

An Investigation of the Role of Religious Beliefs and Spiritual Intelligence in Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual Intelligence is the intelligence with which we address and solve issues of meaning and value; the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, and more meaningful context. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of religious beliefs and spiritual intelligence on the marital satisfaction. The library method (analytical-documentary), as well as books, electronic resources and databases were used for data collection. In this paper, the definition of intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and spirituality were first presented; then, positive effects of intelligence spiritual on individual and social life were discussed. Marital satisfaction is the most important component of marriage and studies suggest that religious beliefs and spiritual intelligence have a very important impact on the quality and thereby, improvement of marital satisfaction. In fact, people with higher spiritual intelligence who use religious and spiritual resources to solve the problems of their daily lives and give meaning and value to their daily affairs, are better able to cope with problems in their lives and have more satisfaction with their lives.

KEYWORDS: intelligence, spiritual intelligence, religious beliefs, marital satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a covenant which has existed at all times and places among people and communities; it was greatly emphasized by religions and assumed as a desirable human union since it gives meaning to individuals' life. Apart from the sexual orientations which are among the preliminary issues, various factors such as economic security, protection, emotional security, tranquility and escape from loneliness are some of the factors that lead to marriage (Janetius, 2004).

In the context of sexual relationship, it can be said that although happy marriage is only partly related to sexual relationship, this relationship might be among the main causes of happiness or lack of happiness in marriage; because if it is not satisfactory, both partners will experience deprivation and frustration, and it will result in the family disintegration (Shamloo, 2001).

What is important in a marriage is marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is a situation in which the spouses feel happy and satisfied with marriage and each other in most cases. In fact, this variable is perceived to have a range of strong satisfaction to strong dissatisfaction. According to the researches in the area of marriage and marital relations, various variables are related to the marital satisfaction over time. These variables can predict the chances of maintaining marital satisfaction over time or marital distress and divorce; some of these variables are related to spiritual intelligence (Shahi et al., 2011).

The definition of intelligence

Although intelligence is generally assumed as "the ability to solve problems and adapt to the environment", there's not a clear definition of intelligence which is agreed by all psychologists affiliated to different approaches. Nevertheless, there are components of intelligence which are agreed by most researchers:

1. **The ability to engage in abstract reasoning:** this means that intelligent people deal more with abstractions (ideas, symbols, relationships, concepts, principles) than with concrete things (mechanical tools, sensory activities).
2. **The ability to solve problems:** the ability to deal with new situations rather than just having pre-learned responses to familiar situations.

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3. **The ability to acquire knowledge:** especially the ability to learn abstractions such as abstractions in words and other symbols as well as the ability to use them. (Seif, 2012).

Spiritual Intelligence

Intelligence is a concept that man has long been interested in studying and examining all its aspects, manifestations, and types. In the meantime, one of the aspects of intelligence, namely, spiritual intelligence is one of the areas on which no coherent and systematic research has been conducted for the purpose of understanding and explaining its features and components, as much as other types of intelligence were studied. This alone creates many problems for researchers in the precise discernment of its components and features.

Spiritual intelligence goes beyond one's physical and cognitive relationship with his environment and enters the domain of his intuitive and transcendent vision of life. This answers questions such as, "who I am", "Why am I here", and "what is important" in individual's life so that he can finally help himself and others through discovering the hidden sources of love and joy that lies in the turbulent and stressful everyday life (Hatami, 2012).

Features prerequisite for spiritual intelligence are likely to be alongside other abilities and activities which include: prayer, meditation, dreams and dream analysis, religious and spiritual beliefs and values, knowledge and skills in understanding and interpreting the sacred concepts and the ability of having transcendent states. For example, some of the old truths such as not torturing others which follow the moral virtues may be considered as ways to strengthen the spiritual intelligence (Ghobari Banab et al., 2007). Contrary to the general intelligence which is also a property of computers, and unlike emotional intelligence that exists even higher in animals, spiritual intelligence exclusively belongs to humans (Khodabakhshi et al., 2014).

Human has several types of intelligences known as multiple intelligences which start with physical intelligence that contains the physical awareness and how to use it skillfully. Next is the logical intelligence, also known as rational intelligence, which is now considered in educational systems more than any other intelligence. After the logical or rational intelligence, there is the emotional intelligence. The last one is the spiritual intelligence which includes inner wisdom and guidance, intellectual balance, inner and outer peace and performance with insight, gentleness and kindness (Raghibi & Gharehchahi, 2013).

Spirituality and Religion

Spirituality, as one of the dimensions of humanity, includes knowledge and self-awareness. Spirituality is a public issue, and like excitement, it has different degrees and manifestations; it can be conscious or unconscious, developed or undeveloped, healthy or ill, simple or complex, and useful or dangerous. In fact, spirituality is the relationship with the transcendent, belief in the unseen, belief in human growth and development through traversing the maze of life, and regulating the personal life based on the relationship with the transcendent and understanding the permanent presence of transcendent in the meaningful, organized and divinely directed existence. This aspect of human existence is innate which changes and improves with respect to human growth and as a result of religious practices (Gobari Banab et al., 2007).

In recent years, spirituality has been considered as an important aspect of humanistic action that has a stable relationship with health and healing. Although there are similarities between spirituality and religious, it has a broader and more comprehensive concept. If man uses the divine inspirations, listens to prophets' invitation, and opens his heart to the divine assistance, without doubt, he will have a life full of happiness ahead (Bakhshayesh, 2011).

Undoubtedly, religion prepares individuals against anxiety, uncertainties and disappointments. Each religious person's value depends on his level of awareness and knowledge growth; and until religion is not principally understood, it cannot play a decisive role in individual's growing life. It's the reason and intuition which determines the value and conditions of religious excitement and sentiments, gives meaning to it, improves and deepens it. As a result, religious as a value system, practically directs human actions, makes them purposeful, and leads them to mental and humanitarian promotion and evolution. According to Allport, religion as a value system would unify human life. In his view, the highest value system which gives unity to human life is a religious value system. This value system points to every aspect of life, encompasses everything, and ultimately, provides the context for a healthy life and character (the Navabakhsh and PoorYousefi, 2006).

The Place of Love in the Family

Love is the most important factor in choosing a partner, because regardless of its romantic and sexual aspects, love includes an individual's ability to accept a commitment to others. Sometimes this commitment requires dedication and sacrifice. This kind of love that makes marriage successful, can occur when a person is deeply

capable of loving, respecting, caring and accepting responsibility (Abdolmaleki, 2008). Family is the starting point which is about the development of human resources and has positive effects on all stages of life (Rezaei, 2005).

Function of Religion and Religious Beliefs as Natural Needs

Religion is the psychological power that can affect the human consequences (Bakhshayesh, 2011). Our society has a rich and efficient cultural and scientific history of dealing with family issues, and most important religious texts, the Koran and the words of the Prophet (PBUH) and infallible (AS) are filled with recommendations on the most basic to the most minor family issues relevant to the present day. No palace in Islam more beloved to Allah has ever been built than the palace of marriage (Wasail al-Shia, vol 14, p3.). Of course, peace and contentment in marriage are not possible by themselves and they may require more effort and struggle (Tahrim/ 6, Ankabut / 69). In this path, the divine prophets, Prophet Muhammad and his successors have been the best guide. They had respect for the privacy of their wives. (Osule Kafi, vol. 6, p. 476) and endeared their moral character and reputation and even asked for their help in spiritual issues helping (Osule kafi, vol. 6, p. 487). They accompanied them with their will and desire in the religious and family issues (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 15, p. 267) and assumed helping their wives as a sign of loyalty (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 101, p 106). Believing in the orders of Islam and religious messages contributes greatly to marital satisfaction. Family could cause rise or decline of the individual. In addition, family members can have great roles in prosperity or adversity of each other (Bakhshayandeh, 2012).

From the psychological perspective of Islam, considering that scientific movements start from Koran scriptures and studies and analysis are inspired by the concepts of heaven and realities, one of the important purposes of marriage is the marital satisfaction or as interpreted by Quran, finding peace with each other. On the other hand, life is not like a self-propelled plant, which is independent of the care and maintenance. Management of life and household requires enough knowledge, heart-consciousness, insight, moral balance, observance of moderation, social reasoning, emotion, science, policy, and finally serious effort and care. Disregarding the above issues, especially ignorance and lack of insight and neglecting what it is going within the family are the main causes of family decline and deviation from its main direction, i.e. achieving peace (Maghsoudzadeh & Younesi, 2013).

Marital satisfaction

There are different definitions of marital satisfaction. Some assume that marital satisfaction is derived from the feelings associated with pleasure and satisfaction experienced by the couple and it is said that ignoring the interests and ideological standpoint of the partner causes disillusionment and frustration in marital relationship. However, it can be accepted that marital satisfaction is the result of contentment and compatibility in spouses in various aspects of life and it helps strengthening the family foundation and parents' health. Several factors are effective on marital satisfaction, such as mutual respect, similar beliefs, age at marriage, length of marriage, relatives and acquaintances, religious beliefs, number and health status of children, and religious and spiritual intelligence (Janaabadi, 2010).

World Health Organization has introduced the family as a basic social factor in increasing health and well-being (Campbell, 2003). Various researches also suggest that successful marriage makes people live a happier and healthier life (Dannelly, 1993). Marital satisfaction is one of the factors contributing to the stability and perpetuity of families as well as mental health of couples and children. A marriage leads to life satisfaction if it has peace, cohesion and emotional security. The better and more perfect are the dimensions of marriage, the greater is marital satisfaction. Sense of coherence and internal unity among family members, peace, stability and tolerance in the face of difficulties, emotional security within the family, and importance of family problems over personal problems ... are among the important aspects of life (Hatami and al., 20098). Spouses create satisfaction in their hearts through more dependence on each other as well as internal coherence. Sense of coherence in the family can be considered as the sign of high level in families. When family members are able to meet the individual and collective needs of each other, the result would be family cohesion (Pourhossein, 2006).

Good communication enables partners to share their needs and interests with each other and be capable of solving inevitable issues and problems in the family. Lack of necessary communication skills makes the family and couple deprived of such a performance and turns their intimate relationships into a parallel relationship without intimacy (Hamid and Dehghan, 2012).

Experts believe that family is one of the first global public institutional systems which is an absolute necessity for meeting the essential and emotional needs of people as well as the survival of society. It is also the most natural and spontaneous of all social institutions (Attari et al., 2006). Many researches have pointed out the impact of sexual satisfaction on marital satisfaction (Brezunyak & whisman, 2004; Byers, 2005; Slosarz, 2000; Nichols, 2005). Some of these studies have shown that sex issues are among the priorities in a marriage in terms of importance. Nichols (2005) states obligations to reach the agreement level on marital relationships that satisfactory sexual relationship for both partners is one of them.

Great theorists like Maslow, Rogers, Ranz, Marie, Erich Fromm, and Horney have considered the need for respect and love as the main psychological human needs (Seif, 2012). Family therapists often suggest that poor communication within the family causes serious family problems, failure to solve problems, lack of love and intimacy and separation of the couple. Some studies have shown that sex issues are among the priorities in a marriage in terms of importance. Terman's studies have shown that although sexual factors are among the most important factors, they are not stronger than other factors. The problem in sexual relationships can be a symptom of other problems in the marriage, i.e. the problem arises from somewhere else (Bakhshayesh & Mortazavi, 2009).

In terms of interpersonal relationships, religious practices create conditions that one listens to God in time of anger and a support is provided for the couple to avoid conflict. Thereupon, relationship with God plays a compensational and interactive role in marital relationships. The use of religious beliefs is an effective way to deal with disasters and painful experience that influence on human relationships in time of problems and discomfort (Janaabadi, 2010). So, the spiritual intelligence influences the prediction of marital satisfaction through relying on the inner core which is a reflection of individual's attitude and view of the world and the environment. Individuals who have higher spiritual intelligence are more flexible and have a high degree of self-awareness. They have a great ability to deal with problems and solve everyday life issues; they also benefit from a more satisfying life. Given the positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and marital satisfaction, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence training to couples will lead to the increase in their marital satisfaction (Bakhshayesh, 2014).

Conclusion

Any concept, like other conceptual aspects of intelligence is influenced by environmental and cultural factors. Thus, the environment which reinforces religious culture and attitudes can provide the context for mental well-being and life satisfaction including marital satisfaction. According to the results of this study which showed that spiritual intelligence and religious beliefs have an important role in marital satisfaction, authorities can use the findings in the planning and implementation of training programs on "spiritual intelligence and strengthening religious attitudes in couples".

In fact, people who have higher spiritual intelligence and use spiritual resources to solve problems in their daily lives, are better able to cope with problems in their lives and have more satisfaction with their lives. In Islam, marriage is a spiritual issue; it is one of the foundations of creation; and to God, it is the most beloved and dearest institution. It has a significant impact on human growth and excellence as well as perfection of religion. To God, family is even the key to the happiness of the Hereafter and He said: "Protect yourselves and your families from the plight and the punishment of the Hereafter". The results of this study showed that religious beliefs and spiritual intelligence predict marital satisfaction positively, i.e. from the interpersonal perspective, the religious beliefs and practices enable the individual to control his anger in terms of physiological, cognitive, emotional aspects and help him to accept responsibility for his actions in conflicts.

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