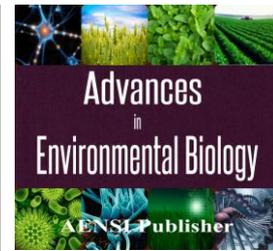




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The Interaction Between Locus of Control and Marital Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

The current study is to examine the interaction between locus of control and marital satisfaction. The method of this research is descriptive- correlation. Statistical population includes the married students of Education University of Babol, out of which a sample of 100 couples was selected by multi-step cluster sampling method. Research tools include locus of control and marital satisfaction. For data analysis, correlation and independent hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to determine the interaction between the predictor variables and criterion variable. Results showed that, there is a significant interaction between internal locus of control and marital satisfaction. Moreover, results of this research indicated that, subjects who have internal locus of control report higher marital satisfaction. Locus of control predicted the marital satisfaction.

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INTRODUCTION

The reason why people get married may be better understood in the concept of the need to belong. According to Bird & Melville, [1] marriage means connecting and committing a loved and trusted one for several reasons one of which is sexual intimacy. Marriage may be best understood in terms of need to belong. Baumeister & Leary [2] suggests that need to belong is a very powerful motive which leads people to have social attachments and to form and maintain enduring interpersonal relationships. Having a long-term intimate relationship generally produces positive emotions. However, losing attachments generally results in pain and disappointment even if there is no plausible reason to maintain them; or even if maintaining them is too costly. On the other hand, the need of belongingness can be met only in pleasant or satisfactory relationships.

Happy marriages make valuable contributions to person's life. Marital happiness is found to be associated with physical and psychological health [3]. In addition, the benefits associated with marriage are greater for women than it was for men [3]. These positive effects of marital happiness may be better understood with the following statement "A supportive romantic or marital partner acts as a kind of buffer or barrier between us and the problems of life" [1].

Although the positive associations related to happy marriages have been indicated, there is still a conceptual confusion in the term "marital satisfaction". Several related terms, such as marital happiness, marital adjustment, marital stability and marital quality are commonly used in the literature instead of the term marital satisfaction [4]. In this study, the definition of Rho [5] is preferred to use: "Marital satisfaction is a subjective evaluation by an individual of the degree of happiness, pleasure, or fulfillment experienced within the marital relationship between spouse and self" (p.5).

Some marriages are really "marital" however; some others are "marital" (Warren, 2000). It is criticized that, research has not been very successful in the prediction of which married couples separate or divorce and which stay together [6]. Although it is found that marital satisfaction is relatively stable over time and initial levels of marital satisfaction predicted the partners' later satisfaction [1], questions such as "What differentiates a happy marriage from an unhappy one?" and "What qualities that maritally satisfied couples have but others do not?" are still remains unanswered.

In conclusion, as Bird & Melville [1] suggested, if the elements of successful, satisfied and happy marriages are realized, it can be possible to alter the unhappy and unsatisfactory ones.

Literature indicates several variables related to marital satisfaction. The association between attachment style and relationship satisfaction is examined by some researchers. Kirkpatrick & Davis [8] investigated the relationship between relationship characteristics and attachment styles. Results revealed that attachment security is associated with greater relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy and trust. Similarly, Ertan [9] found that, couples with two securely attached spouse exhibit highest dyadic adjustment.

Beyond the attachment style, some demographic variables such as gender and education are investigated in terms of marital satisfaction. Dökmen & Tokgöz [10] found that there is a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and level of education. That is, subjects with university degree reported higher marital satisfaction when they compared to their counterparts with high-school degree. In relevance to the gender, some studies indicated that husbands reported greater marital satisfaction than did wives [11], however some others indicated that level of the marital satisfaction of husbands and wives were similar [10], and correlated with each other's [12]. In addition to gender, gender related factors such as coping style and menopause may affect the marital satisfaction.

Moreover, parents' marital behaviors and their perceived marital satisfaction by their offspring might affect the marital quality of the offspring's when they become married adults. Results of the longitudinal study of Amato & Booth [13] on parents and their married offspring indicated that, marital quality is transmitted from parents to the offspring. Spouses who experience marital discord between their parents exhibit more problems. From the view of observational learning perspective, authors claim that, children observe and learn their parents' negative behaviors; however, they don't have a repertoire of positive interpersonal behaviors which facilitate marital satisfaction. Marital relationships are commonly disrupted by ways of thinking, [14]. In this way the relationship between cognitive variables and marital satisfaction also take a large place in marital research especially in recent decades. There are many studies investigating the marital attributions, expectancies and assumptions. It is reported that, negative affectivity and maladaptive attributions are positively related to marital problems [15].

All these findings indicated that, there is a powerful association between cognitive variables and relationship satisfaction. In addition to the cognitive variables, the role of self-esteem and perceived control as personality variables are also investigated in terms of their effects on marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is reported as related to self-esteem [1] and perceived control over conflicts [16].

Beyond all these individual factors related to marital satisfaction, some researchers claim that, all marriages are affected by the culture in which they are experienced. As a result, cultural expressions which are reflected in a specific marriage need special attention. Additionally, it is more useful to examine those marriages by the instruments which are designed for that specific culture [17].

The role of commitment on marital satisfaction is also emphasized by many authors. Bird & Melville [1] describes commitment as "partners' avowed willingness to stay together long term, because they view what they have as viable and worthwhile" (p.77) and states that "Committed partners resist attempts by others to devalue or otherwise break up their relationship. They act as each other's supporters and consistently remind themselves...of their good fortune in being together" (p.77). Lantz & Snyder [18] suggests that, it is unlikely that all unhappy marriages result in separation or divorce. There are many couples experiencing some kind of accommodation which might be a result of their commitment to their marriage.

The role of communication and problem solving in marriages is emphasized by many researchers. In the study of Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli [16], an intervention program that is designed to prevent marital stress and divorce tested on couples planning marriage. Intervention program included communication skills training, problem-solving training, clarification of marital expectations about themselves, their partners and their marriage, and sensual /sexual education in which couples are acknowledged on sexual functioning and strategies preventing sexual problems. Post assessment results showed that, the intervention program was effective in maintaining relationship satisfaction at the ½ year and 3 year follow-ups. However, control couples showed predictable declines. In another similar study, Hahlweg, Markman, Thurmaier, Engl, & Eckert [19] investigated the effects of a program including effective communication and problem solving skills. 3-year follow-up indicated the effectiveness of this program on couples' dissolution rates, relationship satisfaction and communication behavior. Findings of a recent study Hünler, [20] also indicates that, problem solving abilities of the couples predict their level of marital satisfaction. Furthermore, it is reported that communication patterns and marital adjustment of a couple are related, and couples with lower marital adjustment exhibit more destructive communication patterns [21]. Results from these studies may be indicators of the importance of relationship variables such as problem solving and communication on marital satisfaction.

The importance of problem solving and communication may be better understood in terms of marital conflicts. Lantz & Snyder [18] suggests that, marriage gathers different person's different lifetime habits, values, and attitudes; and interaction and integration of these different qualities inevitably produce difficulty or conflicts. However, researchers also claim that, marital conflict is not always harmful or destructive. If the conflict does not involve attacks to the other partner's self-worth, it serves some useful purposes such as helping the partners to understand the other more realistically and help them to appreciate their commitment to the

marriage [18]. From this perspective, it can be said that, persons might need to have effective communication skills and problem-solving skills to solve the discrepancy between their qualities and their spouse's qualities and to make the marital conflicts useful.

Similar to the life, the marital life of the couples has different stages. Some researchers claim that different life periods and different stages of family life cycle affect the marital satisfaction [1]. There are lots of studies indicating the curve-linear or U-shaped tendency in marital satisfaction over the life cycle, which means that marital satisfaction is higher during the initial and later years and lower in the middle years [4]. As a specific life period, transition to parenthood is examined by some researchers. Results of a longitudinal study of Hackel & Ruble [22] indicated that, transition to first parenthood resulted in a decline in positive feelings about the marital relationship. Couples reported less satisfaction, less sexual intimacy and greater conflict in this period. Wives also reported a decline in feelings of emotional intimacy. It is also seen that, how much strong non-traditional gender role and high-expectations a woman hold, she is likely to be more dissatisfied.

The role of social support in marital satisfaction is also investigated in marital researches. A study on older married couples indicated that, perceptions of social support in marriage associated with both partners marital satisfaction, especially the wives' marital satisfaction and well-being than they are for husbands [23]. Similarly, Hünler (20) reported the relationship between marital satisfaction and social support. Married women reported that, when they are more distressed in relation to their husband, they experience increased conflict and less perceived social support in their marriage. On the other hand, perceived social support of these women was related to their marital satisfaction. Furthermore, it is reported that level of social support that spouses serve each other predicts marital adjustment of the couples when their offspring has a severe illness [24].

In addition to the adjustment and marriage, people have always interested in the causality. History reflects stories and myths on events which are controlled by gods, fate, and people's own behaviors [25]. Similarly, psychology is also interested in the causality. There is a growing interest in people's causal explanations and expectations on future events in recent decades [16]. Large amount of books and articles on theory, research, and applications of control have been published and many constructs related to control have been developed and explored [26]. Specifically, as it is defined as a "generalized expectancy of internal or external control of reinforcement" [27] in social learning theory, locus of control construct has become a very popular and widely examined personality concept in psychology [28].

The growth and development of locus of control has been increased since some researchers were studying and investigating in respect of understanding the reasons of behavior in the laboratory. Among these, William Glasser [29] was introduced in to control theory system through the writings of William powers during the late 70s. By invention of a new theory in psychology called as selection theory (internal control), Glasser [29] helped significantly to understand the behaviors of human- being under various conditions and situations. The selection theory is based on that we are the same persons whose behaviors are under our control and authority. On the other hand, based on selection theory, the only on the other hand, based on selection theory, the only person who can have control on us, are us ourselves.

Psychiatrists of selection theory believe that the fundamental problem of most couples is the same. In marital relationships, the resort on external control psychology and seek to change their couples. In each relationship, of any kind and form, everyone is merely able to change himself and nobody else [30] the fundamental principle of selection theory which its understanding is highly important for the couples is that the only person you can control, are yourself. And the only person who can change, are you. If you have unsuccessful and dissatisfied marital relationships, you should examine and see that what you can do to improve your relationship and not try to change couple. Almost in all cases when you give up the external control and use internal control and its attractive communicative methods instead of it (listening, support and fidelity, encouragement and assurance, respect, trust, acceptance and friendship and permanent dialogue on the differences) in your marital relationship, your couple will change [29]. Also, In view of Glasser [30], internal control is the only way to maintain a satisfactory and permanent marital life.

Many researches are performed about internal and external control psychology which is very similar to the concept of Rotter's locus of control and Glasser's selection theory. According to these researches, the presence and increasing internal locus of control cases to increase in satisfaction and compatibility. Parvin [31] reports that many researches show that the presence of internal locus of control has a high and positive correlation with marital satisfaction and compatibility. Also the study of locus of control and marital satisfaction show that couples who have locus of control, will have high marital satisfaction in life [32]. Camp & Ganong [33] showed in a research, when internal locus of control increases both in male and female, marital satisfaction and compatibility will be increased. In view of comparison between two genders, when internal locus of control increases in males, in comparison to when internal locus of control is high in females, marital satisfaction and compatibility will further be increased. But when this is high in females, compatibility and satisfaction with marital life will not change.

The results showed that there is a meaningful relationship between locus of control and satisfaction with marital life during past, present and future times. The results of Agostini & Spanhol's research [34] show that

over time, locus of control of couples becomes more internal. Also, persons with internal locus of control had more satisfaction with their marital life compared to the persons with external locus of control. Madden ET. Al [16] claims that blaming the couple because of marital problems and difficulties is related to low perceived control which may result in weak dominance and indirectly marital dissatisfaction. Sack, Harnen, kohn [11] reported that couples, who seek to control each other, will use more blaming methods against each other and their satisfaction with marital life is also low. Alternatively, a marriage in which each of the couples believes that he/ she should control his/ her behavior, the level of blaming and reproaching the couple is low and satisfaction with marital life is higher.

According to Ross [32] although marriage has a powerful effect on the sense of control, the relationship between marriage and sense of control is widely ignored. However, marriage may increase the sense of control by providing greater social and economic resources as well as social support and decrease it by limiting autonomy, freedom and independence.

After their study on married women, Madden & Janoff-Bulman [16] reported that the most satisfied wives were those who don't blame their husbands and who feel they have control over the negative marital events. However, wives who are blaming their husbands regard the marital problems as relatively irresolvable and the marriage as unsatisfying. Moreover, it is claimed that, not assuming responsibility for one's own problems and discomforts, and blaming the other spouse for the tensions and unhappiness in marriage generally result in marital conflict and prevents a meaningful marital relationship [14]. Berg- Cross [14] claims that instead of seeing oneself as a victim of the environment or others, one must see him/herself as the one who is capable of making the situations better.

It is also reported that, the most satisfactory and less conflict marriages occur among spouses who feel they have control over marital events [35]. Moreover, it is concluded that, internal locus of control is generally found to facilitate better interpersonal relationships [36]. On the contrary, external locus of control was found to be related to higher frequency of negative tactics to resolve conflict, being less committed to the relationship, lower levels of marital satisfaction and higher levels of verbal aggression, physical violence, and angry response style [36]. Furthermore, it is concluded that, for spouses with greater sense of control, it is less likely to expect their marriage would end in separation [37].

Based on the literature, it can be said that, the causal attributions or control senses of the individuals may affect the sexual or marital satisfaction. If one's sense of control is high, in other words, if s/he has an internal locus of control, it can be expected that s/he can get the responsibility of his/her life and try to change the conditions to make him/herself more satisfied with his/her marital and sexual relationship.

Author's state that, it is unclear that how does the locus of control of the couple affects their Sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Also how a couple's sexual satisfaction contributes to their overall marital satisfaction. They also claim that, everyone has their own feelings and judgments' on their marital and sexual life which needs special inquiry to be understood. Although marital and sexual satisfaction needs special inquiry, there is no complete knowledge on these subjects since little research has been done on them. In the same way, there are no large amounts of studies on marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction, as well as their association, in Iran. In the light of these above findings and suggestions, it is clear that there is a need to conduct studies on marital and sexual satisfaction in Iran.

In the light of the relevant literature above, it can be said that studying these variables, interaction between these variables, as well as factors related to these variables can make valuable contributions to the literature. This study is an attempt to expand the existing knowledge on these variables.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

The method of study is descriptive-co relational. Statistical populations of this research include 100 couples who at least one of them was student-teacher. They were selected among the married students of university of Academicians in Mazandaran province by multi-step clustered randomized sampling method. In this way, 100 married students were selected who besides their couples, they include 100 males and 100 females. Although essentially approximately 350 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher among which 244 cases were returned, which 200 cases were appropriate for analysis; consequently, the used sample in this study includes 100 wives and husbands whose 100 people are student.

2.1. Instruments:

Two instruments were used in the present study. The level of perceived marital satisfaction was assessed through the marital Satisfaction Scale (Enrich) and Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E).

2.1.1. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale):

I-E Scale is a self-report instrument which was developed by Rotter [25] to evaluate the generalized control expectancies of the persons on an internality-externality continuum. The scale is consisted of 29 forced-choice

items 6 of which are filler items that are used to cover the purpose of the scale. Other 23 items are scored as 0 or 1 point. Items indicating an external control orientation are scored as 1 point and higher scores indicates higher levels of external locus of control .Possible scores on the scale range from 0 to 23 [38].

In terms of reliability, internal consistency of the original scale was reported as .77; split-half reliability was reported as ranging from .65 to .79, and test-retest reliability was reported as ranging from .49 to .83 [38]. Correlation of the scale with other scales measuring locus of control ranged between .25 and .55 [38]. In addition, construct validity of the scale was proved by factor analyses [38] and by the difference between the scores of internals and externals on different variables and tasks [38].

In Iran, Movaffagh [39] used the simultaneous criterion reliability to examine the reliability of Rotter's internal-external locus of control scale. And Nowiki-Strikland's internal-external locus of control scale was used as the criterion of this study which the obtained reliability by the above-mentioned method was equal to 0.69.

2.1.2. Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale:

This test is the translation of the original text of Enrich's questionnaire which was designed and compiled by Olson et al., [40]. In belief of Olson & Olson [40], this scale is sensitive to the changes which occur during the period of human-being's life and to the changes of family. Each of the subjects of this test is related to one of the important aspects of marital life. The evaluation of these aspects inside the marital relationship can describe the potential problems of couples or it can determine the powerful aspects of them. The original version of the test has 115 questions which include the dimensions and subjects of personality, communication, solving the conflict, financial problems, leisure times, sexual relationship, rearing and training the children, relationship with the family and friends, the roles of being couple and religious orientation.

Regarding to long being of the questions of marital satisfaction scale, multiple forms are drawn from it. Olson first introduced its 115-question form and then, its 47-question form was built [40], and finally, its 25-question form was created. Olson et al., [40] reported the validity of recent form using of alpha coefficient method as 0.92. in a research work, Olson [40] examined the value of validity and clinical application of Enrich draft. The studies showed that the ability to distinguish between happy couples and unhappy couples through this scale is 0.85-0.95.

In Iran, soleimanian & Navvabinejad [41] reported on internal correlation of marital satisfaction scale for 115-question form as 0.93 and for 47-question form as 0.95. In working on the validity of Enrich scale, Mahdavian [42], using of Pearson's correlation coefficient and through re-test method by an interval of one week, obtained it as 0.937 for males and 0.944 for females and equal to 0.94 for males and females.

2.2. Results and finding:

Statistical analysis of data by testing three hypotheses of research at confidence level of 0.95 led not was led the following results.

Table 1: Results of correlation coefficient between locus of control and marital satisfaction.

Variable	Marital	Satisfaction	Locus of Control
Marital Satisfaction	1.00		6.98**
Locus of Control	.21**		1.00

The first correlation matrix which includes marital satisfaction and locus of control showed that there is a positive and meaningful relationship between them. It means that marital satisfaction significantly correlates with locus of control ($r = 0.21$ and $p < 0.01$). Also, the couples reported more marital satisfaction when they reported more internal locus of control. It means that when the couples have more internal locus of control, they will enjoy higher marital satisfaction. In addition, the couples with external control orientation, reported lower levels of marital satisfaction.

Table 2: Results of t-test for comparison of couples with internal and external locus of control and marital satisfaction.

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	T	Freedom degree	Level of Significance
external locus of control	54	27.0	6.45	3.56	198	0.02
Internal locus of control	146	73.0	9.8			

The obtained results show that the observed T value (3.56) with freedom degree of 198 at significance level of 0.02 is smaller than $p = 0.05$. It can be concluded that there is a meaningful difference between the couples in terms of level of marital satisfaction. It means that there is a meaningful difference between the couples with internal and external locus of control in terms of the level of marital satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that couples with internal locus of it can be concluded that couples with internal locus of control experience high satisfaction in marital life.

Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results: Predicting Marital Satisfaction from Locus of Control.

Variable	R ²	R ² change	F change
Locus of Control	0.071	0.028	6.98**
Marital Satisfaction	.41	.38	124.8***

Order to see whether locus of control predicts marital satisfaction. This resulted in a significant change in R² with R² change= .38, F Change (1,196) = 124.8, p< .001. Marital satisfaction added 37% of the unique variance, suggesting that level of sexual satisfaction was accounted for, mostly, by the subject's level of marital satisfaction. Therefore, locus of control is a very powerful predictor of marital satisfaction.

3. Discussion and conclusion:

The primary goal of the present study is to gain an understanding of marital satisfaction; that is, marital satisfaction is the focus of the present study. Additionally, this study examines the interaction among locus of control and marital satisfaction. Research results showed that, there is a high and positive correlation between internal locus of control and their marital satisfaction. It means the couples with internal locus of control have more (higher) marital satisfaction compared to the couples with external locus of control. Locus of control predicted the marital satisfaction.

The results of this research has coordination (harmony) with Glasser's selection theory [29] which claims that decreasing destructive communicational methods of external control using affection- communicational methods of internal control psychology causes to decrease marital dissatisfaction. Also, the results of this research has coordination (harmony) with Guttman's view [6] who believes that the couples have maladjusted marital relationship when they have special negative transactions (criticizing, insult, aggressive and defensive behavior, rage). Also, in maladjustment aspect (dimension), the results of this research has coordination (harmony) with research results by parvin [31], camp & Ganong [33], Ross [32], Agostini & spanhol [34]. According to these researches, when internal locus of control increases, it will cause to increase marital satisfaction and adjustment.

Parvin [31] reports that many researches show that having internal locus of control has a positive and high correlation with marital satisfaction and adjustment. Also, the study of Honler [20] shows that the couples, who have internal locus of control, have high marital satisfaction in the life. In a research, camp & Ganong [33] showed that when internal locus of control increases both in man and in the woman, marital satisfaction and adjustment will increase. Also, the results of researches by Agostini & Spanhole [34] showed that the couples with internal locus of control have more satisfaction with marital life compared to the couples with external locus of control. The studies of Glasser [30] show that internal control psychology is the just way to maintain a permanent and satisfactory marital life and external control psychology is the main source of misfortune and sadness and grief of marital life. According to Ross [32], the marriage has a powerful effect on the feeling of control. The marriage may decrease the feeling of control which this is performed by decrease in autonomy, freedom and independence.

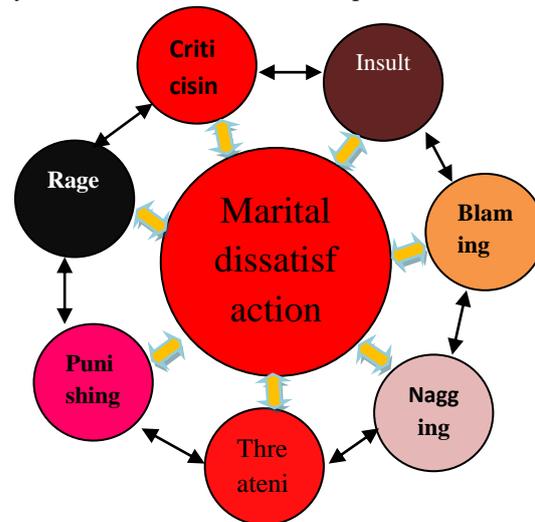
To describe the findings of this research, it can be said in external control, the couples apply some methods to control the other person. Developing Glasser's [29] selection theory pattern, the researchers classify these methods as "seven kinds of negative and destructive communicational method of external control psychology". The researchers mean seven negative and destructive communicational methods of external control psychology as seven disastrous methods which suppress all the attempts of couples during marital relations. These seven negative and destructive communicational methods are as follows from less dangerous to more dangerous: criticizing, insult, blaming, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rage. As they gradually. Begin their progress; the couples feel negative sense and incremental tension. At last, they reach somewhere that they will become indifferent and disappointed against each other's attempts for reconciliation. Each destructive element smoothes the way for the entrance of the next more destructive element.

Also, there is bilateral relationship and effect between them. This is how communicational methods of internal control psychology which had gradually and harmfully been begun with romantic promises and with joy and happiness, are destroyed. According to the findings of this research and the views of other marriage specialists such as Glasser (2007) and Guttman [6], it can be concluded what causes the conflicts, marital dissatisfaction and divorce, are seven kinds of negative and destructive communicational methods of external control psychology which the couples use them shortly after the marriage when encounter with different problems and/ or for changing and controlling the other person. These change the marital problems into marital conflicts; finally they will result in marital conflicts; finally they will result in marital dissatisfaction and divorce.

Drawing circular diagram to describe the quality of bilateral interaction and impact between external control psychological elements and marital dissatisfaction.

According to the findings of present research, the application of seven kinds of positive affection communicational methods and internal control psychology was effective on decreasing and improving marital conflicts Researchers mean seven kinds of positive affection communicational methods of internal control

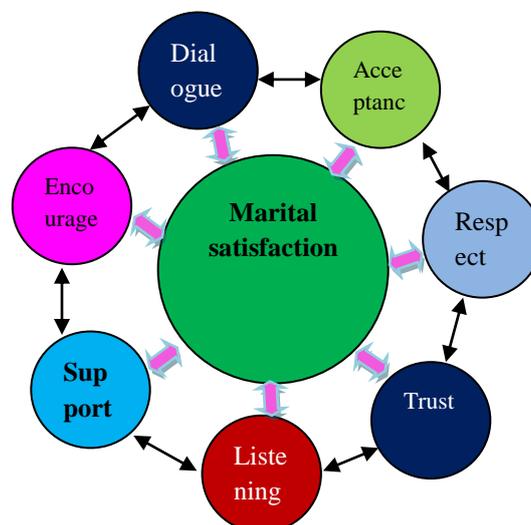
psychology as seven affection communicational methods of internal control psychology include: respect, trust, support and loyalty, acceptance, encouragement, listening and dialogue. Each affection element of internal control smooths the way for entrance of the next more powerful affection element.



Model 1: Bilateral interaction and impact between external control psychological elements to create marital dissatisfaction.

In this research, it was determined that there is a positive bilateral interaction and impact between the elements of internal control psychology. In view of the researchers and other marriage specialists such as Glasser [30] and Guttman [6], marital relationship based on communicational methods of internal control psychology is the most important and appropriate method to have a happy, affectionate and durable (stable) marital life. To attain this essential goal, the couples can replace seven communicational – affection methods of internal control psychology by seven destructive communicational methods of external control psychology in marital relationships.

Drawing circular diagram to describe the quality of bilateral interaction and impact between psychological elements of internal control to create marital satisfaction



Model 2: Bilateral interaction and impact between psychological elements of internal control to create marital satisfaction.

Drawing the combined circular diagram to describe the quality of the effect of communicational methods of external and internal control psychology on creating marital dissatisfaction and satisfaction,

According to the results of present research, it can be said that one of the appropriate techniques to improve marital conflicts is training intervention based on internal locus of control. This model can be used for couples who suffer from marital conflict and dissatisfaction and think of divorce to solve their marital problems. In this way, the occurrence of ominous phenomenon of divorce can be prevented and controlled to a high extent.

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