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Life satisfaction, general self-efficacy, self-esteem, and communication skills in married women

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: Life satisfaction and its determinants in married women are essential for the development of proper preventive programs. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem with life satisfaction in married women.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS: This cross-sectional, descriptive study was conducted on married women who were selected by multistage random sampling, in Naien city health centers. Data were collected using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSE), and revised version of communication skills test. The data were analyzed using the SPSS version 20 by descriptive statistics. Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses were used.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS USED: Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses and ANOVA were used.

RESULTS: According to the regression analysis test, 35.8% of the total variance in life satisfaction was accounted for by self-efficacy, communication skills, and self-esteem. Pearson correlations demonstrated that all correlations between the variables were statistically significant. In particular, self-efficacy, communication skills, and self-esteem had positively correlated with life satisfaction ($P < 0.05$).

CONCLUSIONS: General self-efficacy highly correlated with life satisfaction in married women. Therefore, in order to increase life satisfaction in married women, it is necessary to focus more on self-efficacy promotion strategies.

Keywords:

Communication skills, life satisfaction, self-efficacy, self-esteem, women

Introduction

Life satisfaction is one of the main components of subjective well-being, and it is a process that brings about commitment, positive effect, self-devotion, satisfaction, and help make life meaningful.^[1]

Life satisfaction which refers to one's overall happiness with life is evaluated based on a cognitive critical process, in which individuals compare their current state with their desired level of satisfaction

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and is influenced by various personality traits, cognitive processes, behavioral characteristics, as well as positive and negative effects.^[2]

In recent years, life satisfaction has been the subject of many researches. Research evidence revealed that low levels of life satisfaction lead to a variety of psychopathological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, as well as risky behaviors such as violence, aggressiveness, alcohol, and drug abuse. Likewise, complete life satisfaction mediates the effect of stressful life events.^[1]

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Thus, in conclusion, it can be said that life satisfaction is important for health and quality of life of individuals; hence, researchers have made numerous attempts to find the predictors and correlations of different components for subjective well-being and life satisfaction in different cultures.^[3,4]

According to the study conducted by Dinner, there are considerable individual differences in subjective well-being as well as mean level modifications between different cultures.^[4] Previous researches have shown that external factors such as social support^[5] and internal factors such as personality traits have an impact on well-being.^[4]

Moreover, in some studies, life satisfaction is interpreted as one of the consequences of emotional responses affected by self-efficacy perceptions.^[6] Based on this viewpoint, it is assumed that individuals can adapt to more suitable conditions for themselves if they had strong perceptions of their own efficacy.^[7]

Self-esteem is another personality trait that has been found to be among the strongest predictors of subjective well-being in many studies. For instance in Joshanloo and Afshari study on social well-being in Iranian students, self-esteem predicted social well-being even better than self-efficacy.^[3]

Numerous studies have indicated that predisposition to interaction and communicating with others is a basic need in human beings. Human beings enjoy interacting and making bonds with each other, so the inability to form intimate relationships with each other could lead to dissatisfaction, depression, and loneliness.^[8]

Review of related literature revealed that pleasant relations with others, including relatives friends and family, is a key element and one of the most vital factors to attain life satisfaction and happiness.^[9]

To this regard, a study examined the relationship between communication skills, burnout levels, and life satisfaction levels in football coaches and the results demonstrated that greater communication skills of the coaches decreased their occupational burnout levels while increasing their life satisfaction levels.^[10]

Correspondingly, the study among students by Ghorbanshiroudi *et al.* confirms the effectiveness of communication skills in increasing life satisfaction.^[11] Likewise, the relationship between communication skills and self-efficacy levels was determined by Ozkan *et al.* which showed a significant positive correlation between communication skills and self-efficacy.^[12]

Most studies in the field of life satisfaction, self-efficacy, and self-esteem have been done in students or specific population groups. Very few studies have been done in married women.

Furthermore, the relationship between communication skills and life satisfaction in women has not been well explained; meanwhile women encounter different challenging roles as a mother, daughter, wife, grandmother, career-wise, and as an employee in their lives. Women meet with a wide a range of problems even though their physical and psychological health is put to risk due to aging and hormonal changes.^[13]

Henceforth, recognizing the factors affecting their life satisfaction levels and promoting these factors is imperative to assist them face challenges and attain life satisfaction.

On the other hand, previous studies have separately investigated the relationship between life satisfaction, self-efficacy, and communication skills, thereby creating a need to investigate the relationship between these variables simultaneously.

According to researchers search, so far the issue of life satisfaction of married women referred to health centers in Naien has not addressed. Holding training classes for married women is one of the usual activities of health centers.

Due to resource constraints, identifying the most effective determinant of life satisfaction is important to choose the best educational priorities in health centers.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem with life satisfaction in married women.

Subjects and Methods

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted on married women who were selected by multistage random sampling, in Naien city health centers, Isfahan province, the Central of Iran, in 2017. Initially, the city of Naien was geographically divided into two similar regions. Then, from each region, a health center was selected randomly. The sample sizes were determined according to the number of married women in each center and were chosen by systematic random method from SIB electronic system.

The 250 selected women were invited to participate in the study by phone call. Two hundred and thirty-eight women accepted the invitation and the response rate was 95.2%. Interested women were evaluated for inclusion. The inclusion criteria were that the women must be able

to read and write and be interested in participation. They were excluded if they had filled out the questionnaires incompletely.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants and confidentiality of the information was assured. A total of 212 women were enrolled in the study. Data were collected by four self-reported questionnaires as follows:

Satisfaction With Life Scale

This scale was used to measure global life satisfaction. This well-known scale is made up of five items by Diener et al.^[14] Each item is rated on a seven-point scale, ranging from strongly agree "7" to strongly disagree "1." The Persian form of this scale is valid among Iranian population. This scale was tested in previous studies in Iran and its validity and reliability was approved.^[15,16]

General Self-efficacy Scale

This scale was made to measure a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with the purpose in mind to predict coping with daily stresses as well as alteration after experiencing all sorts of stressful events in life.^[17] In samples consisting of 23 countries, Cronbach's alpha ranged from 76 to 90, with the majority in the high 80s. This scale is one-dimensional including 10 items. Criterion-related validity is well documented in several studies.^[18] The Persian version of this scale is valid among Iranian population. This scale was tested in previous studies in Iran and its validity and reliability was approved.^[19]

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

This scale has 10 items and is used to measure global self-esteem. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree "4" to strongly disagree "1."^[20] The reliability and unidimensionality of this scale was reinvestigated in an Iranian student sample and results indicated that this scale has an acceptable internal consistency and reliability for Iranian users.^[21]

Revised version of communication skills test

This scale has 34 items and 5 subscales and was published by the Queendom Institute in 2004. The credibility and reliability of this test was confirmed by experts.^[22] In addition, validity and reliability of this scale in Iran was approved.^[23,24]

The Research Ethics Subcommittee of the Isfahan Medical University approved this study. The data were analyzed by SPSS version 20 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) through descriptive statistics. Pearson correlations and multiple regression analyses were used to explore relationships between communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem and life satisfaction. ANOVA was applied to test for the differences among women's perceived

family economic status (undesirable, medium, and fine) on self-efficacy, self-esteem, communication skills, and life satisfaction. *Post hoc t*-values were computed for the variables which yielded significant *F* values. Statistical significant level was set as 0.05.

Results

In this study, 212 married women had participated. Their age ranged from 18 to 54 with a mean of 32.7 ± 7.2 years and the average number of children was 1.7 ± 1.02 .

Regarding educational level, 19.9% were less than diploma, more than one-third of participants had a diploma (35.8%), and 41.1% had Bachelor's degree and higher. The majority of the study participants (95.5%) were homemakers.

Six percent of women considered their family's economic situation as undesirable, 68.3% as medium, and 25.7% as desired.

The correlation between communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem and life satisfaction are presented in Table 1.

To examine the relationship between communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem and life satisfaction, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem were entered as potential predictors and life satisfaction was entered as the dependent variable. Results of the multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

One-way ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between communication skills, self-efficacy,

Table 1: The interdependency between life satisfaction scores, self-esteem, and self-efficacy and communication skills

	1	2	3	4
Life satisfaction	-			
Self-esteem	0.225*	-		
Self-efficacy	0.589*	0.229*	-	
Communication skills	0.318*	0.382*	0.411*	-

* $P \leq 0.01$ ($n=212$)

Table 2: Regression analysis to predict life satisfaction scores based on self-esteem scores and self-efficacy and communication skills scores

Variable	B	Standardized β	t	P
Self-efficacy	0.759	0.562	2.07	≤ 0.001
Communication skills	0.318	0.134	9.25	0.037
Self-esteem	0.233	0.124	2.10	0.039
df			3,211	
F			40.14	
F^2 (adjusted)			0.358	

and self-esteem and life satisfaction based on women education ($P > 0.05$).

Regarding economic situation, one-way ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between communication skills and self-efficacy, among the women ($P > 0.05$), but the mean scores of self-esteem ($P = 0.048$) and life satisfaction ($P = 0.014$) were significantly higher in women who considered their family's economic situation as desired.

The multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = 7.034 + 0.233 \times X_1 + 0.759 \times X_2 + 0.318 \times X_3$$

Where Y is the predicted or expected value of the life satisfaction as dependent variable, X1 – self-esteem, X2 – self-efficacy, and X3 – communication skills are the distinct independent or predictor variables.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between communication skills, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, and life satisfaction among married women in Naaien city.

The results revealed that the three groups of women based on perceived family economic status (undesirable, medium, and desired) differed significantly in terms of life satisfaction levels. Women who perceived their family economic status as desired had significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than other women.

The results of the previous studies on the effects of economic status and life satisfaction differ. In some studies, participants' perception of their family's economic status had a positive correlation to life satisfaction.^[25] In contrast to these findings, however, in a study consisting of young adults, Çakar reported that there was no significant difference in terms of perceived level of income and participants' life satisfaction.^[1]

It is stated that the strongest demographic predictor of subjective well-being and life satisfaction is income and social status.^[4] A previous study suggested that a higher economic status helps individuals to achieve their requirements without difficulty and lead a comfortable life. It can be said that in most circumstances, individuals with higher economic status experience lower anxiety and stress in their lifetime.^[9] It seems that better family economic status can increase life satisfaction by enhancing the social support, increasing the possibility to access the needs, desires, solving problems, and opportunities to achieve one's preferred activities. However, this discrepancy could be due to

cultural differences in reporting the economic situation in different countries.

The results also discovered that the three groups of women based on perceived family economic status (undesirable, medium, and desired) differed significantly in terms of self-esteem. In contrast to these findings, in previous studies, a higher self-esteem was found to be related with higher socioeconomic status.^[26] The lower or higher socioeconomic status of individuals might be reflected in the negative or positive perception of oneself.

Another finding reports that women did not differ significantly in terms of perceived family economic status and their self-efficacy. These findings were similar to those of Çakar.^[1]

It is difficult to explain the relationship between women's perceived family economic status and self-efficacy since it is affected by various social and cultural or even family factors. This necessitates further studies to be carried out in the future to discuss this issue in detail.

The results of the current study showed that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and life satisfaction ($r = 0.589$). This is in line with previous studies indicating that self-efficacy is a consistent correlative factor of life satisfaction, as mentioned in Çakarstudy(2012). According to it, self-efficacy of young adults significantly predicts their life satisfaction.^[1] Furthermore, Azizli *et al.* study revealed that life satisfaction correlated the most with general self-efficacy.^[2] Likewise, significant links between life satisfaction and self-efficacy can be seen in studies involving different study groups. For instance, in Ghasemi *et al.*'s study carried out on individuals living in the suburbs of Kermanshah revealed that self-efficacy had a mediating role in the relationship of social support and life satisfaction.^[5] Also according to the results of a study by Bagheri-Nesami *et al.*, there is a direct relationship between life satisfaction and self-efficacy in community-dwelling elderly.^[27]

The strong relationship between life satisfaction and self-efficacy can be understood by the point that individuals with high levels of self-efficacy have a greater ability to overcome stressful circumstances as they have the desirable attitude such as "I can do this" and do their best to achieve their goals in life.

Similar to previous studies, the present study indicated a significant relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction ($r = 0.233$). On the contrary, a study based on middle-aged Malay women, by Marziah *et al.* points out that self-esteem strongly correlated with life satisfaction.^[13] Moreover, Joshanloo and Afshari study

findings revealed that self-esteem significantly predicted life satisfaction ($r = 0.49$),^[31] and correspondingly in a study conducted on married women in Sheikh-aleslami *et al* (2011) confirmed a positive relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction ($r = 0.30$).^[28]

It seems that people with higher self-esteem are always using better self-regulation strategies than others and consequently feel good about themselves and possess higher levels of life satisfaction.

The other goal of the present study was to examine the relationship between communication skills and life satisfaction. As assumed, there was a significant relationship between communication skills and life satisfaction ($r = 0.318$). This result was in line with the previous studies. For instance, the study by Ali and Chamorro-Premuzic on male and female nonclinical sample in which the relationship components positively predicted life satisfaction.^[29]

This study clearly discovered the relevance of maintaining good interpersonal relationships with others by depicting that relationship quality has a positive effect on life satisfaction through direct and indirect means (by mediating factor on self-esteem).^[30]

As confirmed in certain studies, social relationships promote happiness for the individual and act as a means to receiving social support. Therefore, social relationships are a key to life satisfaction.^[29]

When defining the relationship of communication skills with life satisfaction, it can be said that since social relationships correlated with life satisfaction, proper communication skill is one of the best ways to fulfill social needs such as social support and social relationships. It seems that communication skills lead to intimate relations with others, including family, friends, as well as relatives and enhanced social relationship is one of the important factors influencing life satisfaction in women.

Results of bivariate correlation analysis showed that all variables were interdependent. The interdependency between the variables, as presented in Table 1, showing that self-efficacy was the strongest correlate of the life satisfaction, and regression results, demonstrating that self-efficacy predicted life satisfaction over and above the communication skills and self-esteem. With regard to the regression analysis, as predicted, 35.8% of the total variance in life satisfaction was accounted for by self-efficacy, communication skills, and self-esteem [Table 2].

Promoting the self-efficacy of married women can increase their life satisfaction. The strategies to promote

women's self-efficacy should be set as important educational priority in health centers.

The present study is the first study that examines the relationship between the self-efficacy, self-esteem, and communication skills and life satisfaction simultaneously in married women referred to health centers in Iran and had a number of limitations. The main limitation of this study was using cross-sectional design. The study variables were measured one at a time in the same scales, with a married women sample in Naien city. Although the sample size was acceptable, these results cannot be generalized to other groups of women. It is advisable for the future studies to use a larger and more diverse sample of women. Also in this study, general communication skills questionnaire was used so it is better to use marital communication skills questionnaires in the future studies. Although these variables could account for a noticeable amount of the variance in life satisfaction scores, it is obvious that there are other possible mediators who had not been counted in this study, such as marital satisfaction, hence, the future studies are expected to further examine these factors in married women.

Conclusions

On the whole, considering the results of this study and past studies in Iran, it can be concluded that self-efficacy is among the most consistent and strongest predictors of life satisfaction in Iranian married women.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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