



Available online at www.behaviorsciences.com

Reef Resources Assessment and Management Technical Paper

ISSN: 1607-7393

RRAMT 2014- Vol. 40, 2014, 1



Layers of Meaning among Iranian Couples with High Marital Satisfaction

Zahra Gitipasand^{a*}, Kiyumars Farahbakhsh^b, Masoumeh Smaeili^c, Mohamad Saeid Zokaei^d

^a PhD Student in Counseling, Allameh Tabatabayi University, Iran

^b Assistant Professor, Department of counseling, Allameh Tabatabayi University, Iran

^c Associate Professor, Department of counseling, Allameh Tabatabayi University, Iran

^d Associate Professor, Department of social sciences, Allameh Tabatabayi University, Iran

Abstract

Although meaning of life has a great role in human's life but generally its role has ignored in families. Pargament asserts every subject should be understood base on spiritual meaning in person mind. The kind of interpretation for an event is effective on countering manner transactional (wolf, 1997, p. 358).

This was a qualitative study using semi-structured deep interview. 8 couples were selected by purposeful sampling. Data analysis addressed the content of meaning among Iranian couples with high marital satisfaction. Findings revealed congruency in meaning, cooperative in making the common mean and ability in negotiation.

© 2014 Published by RRAMT France Ltd.

Keywords: the meaning of life, marriage meaning, marital meaning, marital satisfaction, Iranian couples.

Introduction

Although marital communication and satisfactory roots based on spousal and personal factors (McCann & Biaggio, 1989) and meaning of life has a great role in human's life but generally its role has been ignored in families. Meaning of life and marital satisfaction are related (Rezaee et. al., 2012; Govahee gahan, 2007; Kalantarkousheh & Hassan, 2010). Most of done researches have considered theory of Victor Frankl (1984). He emphasizes the natural need for humans to find conscious meaning in their lives. He assumes on finding or making meaning in order to live a healthy and well-adapted life.

But meaning of life is only understood based on the Western perspective as it has cultural and religious elements (Mohamad et al., 2011). Steger (2009) sees meaning of life as the manner in which people feel their lives have purpose, and how they comprehend their experiences. Baumeister (1991) sees meaning as a psychological account of associations among experiences, events, and relationships. He emphasizes the significance of the self because of acquiring meaning in life. He assumes that man has four forms of needs that serve as motivation to gain certain things like satisfaction and meaning in one's life (Mohamad et al., 2011).

Meaning as a complex blend of values, beliefs, feelings and perception schemas makes phenomenological inherence human. Henceforward the meaning is eclectic, holistic pattern from orientation about themselves, others and world (Pargament, 1977, p. 100; Spilka et al., 2003, p. 667). Both meaning systems and social relationships are very important and dependent to each other. They could be related with many cultural and social elements (Roberts & Davidson, 1984; Spilka et al., 2003, p. 219).

Besides it's one of difficult questions against humans. One of the most important sources to reply meaning of life is religious. Religion more than other human functions, satisfied mending to meaning in human (Clark, 1985, p. 419; Spilka et al., 2003, p. 23). It shows itself in trying to discovery world meaning (Mills, Simpson, 1964; Spilka et al., 2003, p. 203). Pargament asserts that every subject (either micro or macro changing in life) should be understood base on spiritual meaning in person mind. The kind of interpretation for an event is effective on countering manner transactional (Wolf, 1997, p. 358). Religion and culture are the most important effective elements and supportive psychological growth stages, life stage tasks, goals making and life values source in person and family. Therefore not only regarding about effective elements for family enrichment is important, but also we should examine family issues in its social, religion and cultural space (Rezaee et al., 2012).

Kalantarkousheh & Hassan (2010) examined function of life meaning and marital communication among Iranian spouses in University Putra Malaysia. They reported there is a gap in literature to explain any relationship between meaning of life and marital communication. Govahee gahan (2007) reported that there are high positive correlation ($r = +0.78$) between two variables but there is no correlation between meaning of life and age, length of marriage, educational levels and properties. Hall (2006) explored young adults' belief systems about marriage. He noted marital meaning is multifaceted and can be conceptualized as including five distinct dimensions: special status of marriage versus neutral alternative, self- fulfillment vs. obligation, mutuality vs. individuality, romanticism vs. pragmatism and role hierarchy vs. role parallelism. He emphasizes marital meaning has implications for how people behave prior to and during marriage that may relate to marital functioning.

When couples get married, they bring their meaning of life and unique view about marriage to new family. Also they reach to marital meaning too. Meaning of life, marriage meaning and marital meaning is made in society and culture. In this research we examine contents of these meanings in Iranian couples with high marital satisfaction. Probably marital dissatisfaction roots in adverse effects meaning of life and marriage meaning in each person and disabilities to make satisfied marital meaning. Hence, this study aims to approach a new perspective about enrichment and inadequacy in Iranian families.

Methods

This study employs a face to face and deep semi-structured interview design. Semi-structured interview is an economical and rapid method for gathering information from individuals or small groups which ensures that the interview stays focused on the issue at hand, and informal enough to allow participants to introduce and discuss issues which they seem to be relevant. Marital satisfaction test (ENRICH) used for selection couples. In the present study, the short form of this questionnaire was used. We did three interviews for each couple: each of couples first alone and then both of them together. The time of individual interviews was about 60 and for common interviews 30 minutes. All of the interviews were recorded and typed by researcher.

Participants

Based on the criteria that they are Iranian couples, Muslims, Shia and undergoing with high marital satisfaction, their marital length (less than 15 years), their ageing (more than 30 years) and at least a child from their marriage, a total of 8 couples (8 wives and 8 husbands) were chosen. The couples were selected by purposeful sampling for this study as they voluntarily participated in the face to face interview. This was determined on the basis of theoretical saturation (the point in data collection when new data no longer bring additional insights to perception of meaning in life). As

Seidman (1998) puts it, “the criteria for determining the numbers of participants depended on sufficiency and saturation of information” (p. 48).

Analysis

The research analysis in this study produced a total of three groups of data (the meaning of life, marriage meaning and marital meaning). The meaning of life has four main themes that are related to participants’ perception of meaning in life. Marriage meaning has five main themes and marital meaning has three main themes. As mentioned earlier, two groups of data emerged from individual experience participants and the marital meaning come from their experience from marital life. Findings have shown in Figure 1-3 below.

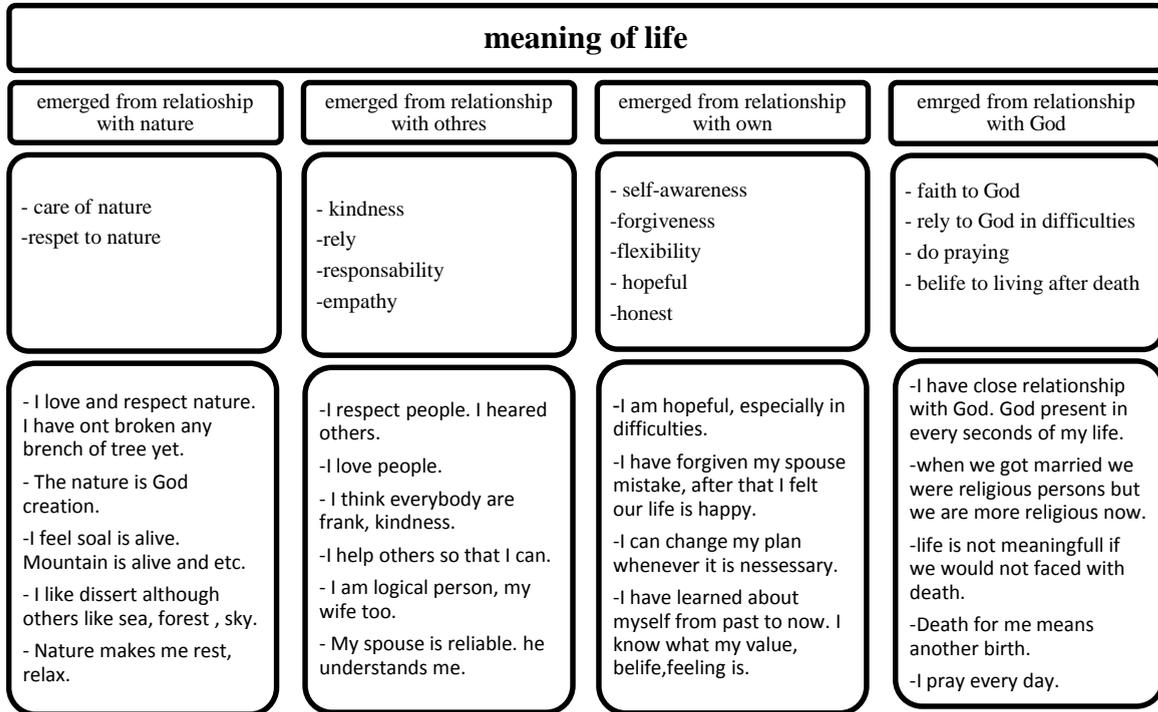


Figure 1. Themes, Connected Coding and Quotations of meaning of life

The contents of meaning of life in satisfied couple have emerged from relationship with God, own, others and nature.

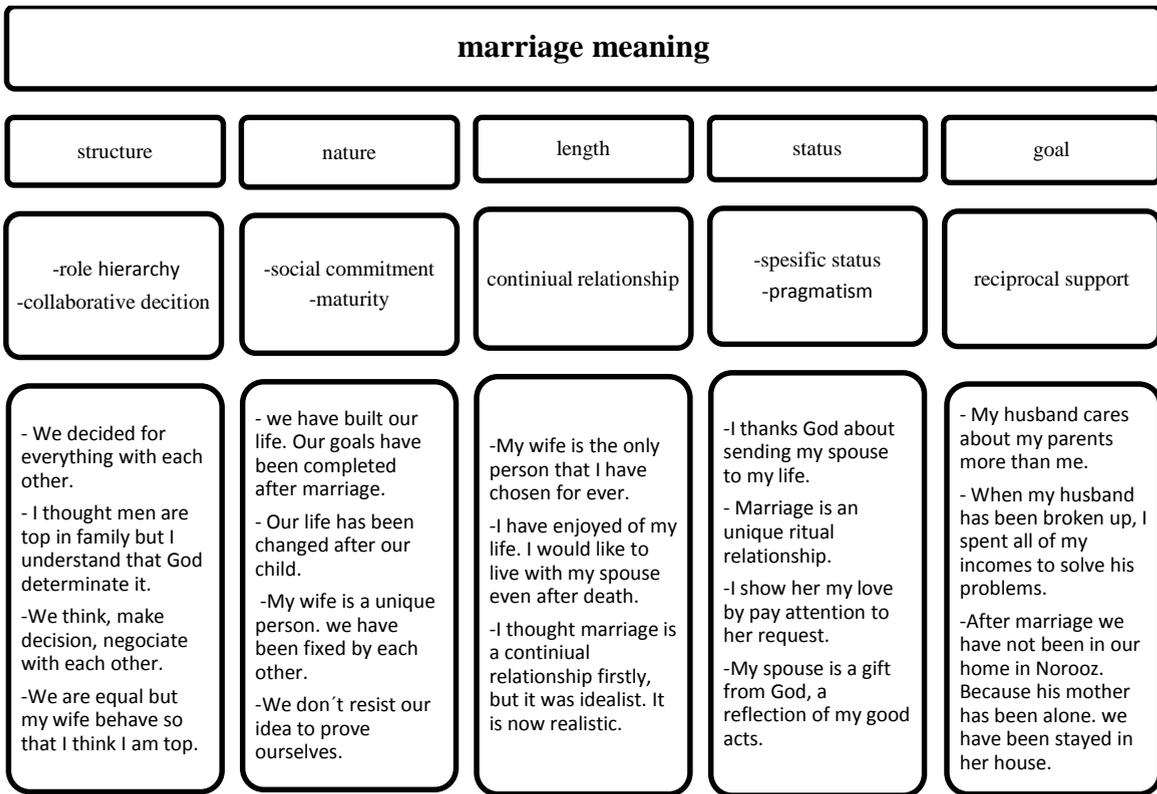


Figure 2. Themes, Connected Coding and Quotations of marriage meaning

The contents of marriage meaning in satisfied couple have addressed in goal, status, leant, nature and structure of marriage.

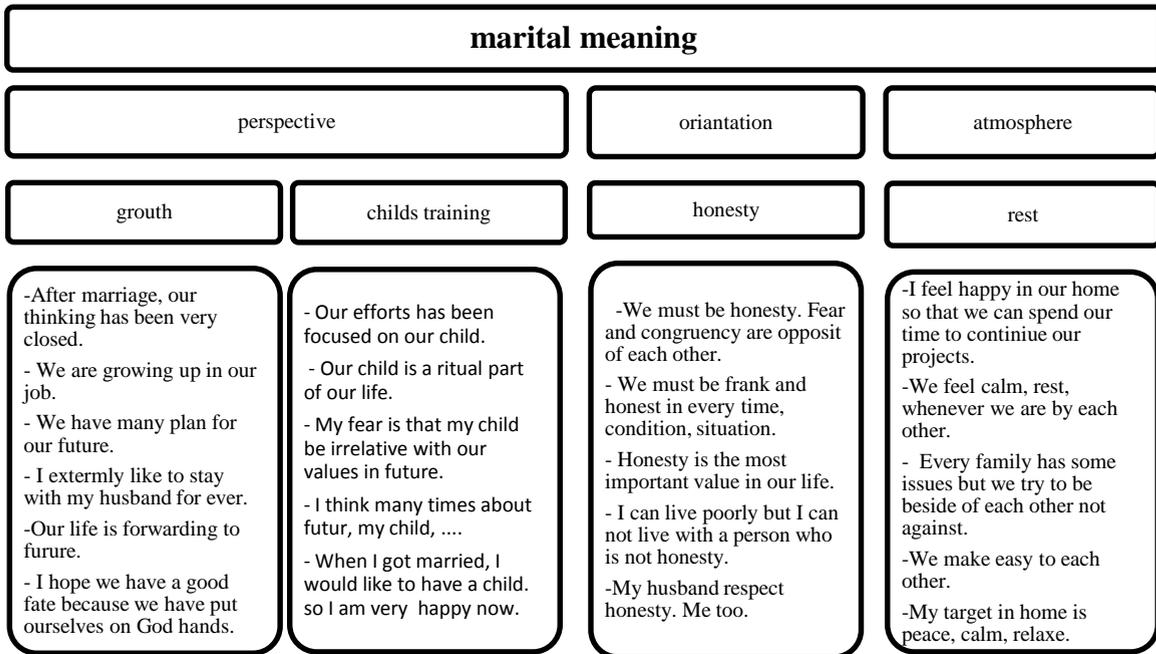


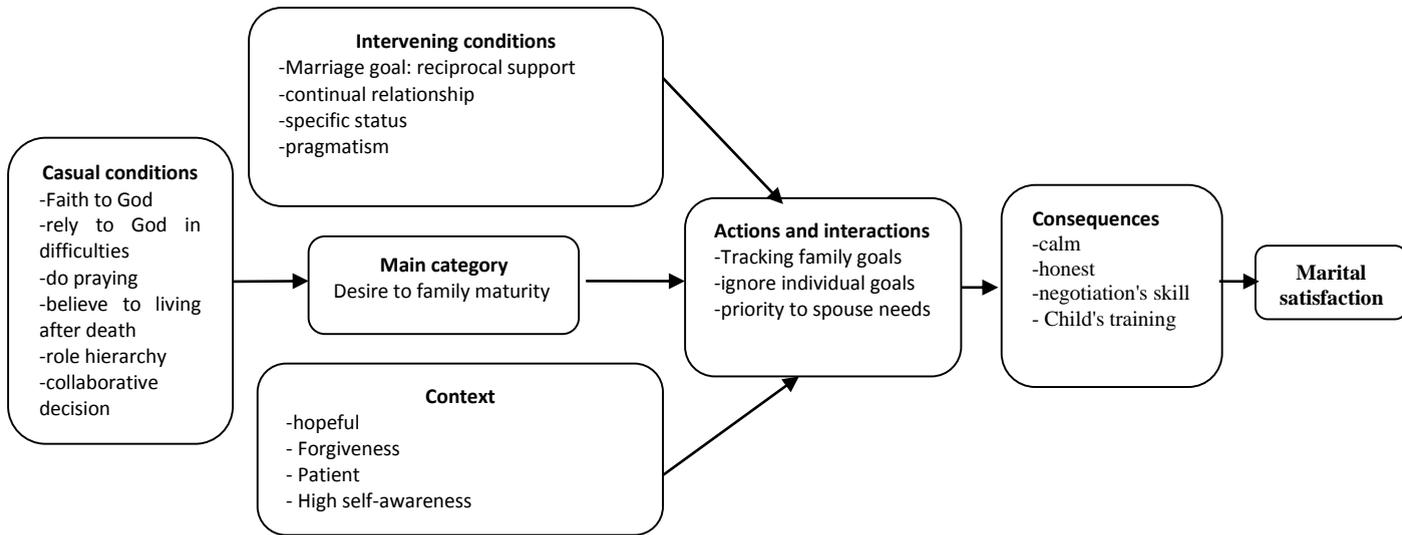
Figure 3. Themes, Connected Coding and Quotations of marital meaning

The contents of marital meaning in satisfied couple have addressed in atmosphere, orientation and perspective of marital.

Conclusion

Satisfied couples believed their atmosphere of marital life is based on rest. God remember makes rest in couples hearts (Holy Koran, raad, 28) and therefore help them to solve their difficulties life. Honesty has seen as a fundamental human communication and faith criterion In Islamic view (Holy Koran, nahl, 115). It's also one of the most important criterions for marital stability. Lack of honesty opens many issues in family. Based on (Holy Koran, forgan, 74), education a competency generation is a main goal for families. Heaton & Pratt (2004) reported that there is positive and significant correlation in couples between ritual acts and honesty. Religious beliefs effects on family and family communications showed itself in giving meaning to life and marital relationship, acting based on ritual acts, avoidance of guilt and toleration about family problems (Badee et. al., 2012).

As seen, individual meaning of life contents based on human nature and many effects on family relationship. Couples who participate in present research reported they do ritual acts continually. Resist on doing ritual acts and faith to God lead to marital satisfaction. Mahone et al. (2003) believed religious could be oriented for marriage. With having religious values, Couples moved to pledge their marriage (Pargament & Mahone, 2005, p. 180) and consider it far from other worldly relationships (Lambert & Dolahite, 2008).



Meaning paradigm in Iranian couples with high marital satisfaction

Findings showed congruency in meaning, cooperative in making the common mean and ability in negotiation leads to satisfy in couples. Our sampling members were close and had congruency meaning, extremely desire to negotiate, openness in changing prior meaning. Also they cooperate to make and reach to new common meaning. Gordon & et. al. (2009) reported forgiveness has related with couple functions and marital satisfaction. Also Backus (2009) noted quality of marital communication relates with forgiveness. Indeed there is positive significant relationship between forgiveness and family satisfaction ($p < 0/01$). Owen & et. al. (2011) suggested commitment to marriage and marriage importance in persons mind effects in relation leant. One of aspects of marital relationship from other kind or relation is consistence. Most of persons consider marriage as a continual relationship that persons are obliged to persist on commitment with her/his spouse (Willoughby, 2010). Emmons (2000) noted the connection between forgiveness and positive relationships with God, own and others (Spilka et al., 2003, p. 237).

Findings of Cobb, Dravil & Bradbury (2001) showed how positive perception about spouse desire makes and continue affective security, supportive behaviors and marital satisfaction. Happy couples assert on power equally (Kirchler, 1989) and believe they experience kindness (Handwerker, 1989) in their relationships (saeedean, navabe negad & kiamanesh, 2010).

Findings of present research showed effects of individual meaning of life in marriage and marital meaning. Besides congruency in meaning, cooperative in making the common mean and ability in negotiation leads to satisfy in couples. Meaning of life and religion believes revealed itself in satisfied relationship.

Iranian couples with high marital satisfaction have a close relationship with God and serving His purpose helps them to perceive life to be meaningful. We suggest using meaning of life dimensions to design enrichment methods for other Iranian couples. Indeed giving awareness to younger, teenagers and Childs about multi dimension of marital could save them from learning irrational believes about function and relationship marital. Also we suggest unite premarital family counseling (goals, nature, status and structure), solving problem and negotiation skills be considered for them.

Family is main source of satisfying affection needs in society. Satisfied couple countered with problems as other couples but they stay besides each other and try to solve problems. When couples are in a space full of rest and empathy, they learn to express their worries without fear. Then they received suitable attention and appropriate

answer. It makes them feel support from their spouse and enforces these actions in each other. Continuing of this behavior leads to common understanding about subjects, meanings and marital satisfaction finally.

Present research had some limitations too. As our target was exploration the contents of meaning that leads to marital satisfaction, study was done in satisfied couple only. Therefore our results limited to families with simulate our sample. Also we don't know with changing contents, marital satisfaction how would be. We suggest more study in variety samples done. As establish and growing up meaning is, we suggest long term view to this issue to have health families and society next.

References

- Backus, L. N. (2009). *Establishing links between desecration, forgiveness and marital quality during pregnancy*. Master of Arts Dissertation, Graduate College of Bowling Green States University.
- Badee, A., Galale, M., & Oboude, s. (2012). Exploration the relationship between spiritual quotient and marital satisfaction. *The first international congress Religious and culture*. Tehran: Tehran University and Psychology and counseling Organization.
- Baumeister R. F. (1991) *Meanings of Life*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Frankl, V. E. (1984). *Man's search for meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Gordon, K.C., Hughes, F.M., Tomcik, N.D., Dixon, L.J., & Litzinger, S.C. (2009). Widening spheres of impact: The role of forgiveness in marital and family functioning. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(1), 1-13.
- Govahee gahan, F.(2007). *Examination relationship between meaning in life and marital satisfaction in Iranian couples refer to counseling clinic with others in Tehran city*. MA dissertation, behzeste and tavanbakhshe University.
- Hall, S. S. (2006). Marital meaning: Exploring young adults' belief systems about marriage. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27 (10), 1437-1458.
- Heaton, T.B. & Pratt, E.L. (2004). The Effects of Religious Homogamy on Marital Satisfaction and Stability, *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 11(2): 191-207.
- Holy Koran.
- Kalantarkousheh, S. M., Hassan, S. A. (2010). Function of life meaning and marital communication among Iranian spouses in University Putra Malaysia. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5 (2010) 1646–1649.
- Lambert, N. M., & Dolahite, D.C. (2008). The Threefold Cord: Marital Commitment in Religious Couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29(5), 592-614.
- McCann, J. T., & Biaggio, m. k. (1989). Sexual satisfaction in marriage as function of life meaning. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 18(1), 59-72.
- Mohamad, M., AbdRazak, A., & Mutiu .S. (2011). Meaning in Life among Muslim Students. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30 (2011), PP. 743 – 747.
- Mahoney, A., Pargament, K.I., Murray-Swank, A. B., & Murray-Swank, N. (2003). Sanctification of family relationships. *Review of Religious Research*, 44, 220–236.
- Owen, J., Rhoades, G.K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H.J. (2011). The revised commitment inventory: Psychometrics and use with unmarried couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 32, 820-841.
- Pargament, K. L., & Mahoney, A. (2005). Sacred matters: Sanctification as a vital topic for the psychology of religion. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 15, 179-198.
- Rezaee, J., Ahmadi, S. A., & Mousave, S. R. (2012). Exploration the relationship between marital satisfaction and spiritual tendencies in couple students Isfahan University. *The first international congress Religious and culture*. Tehran: Tehran University and Psychology and counseling Organization.
- Saeedean, F., Navabe negad, Sh., & kiamanesh, A. (2001). *Exploration the relationship between power structure with marital conflicts*. Tazeha & pazhoheshhayeh moshavere. 7(28), 35-51.
- Spilka, B., Hood, R. W., Hunsberger, B., & Gorsuch, k. (c2003). *The psychology of religion: an empirical approach*. Mohammad dehghane. (persian translator). 3th ed. Tehran: Roshd publication. 2012.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Willoughby, B.J. (2010). Marital attitude trajectories across adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39, 1305-1317.
- Wolf, D. (1997). *The psychology of religion*. Mohammad dehghane. (persian translator). ed. Tehran: Roshd publication. 2009: 358.