



Proposing Marital Satisfaction Structural Model Based on Marital Expectations, Optimism, and Relationship Self-Efficacy in Married Women's from a Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

The present study aimed to suggest marital satisfaction structural model based on the marital expectations, optimism, and relational self-efficacy among married women from a cultural perspective. The statistical population consisted all the married women aged 20 to 40 years, who had been married for at least one year during March 2024 to August 2024 in Shiraz city. The sample embraced 380 participants whom were selected via convenient sampling procedure. The research method was descriptive-correlational of structural model equations. The data were collected using the Relationship Standards Questionnaire of Vangelisti and Daly (1997), the Life Orientation Test of Scheier and Carver (1994), the Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale of Lopez et al. (2007), and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Data analysis was conducted through structural model equations analysis. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between marital expectations, optimism, and relational self-efficacy with marital satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis confirmed the significant impact of marital expectations ($\beta = 0.338$) and relational self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.129$) on marital satisfaction. However, optimism did not exert an effect. Furthermore, the subscales of marital expectations—such as future orientation ($\beta = 0.092$) and emotional accessibility ($\beta = 0.091$)—showed the greatest contribution to predicting marital satisfaction. The structural model goodness of fit indices supported the adequacy of the final model ($GOF = 0.36$). In conclusion, realistic marital expectations aligned with the socio-cultural context (particularly in Shiraz), along with relational self-efficacy, played a decisive role in improving marital satisfaction among married women by enhancing communication and conflict-resolution skills.



Extended abstract

Introduction: Marital satisfaction is one of the key indicators of family health, influenced by marital expectations, optimism, and relational self-efficacy. Research showed that realistic and fulfilled expectations increase satisfaction and reduce conflict, whereas unrealistic expectations lead to burnout and decreased effectiveness. Optimism plays a protective role by fostering positive interpretations of events, resilience, and enhanced couple interactions, while pessimism heightens emotional tension. Relational self-efficacy, through the ability to express needs, resolve conflicts, and provide emotional support, contributes to relationship stability, although some studies have reported only a weak association with satisfaction. The interplay of these factors within the cultural context of Shiraz—where family values and realistic expectations are emphasized—creates conditions that enhance women's marital satisfaction. The present study aimed to suggest a structural model of the marital expectations role, optimism, and relational self-efficacy in enhancing marital satisfaction among married women from a cultural perspective.

Method: The statistical population consisted all the married women aged 20 to 40 years, who had been married for at least one year during March 2024 to August 2024 in Shiraz city. The sample embraced 380 participants whom were selected via convenience sampling procedure. The research method was descriptive-correlational of structural model equations. The data were collected using the Relationship Standards Questionnaire of Vangelisti and Daly (1997), the Life Orientation Test of Scheier and Carver (1994), the Relationship Self-Efficacy Scale of Lopez et al. (2007), and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Data analysis was conducted through structural model equations analysis. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed.

Result: Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between marital expectations, optimism, and relational self-efficacy with marital satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis confirmed the significant impact of marital expectations ($\beta = 0.338$) and relational self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.129$) on marital satisfaction. However, optimism did not exert any effect. Furthermore, the subscales of marital expectations—such as future orientation ($\beta = 0.092$) and emotional accessibility ($\beta = 0.091$)—showed the greatest contribution to predicting marital satisfaction. The structural model goodness of fit indices supported the adequacy of the final model ($GOF = 0.36$). In conclusion, realistic marital expectations aligned with the socio-cultural context (particularly in Shiraz), along with relational self-efficacy, played a decisive role in improving marital satisfaction among married women by enhancing communication and conflict-resolution skills.

Conclusions: The findings indicated that the studied three variables, in interaction with one another, explained a portion of the variance in marital satisfaction, thereby supporting the study's overall hypothesis. Realistic marital expectations—particularly in areas such as emotional support and partnership—are positively correlated with satisfaction, as they foster emotional alignment and serve as motivational goals. Although optimism does not directly impact marital satisfaction, it plays a mediating role by enhancing relational self-efficacy and reducing cognitive distortions. Relational self-efficacy, in return, directly contributes to greater marital satisfaction by improving communication skills and conflict



management. These results align with Social Capital Theory and Decisional Affect Theory (DAT), underscoring the importance of counseling interventions aimed at setting realistic expectations and teaching self-efficacy skills. Specifically, the findings highlight that clear and realistic marital expectations play a key role in fostering emotional harmony, intimacy, and overall satisfaction. When such expectations are met, they strengthen emotional bonds; when unmet, they can become sources of tension and conflict. On the other hand, while optimism does not have a direct effect on marital satisfaction, it influences relationship quality indirectly by increasing relational self-efficacy. Optimistic individuals, due to their positive outlook and greater resilience, tend to cope better with crises. Relational self-efficacy, as a crucial psychological mechanism, enhances problem-solving, emotional regulation, mutual understanding, and constructive interaction. Women who believe in their ability to manage relationship dynamics tend to experience greater security, calm, and satisfaction. This study empirically supported an integrated model showing that marital expectations, optimism, and relational self-efficacy together impact marital satisfaction. Self-efficacy plays a key role, acting both as a direct predictor and as a mediator of optimism's effect. Practically, counseling and educational programs should focus on clarifying marital expectations and building relational skills like assertiveness and emotional regulation to enhance marital outcomes.

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