



THE INTERRELATIONSHIP AMONG LOCUS OF CONTROL, SEXUAL SATISFACTION AND MARITAL SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of the present study is to examine the interrelationships among locus of control, sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. In the current study, a sample which was composed of 200 married persons was investigated. Research tools include locus of control, sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. For data analysis, correlation and independent hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used to determine the relationships between the predictor variables and criterion variable. Results revealed that there is a significant interrelationship between internal locus of control and sexual satisfaction with marital satisfaction. Another finding of the current research indicated the significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Locus of control and sexual satisfaction predicted the marital satisfaction.

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Keywords: Locus of control, Internal locus of control, External locus of control, Sexual satisfaction, Marital satisfaction, Marital adjustment

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, most couples agree that two main goals in the marriage are having satisfactory sexual relationship and mental agreement with the spouse. Although most individuals emphasize on more having sexual relationship, satisfactory sexual relationship and mental agreement are considered as two inseparable components in a successful marriage [1]. By starting the marriage and creating marital relationship, sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction change into important variables in association with the marriage quality. Sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction are regarded as two of the most important factors in affectionate stability of couples [2].

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The reason why people get married may be better understood in the concept of the need to belong. Baumeister and Twenge [3] suggest 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. Furthermore, even if maintaining the relationship is too costly, people resist losing that attachment. On the other hand, the need of belongingness can just be meeting in pleasant or satisfactory relationships. Baumeister and Twenge [3] also claim that, belongingness positively affects the health and well-being. Physical and psychological problems are commonly seen in the case of unsatisfied need of belongingness. Similarly, Rose [4] believes that an intimate love and acceptances satisfies the need of belongingness and affirm the worthiness of the self. On the other hand, attaching to somebody makes people vulnerable to the pain of possible rejection and indirectly threatens the self.

Rho [5] defined marital satisfaction as "...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). Marital happiness is found to be associated with physical and psychological health [6]. These positive effects that are related to 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" [7].

On the other hand, while some marriages are happy, some others "begin as a source of satisfaction, but often end as a source of frustration" [8]. Although there are satisfactory marriages, there are also marriages which suffer from marital discord or which results in divorce. Amato and Booth [9] reported that, parents' marital discord is transmitted to their offspring's marriage. This transmission leads to a decrease in marital harmony and an increase in marital discord. Researchers argue this finding from the view of the social learning perspective, by suggesting that children observe and learn negative interpersonal styles from their parents. Moreover, they are less likely to learn a positive behavior which facilitates satisfying relationships, such as showing support or successfully resolving the conflicts.

Literature indicates several variables related to marital satisfaction. Dökmen and Tokgöz [10] found that there is a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and education level. That is, subjects with university degree reported higher marital satisfaction when they compared to their counterparts with high-school degree. Additionally, in terms of the relationship between marital satisfaction and gender, inconsistent results were reported. Although some studies reported that husbands have greater marital satisfaction than wives [11] some reported no gender difference on marital satisfaction [10].

In the light of these findings, it may be concluded that predicting the factors which affects the marital satisfaction is necessary. However, current research on this subject is not satisfactory to predict which married couples stay together and which separate or divorce [12]. Questions such as "What differentiates a happy marriage from an unhappy one?" and "What qualities that martially satisfied couples have but others do not?" are still remains unanswered.

The association between marriage and sexuality also takes place in the current literature. Sexuality is regarded as one of the most important elements in a marital relationship [13]. Crowe [14] suggests that sexual relationship of the couple can be seen as a kind of microcosm of the general relationship. If general relationship is not satisfactory, sexual relations between partners are affected negatively. Similarly, according to Klemer [15], good sexual adjustment generally depends on a good marital relationship.

It is also reported that sexual problems negatively affect the intimate relationships [16]. Some researchers claim that, sexual problems must be treated in the relationship in which the problems are experienced [14]. since sexual problems usually occur in discordant relationships [17].

Although the sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction have reciprocal contributions on each other, issues such as marital sex and the relationship between marital and sexual satisfaction do not seem to be studied widely. Christopher and Sprecher [18] claim that although there is an increased interest in sexuality within a relational context in recent years, sexual relationship in the marriage has not been the interest of many researches. Authors state that since sexual activity in marriage is socially approved and sex and marriage are linked, marital sex is not viewed as a problem or as a phenomenon that can be result in negative outcomes, which may be the reason of this restricted interest on marital sex. Likewise, Apt, Hurlbert and Clark [19] states that, sexual behavior in marriage is between the most neglected search subjects in the sexology research. Similarly, Masters, et al. [20] also emphasize the relationship between marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction.

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 [21]. 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 [22]. 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 [22]. Specifically, as it is defined as a "generalized expectancy of internal or external control of reinforcement" [23] in social learning theory, locus of control construct has become a very popular and widely examined personality concept in psychology [24].

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 was introduced in the 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 and Glasser [25] 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 [26] 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 [25]. Also, In view of Glasser [26], 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. Pervin and John [27] report 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 [4]. Camp and Ganong [28] 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.

According to Rose [4] 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 and Janoff-Bulman [29] 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 [30]. Brg-Cross [30] 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.

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, interrelationships 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.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

Method and materials, the method of study is descriptive-co relational. Statistical populations of this research include 200 married persons 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

Three instruments were used in the present study. The level of perceived sexual satisfaction was measured by Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction; Participant's 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 [31] 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 [31].

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 [31]. Correlation of the scale with other scales measuring locus of control ranged

between .25 and .55 [31]. In addition, construct validity of the scale was proved by factor analyses [31] and by the difference between the scores of internals and externals on different variables and tasks [31].

In Iran, Movaffagh [32] 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 [33]. In belief of Olson, et al. [34], 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 [33], and finally, its 25-question form was created [34] reported the validity of recent form using of alpha coefficient method as 0.92. in a research work, Olson [33] 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, Soleimani and Navvabinejad [35] 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 [36], 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.

2.2.3. Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction Inventory (GRISS)

The level of perceived sexual satisfaction was measured by Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction Inventory (GRISS) and a Demographic Information Form. GRISS is a 28-item Likert-type self-report scale which was developed by Rust & Golombok [37] in order to assess the quality of sexual relationship and sexual functioning of both individuals and couples.

Reliability and validity studies of the scale have been assessed by Tuğrul, et al. [38] on 243 subjects. The sample consisted of both the clinical subjects (73 women and 66 men) who were diagnosed with a sexual dysfunction as well as randomly selected non-clinical subjects (53 women and 51 men). In terms of internal consistency, Cronbach alpha was reported as .91 for women and .92 for men. Split-half reliability was reported as .90 for men and .91 for women. These findings

point to the high reliability of the scale. Additionally, high validity of the GRISS has been proved in Turkish population. Both total scores and subscale scores differentiated the clinical and non-clinical women ($t = -14.52$, $SD = 123.33$, $p < .001$) and men ($t = -13.93$, $SD = 108.80$, $p < .001$).

However, only communication subscale did not differentiate the clinical and non-clinical women. Moreover, discriminate analyses indicated that, items truly discriminate 98% of women and 98% of men; and subscales truly discriminates 94% of men and 95% of women [38]. For data analysis, additionally, correlation among the variables was examined and the existence of multicollinearity among them was also checked. Two independent hierarchical multiple regression analyses were the procedure of choice so as to determine the relationships among predictor variables and criterion variable. All the statistical analyses in this study were conducted through different functions of SPSS program. In the current study, a sample that comprised 200 married persons was investigated. Statistical analysis of data by testing three hypotheses of the research at confidence level of 95 percent led to the following results.

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. Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges of the Continuous Variables

Variables (N = 200)	M	SD	Range
Age	35.83	7.77	20-56
Length of Marriage (years)	10.48	8.21	0.20-31
Number of Children	1.23	1.07	0-5
Monthly Sexual Intercourse Frequency	9.09	5.09	0-22
Orgasm Frequency In Every 10 Sexual Intercourse	7.43	2.73	0-10
GRISS Score	24.59	14.24	4-77
DAS Score	94.05	11.28	54-124
Rotter's I-E Scale Score	9.42	4.1	0-19

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and ranges of the continuous variables, and Table 3 presents frequencies and percentiles of categorical variables.

As can be seen in Table 2, average age of the participants was 35.83 ($SD = 7.77$). Most of the subjects were highly educated and had high school and university (2 or 4 years) degree (23% and 60.5% respectively).

Table-2. 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-3. 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 control can be concluded that couples with internal locus of control experience high satisfaction in marital life.

Table-4. Correlation Matrix for the Variables in the First Regression Analysis

Variables	Sexual Satisfaction	Marital Satisfaction	Locus of Control
Sexual Satisfaction	1.00		
Marital Satisfaction	-.65**	1.00	
Locus of Control	.23**	-.21**	1.00

** $p < .01$

First correlation matrix which included sexual satisfaction, marital satisfaction and locus of control revealed that, all of these variables were related to each other. Sexual satisfaction significantly and strongly correlated with marital satisfaction ($r = -.65$, $p < .01$). In other words, subjects reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction when they feel that their level of marital satisfaction is high. Sexual satisfaction also significantly correlated with both locus of control ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) and marital satisfaction ($r = .17$, $p < .01$). That is, when a person is more internally control oriented s/he is more sexually satisfied. Additionally, when a person reports higher levels of marital satisfaction s/he also reports greater sexual satisfaction (note that higher scores on the GRISS indicate lower sexual satisfaction). In addition, subjects reported more marital satisfaction when they reported internal locus of control ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$).

Table-5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results: Predicting Sexual Satisfaction from Marital Satisfaction and Locus of Control

Step	Variable	R ²	R ² Change	F Change
Step 2	Locus of Control	.063	.035	7.44**
Step 3	Marital Satisfaction	.43	.37	124.9***

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

At step first, locus of control was entered to examine whether locus of control predict sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, locus of control accounted for 4% of the variance in sexual satisfaction, meaning that variance in sexual satisfaction was accounted for, partly, subject's locus of control orientation. At the last step, marital satisfaction was entered into the equation in order to see whether marital satisfaction predicts sexual satisfaction. This resulted in a significant change in R^2 with R^2 change = .37, F Change (1,196) = 124.9, $p < .001$. 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.

Although marital satisfaction was entered into the equation after sexual satisfaction and locus of control, its contribution was still very important, which indicates that it is a very powerful predictor of sexual satisfaction. Moreover, with all the predictor variables in the equation, 44% of the variance in the sexual satisfaction of the married persons was accounted for (Also see Table 16 which displays R^2 , R^2 change and F change after each step of the analysis).

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary goal of the present study is to examine the interrelationships among locus of control, sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Results revealed that, there is a significant interrelationship between internal locus of control and sexual satisfaction with marital satisfaction. Another finding of the current research indicated the significant relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Moreover, results of this research indicated that subjects who have internal locus of control report higher sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Locus of control and sexual satisfaction predicted the marital satisfaction.

It was also found in this study that locus of control and marital satisfaction significantly related to each other. It means that the internal the locus of control, the greater the marital satisfaction. In addition, locus of control significantly contributed to the variance in the marital satisfaction. Based on the relevant literature, it is not surprising. It is reported by several researchers that the greater the internal locus of control, the higher the relationship and marital satisfaction [4, 13] which is similar to the current findings of the study. According to Rose [4], marriage has a powerful effect on the sense of control. It may increase the sense of control by increasing social support as well as social and economic resources. On the other hand, marriage may decrease the sense of control by decreasing autonomy, freedom and independence. Madden and Janoff-Bulman [20] reported that, wives who feel they have control over the negative marital events experience greater marital satisfaction. Similarly, Doherty [39] argues that, because they experience more personal control on marital events, internals may try more to achieve success in their marriages. They are more likely to behave in a positive and active way to make their marriage happier. In contrast, externals exhibit a passive stance toward their marriage which may be the result of their belief in personal ineffectiveness. Studying the effects of marital locus of control on marital quality, Myers [13] found that the most satisfactory and less conflict marriages occur among spouses who feel they have control over marital events. Spouses with lower levels of marital locus of control reported more marital strains and poorer marital quality. Similarly, Crandall and Crandall [40] concluded

that internal locus of control is generally found to facilitate better interpersonal relationships and higher self-esteem. On the contrary, in terms of marital quality, 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 [13]. It is also reported by some studies [41] when a spouse regard the marital problems as “unsolvable” his/her level of marital satisfaction is likely to decrease. Similarly, it is also stated that blaming other spouse and not taking the responsibility for marital problems is harmful for the marriage, since marital problems are interactional [30].

The association of locus of control with both sexual and marital satisfaction may be best understood from the [Markman, et al. \[42\]](#) point of view. [Markman, et al. \[42\]](#) defines the locus of control construct as a learning process and claim that people with internal locus of control can change their behaviors easily since they believe that they can control the reinforcements. From this perspective, it is reasonable that internals experience more satisfactory relationships. They are likely to change their behaviors to reach the desired outcomes since they believe that personal efforts can be effective for their sexual and marital satisfaction.

According to [Bird and Melville \[7\]](#) marriage means connecting and committing a loved and trusted one for several reasons one of which is sexual intimacy. Similar to these statements, results of this study highlight the importance of sexual satisfaction in marital satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction strongly correlated to marital satisfaction, meaning the greater the Sexual satisfaction, the greater the marital satisfaction. In addition, contributing to a large portion of variance in marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction occurs as a very powerful predictor of sexual satisfaction. This finding is consistent with a large body of previous research. As a result, sexual relationship and general relationship may be affected by each other. In a recent study, [Timm \[43\]](#) sampled married individuals and found a relationship between marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. In another study, [Renaud and Byers \[44\]](#) reported that, the greater the relationship satisfaction, the greater the level of sexual satisfaction. Indicating the strong relationship between sexual and marital satisfaction, some researchers [45] suggest that if a couple experience serious marital problems, these problems must be solved before starting the sex therapy process. [Uçman \[45\]](#) also reported that, individuals who give up the sex therapy before they resolve sexual problems are generally the persons who want to continue their power to manipulate the other spouse who is responsible for the sexual problems. Moreover, when Iran marriages are considered, the strong relationship between marital and sexual satisfaction that was found in this study is not surprising indeed. As it was indicated by this study, in Iran, individuals generally gain a continuous sexual life with the marriage. For many Iran people, marriage and sexuality are overlapped. As a result, the finding in this study which indicates the strong association between sexual and marital satisfaction is expected.

The current research also found that locus of control orientation significantly related to sexual satisfaction and contributed to the prediction of this variable. Subjects reported higher sexual satisfaction when they report internal locus of control orientation.

Based on the results, it can be said that the internal locus of control couples on affect the sexual and marital satisfaction. If couple's sense of control is high, in other words, if couples has an internal locus of control, it can be expected that couples can get the responsibility of them life and try to change the conditions to make them more satisfied with themselves marital and sexual relationship.

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