

Moderating Effect of Gender Role on the Association between Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction of Iranian Married Students

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Abstract: *The main purposes of the present study were first to examine the association between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction among married Iranian students in Malaysia and second to examine the degree to which gender role moderates the relationship between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Data from 387 participants were examined using measures of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. The results indicated that conflict resolution is positively related to marital satisfaction. Although, based on gender role, there are some differences between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction; gender differences did not lead to the conclusion that gender has a moderating influence on the association between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction.*

Keywords: *Conflict Resolution, Marital Satisfaction, Moderator, Gender Role, Iranian, Married students.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marital relationship, which is a union between a male and a female includes happiness, intimacy, commitment, pleasure, compassion, love, strong communication, typically provides a reliable means for marital satisfaction (Amidu, Owiredu, Gyasi-Sarpong, Woode & Quaye, 2011). According to Gottman (2000), unhappy couples are more likely to opt for divorce due to the poor interaction in their marriage life. This is because conflict resolution and daily interactions with their partner are more negative compared to that of the happy, stable couples. In today's world of seemingly endless options, many couples suffer from marital dissatisfaction (Majd, 2009). Comparatively, one fourth of marriages end in divorces in Iran (Iranian Family Health Centre, 2010), while between one half and two thirds of marriages end in divorces in America; these figures showed the high rates of divorce (Ltzinger & Gordon, 2005).

Similarly, Smart (2008) found that in America, around half of all marriages end up in divorces; in addition, he also stated that there is a correlation between marital dissatisfaction and divorce. Marital relationship can have effects on people's quality of life uniquely, and because of this reason, the quality of marital relationship is a momentous topic for researchers (Whisman, Sheldon, & Goering, 2000). Meanwhile, low or poor marital satisfaction can cause problems to both family and society (Smart, 2008). Marriage undeniably plays an important role in Iranians' life. After the revolution in 1979, many Iranians have migrated to other countries (Saroukhani, 1991; Shahidian, 1999). On the other hand, with the social environment and family changing during marriage, Iranian married couples who have migrated face challenges with the new environment in their family. The major question here is "How will Iranian married couples be able to adapt to the new environment and the society and how will these couples find solutions for

their marital conflicts during their migration?" An existing research has shown that there is a high prevalence of marital dissatisfaction among couples (Sadeghi, 1997). Furthermore, after the 1979 revolution in Iran, a great influx of Iranian immigrants relocated to other areas such as America, Europe and Asia due to the social and political unrest. Adjusting and integrating to the new culture and environment is the main problem for these immigrants. This process of adjustment to new culture, different beliefs, values and attitudes is called acculturation (Banafsheian, 2003). Similarly, couples' conflict interactional patterns can directly affect their relationship satisfaction (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). With such high rates of divorces and marital dissatisfaction among Iranian couples research on marital satisfaction among immigrants is necessary (Saroukhani, 1991; Shahidian, 1999).

According to Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000), marital satisfaction refers to the level of happiness, and pleasure within a couple's relationships and this depends upon or is determined by their psychological well-being, as well as environmental factors. Moreover, another factor that may influence on marital satisfaction is gender roles and how individuals in a couple can carry these out in their marital relationship. According to Darvishpour (2002), gender role is another important impact in a marriage and men seem to have more needs for romance relationship as compared to women. Moreover, there is a significant relationship between gender role and couple interaction and marital satisfaction (Williams & McBain, 2006). In addition, Faulkner, Davey, and Davey (2005) mentioned that gender roles affect the difference in the ways male and female manage conflicts. For example, men are more likely to withdraw from negative marital relationship, while women are more likely to pursue the negative conversation. Moreover, women are more likely to be attuned to the emotional quality of their marital interactions and are also more sensitive to events that occur in the relationship (Faulkner, Davey & Davey, 2005).

The existent literature shows the important of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction among married individuals. Furthermore, gender differences of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction are evident in the existent literature. Nevertheless, gender role differences of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction among an Iranian sample have not been reported in the literature. Therefore, the present research aimed to examine gender role differences and impact of the gender role as a moderator on the association between conflict resolution and marital satisfaction among a sample of married Iranian students.

The research will undertake to addresses the following research hypothesis:

- Gender role negatively (or positively) moderates the positive effect of conflict resolution on marital satisfaction.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants and Procedure

The participants included in this study were married postgraduate Iranian students in public Malaysian university Kuala Lumpur zone. Out of six public universities in Kuala Lumpur zone, randomly three universities (UM, UPM, UKM) were chosen. Students were randomly recruited to participate in the study through their emails addresses. Data for this study were obtained by administering the survey instruments to the participants via an online survey. The total number of respondents reached 387. The raw data from the online survey instruments were downloaded from the website in which the survey was administered and imported into a computer spreadsheet for analysis. The sample consisted of 387 married students including 187 females and 200 males aged from 25 to 61.

2.2. Instruments

Marital Satisfaction measured by using the PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Satisfaction Scale. The PREPARE/ENRICH is a multidimensional couples satisfaction inventory that includes 10 core scales and include: Idealistic Distortion, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Partner Style and Habits, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Affection and Sexuality, Family and Friends, Relationship Roles, and Spiritual Beliefs (Olson, Larsan, Olson, 2009) and a participant must assess each item on a 5-point Likert scale. A very high score indicates adaptability and

satisfaction with most aspects of the marital relationship, and a very low score reflects a lack of satisfaction and a concern over various aspects of the marriage. Very high score is 85-100, high is 65-80, moderate 40-60, low 25-35, very low 0-15. The internal reliability coefficient (alpha) of this subscale is .60-.89. (Olson, Larson & Olson, 2009).

Gender role measured by gender role attitude scale and developed by Baron (1996). This inventory measures policy items, belief items, and moral items, 75 policy items, 22 belief items and 9 moral items, making a total of 106, subjects rated the extent to which they agreed with each of the items on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was described as “strongly agree” 2 was “moderately agree” 3 was “neutral” 4 was “moderately disagree” and 5 was “strongly disagree” (Prasad & Baron, 1996). The scale has 27 items that measure equality, items held that males and females should be treated the same or should do the same things. Cronbach α of this scale is respectively: Equal, .964, Reversal, .774, Separate, .685, Belief, .907, Moral, .734. Naturally (Prasad & Baron, 1996).

Conflict Resolution measured by using the PREPARE/ENRICH conflict resolution Scale. Conflict Resolution measures the ability of a couple to discuss and resolve differences. A very high score indicates very effectively discuss and resolve differences with partner, and a very low score reflects great difficulty discussing and resolving differences with your partner. Very high score is 85-100, high is 65-80, moderate 40-60, 25-35, very low 0-15 (Olson, Larson & Olson, 2009).

2.3. Data Analysis

We use Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method and smart PLS software 2.0 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) to test the research hypotheses. PLS-SEM can cope with formative constructs and it is appropriate for assessing relatively new measurement models. Using Gender Role and Conflict Resolution as formative constructs (J.F. Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Ragavan, Subramonian, & Pahlevan Sharif, 2014; Rajaratnam, Munikrishnana, Pahlevan Sharif, & Nair, 2014). There are three different approaches to estimate parameters in models with second-order constructs: (1) the repeated indicator approach, (2) the two-stage approach, and (3) the hybrid approach (Becker, Klein, & Wetzels, 2012). Moreover, the hybrid approach reduces reliability of the measures as in this approach the construct has only half of the indicators (Becker et al., 2012). In the two-stage method, first we specify the model only by considering first-order constructs without their second-orders. Then we estimate the latent variable scores of the first-order constructs and use these scores as indicators for the second-order constructs (Becker et al., 2012).

Then we test the structural hypothesis by bootstrapping resampling method with 2000 replications (Chin, 1998). Bootstrapping is a nonparametric approach which makes no distributional assumptions of variables and lets us estimate standard errors, confidence intervals and test the research hypotheses. In testing mediation effect, bootstrapping approach is more accurate and has higher statistical power than Barron and Kenny (1986) as well as Sobel (1982) and Taylor, MacKinnon, and Tein's (2008) approaches (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004).

3. RESULT

Finally, gender role negatively moderate the positive effect of conflict resolution on marital satisfaction (standardized estimate = -0.102, t-value = 2.713). It means that the effect of conflict resolution on marital satisfaction is lower for respondents with higher gender role than those with lower gender role level.

The model explains 62.60% of marital satisfaction. To assess predictive accuracy of endogenous variables, we use Stone-Geisser's Q^2 (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974) which is implemented by blindfolding procedure in smart-PLS 2.0. The results of predictive accuracy, shown in Table 1, indicate appropriate predictive power of marital satisfaction in the model ($Q^2=0.6251$) (J.F. Hair et al., 2013; Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009).

Table1. Formative Constructs Assessment

Construct / Measure	Outer Weights	t-value	Outer Loadings	t-value
Conflict Resolution (Range of inter-item correlations=0.294-0.444; Average inter-item correlation: 0.346; Max. VIF= 1.296)				
Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.	-0.001	0.027	0.299	4.009
At times I feel some of our differences never get Resolved.	0.016	0.290	0.314	4.064
Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner.	0.996	57.957	1.000	451.851
Gender Role (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.121-0.585; Average inter-item correlation: 0.289; Max. VIF= 1.720)				
High schools should spend as much money on girls sports as on boys sports.	0.166	0.824	0.528	3.457
Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about investments	0.209	1.017	0.624	4.413
Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about where to live.	0.127	0.639	0.557	3.665
In relationships between men and women, disloyalty should be equally censured for women and men.	0.486	2.751	0.731	5.926
Families should spend just as much money on the education of daughters as on the education of sons.	0.500	2.668	0.714	5.699
Assimilation (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.087-0.356; Average inter-item correlation: 0.200; Max. VIF= 1.254)				
I write better in English than in my native language (Farsi)	0.607	3.426	0.770	5.848
I get along better with Malaysians than Iranians.	0.268	1.226	0.483	2.522
I feel that Malaysians understand me better than Iranians do.	0.096	0.418	0.469	2.533
I feel more comfortable socializing with Malaysians than I do with Iranians.	0.453	2.262	0.635	3.932
If I were asked to write poetry, I would prefer to write it in English	0.161	0.762	0.436	2.390
Separation (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.218-0.563; Average inter-item correlation: 0.322; Max. VIF= 1.536)				
I prefer going to social gatherings where most of the people are Iranian	0.522	4.587	0.868	16.940
I feel more relaxed when I am with an Iranian than when I am with a Malaysian.	0.589	5.295	0.898	18.691
Most of the music I listen to is Iranian	0.021	0.177	0.391	3.766
Mostly I identify with the Iranian ethnic group.	0.034	0.296	0.302	2.795
Integration (Inter-item correlations= 0.013)				
I feel very comfortable around both Malaysians and Iranians	0.870	11.375	0.877	11.918
I came to Malaysia to improve my education for future.	0.482	3.718	0.493	3.755
Marginalization (Range of inter-item correlations= 0.216-0.530; Average inter-item correlation: 0.348; Max. VIF= 1.665)				
There are times when I think no one understands me.	0.210	1.641	0.601	5.821
I sometimes find it hard to communicate with people.	0.546	3.928	0.891	15.059
Sometimes I feel that Iranians and Malaysians do not accept me.	0.336	2.391	0.726	8.138
I find that both Iranians and Malaysians often have difficulty understanding me.	0.193	1.430	0.691	7.836
I sometimes feel that neither Malaysians nor Iranians like me	0.026	0.215	0.386	3.573

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