custom, has always been emphasized to achieve the emotional needs of people (1). The main reasons for marriage are love and affection for a partner and companion in life, satisfying emotional and psychological needs and increasing happiness and satisfaction (2). In fact, one of the main aspects of marriage that requires the special attention of couples and family counselors is the satisfaction between couples (3). The level of marital satisfaction is one of the most important factors affecting the functioning of the family. All couples seek to enjoy their married life and feel satisfied (4). Marital satisfaction is the objective feelings of satisfaction, satisfaction and pleasure experienced by a husband or wife when they consider all aspects of their marriage. Investigating the effective factors in marital satisfaction is important because a person's satisfaction with marital life is considered an important part of personal health (5).

Marital satisfaction is a personal experience in marriage that can only be assessed by the individual in response to the level of enjoyment of the marital relationship, and there are many factors that affect marital satisfaction in a joint life, and this feeling plays an important role in the level of normal family functioning. 6). Based on Elson's cycle theory of marital and family systems, satisfactory relationships in married life allow the family to change the level of their ability and solidarity in response to the needs they face. As a result, this ability and solidarity created by marital satisfaction facilitates behaviors such as solidarity, flexibility and communication in married life and reduces marital dissatisfaction in the family center (7).

One of the most important factors affecting marital stability is the marital satisfaction of couples with their lives (8). Marital satisfaction plays an important role in strengthening marital life and can protect couples from marital problems (9). The research background shows the effect of couples' satisfaction on the quality and stability of married life of couples. However, the existence of a problem in any of these factors can have a negative effect on the marital relationship and lead the couple's life to deterioration and weakness (10).

Marital satisfaction can be influenced by evolutionary roots (11). One of the evolutionary roots is the primary incompatible schemas, which play an important role in the formation of many psychological disorders (12), and can cause marital life of couples with problems such as dissatisfaction and conflicts (13). Primary maladaptive schemas, self-damaging emotional and cognitive patterns are in the individual, which are formed in the mind at the beginning of growth and development and are repeated in the path of life. In fact, these schemas are beliefs that people have about themselves, others, and the environment, and they usually originate from not satisfying basic needs, especially emotional needs, in childhood. Schemas arise due to the unsatisfaction of the basic emotional needs of childhood, and this is when the basic and universal psychological needs (secure attachment, self-direction, freedom to express healthy needs and emotions, spontaneity and realistic limits) are not satisfied (14).

, care and help refers to an individual or group. This support can come from many sources such as spouse, family, friends, colleagues, doctor, another variable affecting marital satisfaction is social support (15). Social support means the feeling that a person is noticed by others and that others value him and that he belongs to a social network. Social support is one of the important sources for protection that originates from receiving the perception of peace or social organizations (16), in couple relationships, social support acts as a shock absorber and is a means of relieving psychological distress. Also, social support is positively related to marital adjustment and negatively related to depression, anxiety and stress (17), aligned with the

variables of primary maladaptive schemas and social support, another psychological component that researchers believe plays a fundamental role in marital adjustment and satisfaction. has people; It is attachment style (18).

Bowlby (19) has done extensive research on the concept of attachment and defined it as a stable psychological bond between two people and believes that attachment is a deep emotional bond that we have with certain people in our lives and causes when we interact with them. We establish, enjoy and feel comforted by their closeness in times of stress.

Attachment styles affect the way people document the communication process through intra-functional models, and communication documents have the potential to mediate between attachment styles and relationship quality (20), research shows that the quality of the child's mother's relationship during childhood in the evolution of the practical pattern and Behavior in adulthood is of special importance and close and intimate relationships in adulthood are also influenced by these practical patterns (21).

Roth and Anderson (22) mentioned three styles of secure attachment, avoidant insecure attachment and ambivalent insecure attachment. Secure attachment style is associated with positive communication characteristics including intimacy and satisfaction, avoidant attachment style with lower levels of intimacy and commitment, and ambivalent attachment style with excitement and preoccupation with relationships with low satisfaction.

Johnson and Whitburn (23) stated that attachment style plays an essential role in creating marital satisfaction and that insecure attachment style is a good predictor for primary maladaptive schema. The theorists of attachment theory believe that people's expectations when entering romantic relationships are based on previous intimate relationships with primary caregivers; It often affects the style of attachment and the way of communication with the spouse and their married life, safe, avoidant and ambivalent people use completely different strategies to regulate their emotions and process their emotional information and these emotional states can be observed in people's behavior (24).

Considering what was mentioned above, paying attention to identifying and determining the contribution of the antecedent factors of marital satisfaction is one of the research priorities in the field of marital and family issues. Therefore, this research aims to answer this question: Is it possible to predict marital satisfaction in women with marital conflict in Sanandaj based on initial maladaptive schemas, social support, and attachment styles?

### **Method:**

The present study was descriptive of the correlation type. Married women who were dissatisfied with their married life, who had referred to family counseling centers in Sanandaj city in the first quarter of 1400 for counseling. The total number of this statistical community is 440 people. The sample size of the study was estimated to be 205 people, who were randomly selected from the population group, using the table of Karajesi and Morgan. Since the restrictions of the corona virus prevented the researcher from visiting in person, an explanatory file was prepared and along with the research questionnaires, a design form and its link were sent to the selected women through WhatsApp and after filling the questionnaires, the results were downloaded and were analyzed. This research is taken from the master's thesis with ethical ID number 14362/D/1400 and all the ethical considerations of the research have been observed in it.

In order to collect data, the following questionnaires were used. 1- Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire: This questionnaire, which has 47 questions, was prepared by Olson et al. (1998) and includes 12 subscales, which are: contractual response, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital relationship, conflict resolution, financial supervision, related activities. In leisure time, sexual relations, marriage and children, relatives and friends, the roles of egalitarianism and ideological orientation are made. The questionnaire has five options. This is the questionnaire for the item "I completely disagree with score 1", "I disagree with score 2"; "Neither agree nor disagree" is score 3, "I agree score 4" and "I completely agree score 5". In this questionnaire, questions 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34 are scored in reverse. In other words, in these questions, a score of 1 is given to the phrase "I completely agree" and a score of 5 is given to the phrase "I completely disagree" (25). For the first time in our country, Suleimani (26) has calculated and reported the internal correlation of the test at 0.93 for the long form and 0.95 for the short form.

2- Young's primary maladaptive schemas questionnaire: This questionnaire was created by Yang in 1999 and has 75 items that evaluate fifteen primary maladaptive schemas and these fifteen schemas are placed in 5 areas according to the primary developmental areas. Early maladaptive schemas are assessed with Young's Early Maladaptive Schema Questionnaire (1998). Yang (27) designed this questionnaire based on the original questionnaire form (form 205) and has 75 five-choice questions. The scoring method is based on a five-point Likert scale, the options of which range from 1=completely disagree to 5=completely agree, with a score of 75 indicating the lowest amount of initial inconsistent schemas and a score of 375 indicating the highest amount of initial inconsistent schemas. The reliability of Young's schema scale by Cronbach's alpha was 96% for the whole test and above 80% for all subscales. Also, the standardization of this questionnaire in Iran by Sadouqi et al. in 2015 showed that the internal consistency of this questionnaire was obtained using Cronbach's alpha (28).

3- Sherburne and Stewart Social Support Questionnaire (1999) (MOS-SSS): It was created by Sherburne and Stewart in 1991 to be used in the context of medical outcomes, and it has been used in other researches since then. This test, which measures the amount of social support received by the subject, has 19 statements and 9 subscales. The concurrent validity of this questionnaire was obtained by Sherburne and Stewart at 0.75 (29). The reliability of the subscales of this test has been reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a range from 0.74 to 0.93 (30).

4- Adult Attachment Styles Questionnaire (RAAS): This test, which includes 18 questions, was created by Hazen and Shaver (1987) and is a self-report scale based on Ainsworth's three attachment styles (secure, avoidant and anxious or ambivalent) and with this The assumption that one can find styles similar to children's attachment styles in adult relationships has been designed (31). This scale has two parts, in the first part, the subject answers each of the three descriptive statements on a five-point Likert scale, from completely inappropriate (1) to completely appropriate (5). In the second part, the person chooses one of the statements as the most suitable description about his feelings. According to the instructions of the questionnaire, 6 items related to each sub-scale are specified, according to which circle the subject has put his mark on for each sentence in the answer sheet, his score is determined for each sub-scale. For options, grades 1 to 5 or grades 0 to 4 can be considered. Hazen and Shaver (32) reported the overall reliability of this scale to be 67%, and the alpha coefficients of secure, avoidant, and

ambivalent styles were 80%, 57%, and 32%, respectively. In the study of Rahimian Boger et al. (33), the total alpha coefficient of this scale was reported as 64%.

After collecting the research data, the collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 25 software. For this purpose, first the normality of the data dispersion and then the homogeneity of the variance of the two groups regarding the main data of the research were examined, and after examining the assumptions of the homogeneity of the variances and the distribution of the variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient test was used.

### Results:

The checklist of information and demographic characteristics of the respondents is given in Table No. 1, and the highest frequency was in the age group of 31-40 people with the number of 92 people (44.9%). The highest frequency in terms of the duration of marriage was between 11-20 years with the number of 90 people (44%). In terms of education, the highest frequency was related to university education with the number of 98 people (47.8%). The highest frequency related to jobs was related to administrative jobs with the number of 99 people (48.3%).

**Table 1:** Demographic information

	Age	Number	perset
<b>Age of the respondents</b>	Up to 30 years	31	15.1
	Between 31 and 40 years	92	44.9
	Between 41 and 50 years	74	36.1
	Above 50 years	8	3.9
	Total	205	100
<b>Duration of cohabitation</b>	1-10 years	52	25.3
	11-20 years	90	44
	Above 20 years	63	30.7
	Total	205	100
<b>Education</b>	Less than a diploma	66	32.2
	diploma	41	20
	College education	98	47.8
	Total	205	100
<b>Job</b>	housewife	67	32.7
	Administrative jobs	99	48.3
	Self-employed	39	19
	Total	205	100

The results of table number 1 showed the measurement of the research variables and the level of marital satisfaction in 15 people (7.3%) of the studied respondents was very low, 121 people (59%) were low; 57 people (27.8%) were in the medium range and 12 people (5.9%) were in the high range. The amount of incompatible schemas in 14 people (6.8%) of the studied respondents was low; 90 people (43.9%) were at the average level, 88 people (42.9%) were at the high level, and 13 people (6.3%) were at the very high level, the level of social support in 16 people (7.8%) of the studied respondents at a very low level, 89 people (43.4%) at a low level; 78 people (38%) were in the medium range and 22 people (10.7%) were in the high



range, and the attachment style of 21 people (10.2%) of the studied respondents was secure, 102 people (49.8%) were ambivalent and 82 people (40%) were avoidant.

The normality of data dispersion related to the research variables has been checked by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results obtained from this investigation are as described in the following table:

**Table 2:** The results of measuring the state of natural dispersion of the variables

Variable	N	Z	P
Marital Satisfaction	205	0.053	0.200
Inconsistent schemas	205	0.049	0.200
social support	205	0.058	0.186
attachment style	205	0.070	0.116

According to the information in Table 2, since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic and the estimated error rate in all the investigated variables were calculated at a level higher than 0.05, which indicates that there is no significant difference in the levels of the investigated variables, which indicates that it is normal. It is the relevant data. Marital satisfaction can be predicted based on initial maladaptive schemas, social support and couple attachment styles in married women of Sanandaj city. Multiple linear regression tests were used to test this hypothesis.

**Table 3:** Regression line equation

Regression model	beta		T test			Variance heterogeneity	
	Non-standard	standard					
	B	S.e	beta	T	Sig	tolerance	VIF
width from origin (a)	165.00	16.42	-0.223	10.04	0.001	0.279	3.591
	5	6		6			
Initial schema	-0.213	0.065		-	0.001		
				3.261			
social support	0.741	0.105	0.427	7.081	0.001	0.357	3.803
attachment-safe	0.314	0.101	0.235	3.108	0.001	0.833	1.200
Attachment-avoidance	0.242	0.353	0.063	0.685	0.495	0.616	1.624
Attachment - ambivalent	0.582	0.231	-0.260	2.519	0.001	0.627	1.595
				-			

The above table shows the VIF index and tolerance. The value of the variance increase factor should be between 5 and 10, if it is more than this limit, there is a possibility of weak estimation of the regression coefficient due to multicollinearity. Considering that tolerance is a ratio, its value is between zero and one. A value close to one means that an independent variable explains a small part of its dispersion with other independent variables, and a value close to zero indicates that a variable is almost a linear combination of other independent variables. The results of the model test show that the effect of four of the five predictor variables on the marital satisfaction of the studied women is acceptable and the effect of these variables is also predictable; in such a way that for one unit increase in primary maladaptive schemas there is a 22% decrease, for one unit increase in social support there is a 43% increase and for one unit increase in "secure-attachment" there is a 24% increase in probability and for One unit increase in "attachment-ambivalent" has a 26% chance of reducing marital satisfaction in the studied women. The sum of these four variables explains 43% of the criterion variable and 57% of the

explanation of the criterion variable depends on other components. That is, marital satisfaction can be predicted based on the initial incompatible schemas, social support and attachment styles (secure and ambivalent) of couples in married women of Sanandaj city. There is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction of married women. Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used to measure this hypothesis. The following table shows the results obtained from the test of this hypothesis:

**Table 4:** The result of measuring the relationship between initial incompatible schemas and marital satisfaction of married women

Variables			Tendency to commit suicide	
			$\bar{x}$	s.e
			112.46	13.619
			R	P.Value
Initial schema	$\bar{x}$	223	-0.481	0.001
	s.e	14.425		

The results of Table 4, which examined the relationship between the two variables of primary incompatible schemas and marital satisfaction in married women, indicate that there is a significant, negative and very strong relationship between the predictor variable, i.e. primary incompatible schemas, and the criterion variable, namely marital satisfaction of the studied women. because the obtained r value of -0.481 was higher than 0.95 at the confidence level, and this means that with the increase of initial incompatible schemas in women, the level of marital satisfaction decreases in them, and the relationship between these two variables is inverse. . Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is confirmed, so this research hypothesis is confirmed. That is, we must accept that: there is a negative and inverse relationship between the initial incompatible schemas and the marital satisfaction of married women.

There is a relationship between social support and marital satisfaction of married women. Pearson's correlation test was used to test this hypothesis. The table below shows the results obtained from the test of this hypothesis.

**Table 5:** The result of measuring the relationship between social support and marital satisfaction of married women

Variables			Tendency to commit suicide	
			$\bar{x}$	s.e
			112.46	13.619
			R	P.Value
Initial schema	$\bar{x}$	47.89	0.510	0.001
	s.e	7.86		

The results of Table 5, which examines the relationship between the two variables of social support and marital satisfaction in married women, show that there is a significant, positive and very strong relationship between the predictor variable i.e. social support and the criterion variable i.e. marital satisfaction of the studied women, because the value The obtained r of 0.510 was higher than 0.95 at the confidence level and this means that with the increase of

social support in married women, the level of marital satisfaction increases in them and the relationship between these two variables is direct. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the opposite hypothesis is confirmed, so this research hypothesis is confirmed. That is, we must accept that: there is a positive and meaningful relationship between social support and marital satisfaction of married women, and the higher their level of social support, the higher their level of marital satisfaction.

There is a relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction of married women. Multiple linear regression test was used to test this hypothesis. The following table shows the results obtained from the test of this hypothesis:

**Table 6:** Regression line equation

Regression model	beta		T test		Variance heterogeneity		
	Non-standard		standard				
	B	S.e	beta	T	Sig	tolerance	VIF
width from origin (a)	149.00	8.037	0.320	18.64	0.001	0.626	<b>1.597</b>
	5			2			
safe style	1.324	0.228		5.815	0.001		
Ambivalent style	-1.510	0.214	-0.380	-	0.001	0.626	<b>1.525</b>
				7.051			
Avoidant style	-1.131	0.197	-0.280	-	0.001	0.800	<b>1.250</b>
				5.745			

The results of the model test show that the effect of all three attachment styles on the marital satisfaction of the studied women is acceptable and the effect of these variables is also predictable; In this way, for one unit increase in secure style, it increases by 32%, for one unit increase in ambivalent style, it decreases by 38%, and for one unit increase in avoidant style, by 28%, the probability of marital satisfaction decreases in women. There is a study. The sum of these three variables explains 34% of the criterion variable and 66% of the explanation of the criterion variable depends on other components. That is, there is a significant relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction of married women and in women with a secure attachment style, the level of marital satisfaction was higher, but in women with ambivalent and avoidant styles, the level of marital satisfaction was lower.

### Discussion and conclusion:

The result of testing the main hypothesis using multiple linear regression test showed that marital satisfaction can be predicted based on initial incompatible schemas, social support and attachment styles (secure and ambivalent) of couples in married women of Sanandaj city.

The results of previous researches are consistent with the above result and confirm it (11, 19, 20, 21, 27). In explaining this result, it can be said that marital satisfaction is one of the most important and effective factors on the health of couples and one of the most important indicators of life satisfaction. It follows from the definitions that marital satisfaction includes a set of factors such as successful conflict resolution, or success in activities related to happiness in the marriage process, and it is a process that occurs throughout the life of the couple; And its requirement is the adaptation of tastes, recognition of personality traits, creation of behavioral rules and formation of communication patterns. In other words, marital



satisfaction is the objective feelings of satisfaction, satisfaction and pleasure experienced by the wife or the husband or both. According to Hodson et al.'s opinion (34), the wife's or husband's perception of the amount, intensity and range of problems in the relationship reflects the level of intimacy and ultimately their satisfaction with married life. In the context of the relationship between primary maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction, it should be said that just as primary maladaptive schemas can act as a framework for information processing and affect people's emotional and emotional reactions to life situations and their interpersonal relationship patterns, spouses' relationships in married life are also one of It is the most important relationships that can be affected by the framework of the initial maladaptive schemas.

Yang's findings (27) show that schemas can indirectly affect marital relationships by influencing personality disorders and mood disorders. On the other hand, one of the variables that has been mentioned in the smooth social context is social support. Social support always has a moderating role on the pressures caused by psychological stress because it moderates the effects of stressful events and leads to positive emotions in people, and as the amount of social support increases, the level of health also increases and vice versa. Also, social support can have an effect on couples' intimacy and marital satisfaction. Social support often refers to the help of important people in a person's life in situations of crisis and need. These important people, whose help generally includes emotional and instrumental help, can be discussed in different dimensions. Six types of social support can be considered: consultation, emotional assistance, services, financial assistance, information and companionship. In fact, people who have a good social support system are more optimistic about their lives. Also, these people are more successful in overcoming depression and adapting to injuries caused by physical disability, maintaining self-esteem and overcoming loneliness. Also, based on research evidence, people who have a good support system get sick less and have a low level of physiological stress, thus they have a better life. On the other hand, attachment style (secure) has a predictive and significant role in marital satisfaction. The result of secure attachment process is creating a sense of safety in the person, while the result of insecure attachments is creating fear and panic in the person.

In this regard, Robert et al. (35) write that the psychological consequence of insecure attachment styles in stressful situations is anxiety and depression, while the psychological consequence of secure attachment style in such conditions is higher well-being and ultimately marital satisfaction. Considering the prediction of married women's marital satisfaction based on primary maladaptive schemas, attachment styles and social support, ways of reducing primary maladaptive schemas, improving secure attachment styles, and increasing social support of married women can be used to increase their marital satisfaction. The stated content and also the importance of the result of the above hypothesis based on the main hypothesis of the research which showed that the marital satisfaction of married women is predicted based on the initial incompatible schemas, attachment styles and social support, so it is suggested to increase marital satisfaction in this group of women by holding Educational workshops should be conducted in family counseling centers to improve maladaptive schemas to compatible schemas, strengthen secure attachment styles, and increase social support in them.

According to the stated content and also the importance of the result of the above hypothesis based on the main hypothesis of the research which showed that the marital satisfaction of

married women is predicted based on the initial incompatible schemas, attachment styles and social support, so it is suggested to increase marital satisfaction in this group of women. , by holding educational workshops to improve incompatible schemas to compatible schemas, strengthen secure attachment styles and increase their social support in family counseling centers

### **Limitations:**

The biggest limitation of this research was facing quarantine days caused by Corona and maintaining social distance and health protocols. To solve this problem, data collection was done by forming Telegram groups and sending questionnaires through a link to the respondents.

### **Ethical considerations:**

The current research has an ethical ID number 14362/D/1400 issued by the ethics committee of the Islamic Azad University, Hamadan branch.

### **Conflict of interest**


The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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