

# Investigate the Relationship between Marital Satisfaction and Parenting Self-Efficacy among Parents of Primary School Students

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** Parenting Self-Efficacy is a very important cognitive construction of the individual assessment of their capability or competency to fulfill their parental role and implies it is favorable and encouraging. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy among primary school students' parents in Khomeini Shahr city, Iran.

**Methods:** A correlation study on 104 parents of primary school students was carried out in Khomeini Shahr city. Data were collected by demographic, parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction questionnaires and were analyzed by SPSS version 20.0 software.

**Results:** The findings showed that the mean and standard deviation of participant's age was  $36 \pm 5.17$ . Half of the participants were women. The highest education level of 48% was diploma, 37% just went to primary school and 15% went to university. According to the Pearson correlation test there is a significant correlation among total parenting Self-Efficacy score, its domains and marital satisfaction ( $r=0.362$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Among the different domains of parenting Self-Efficacy, feelings and emotions of children and the pressure were not significantly correlated with marital satisfaction. The highest correlation was found between the domain of discipline and marital satisfaction ( $r=0.092$ ,  $p=0.372$ ).

**Conclusion:** The findings of this study indicate a direct and significant relationship between parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction. It is recommended that schools and other educational institute organize educational intervention to increase marital satisfaction and successful parenting.

**Key words:** Parenting Self-Efficacy, Marital Satisfaction, Parents, Iran

## Introduction

Parent's opinions about, and being capable of affecting their child in a way that raises their confidence adjustment and development are called "parenting Self-Efficacy"(1).

Parenting Self-Efficacy can be described as one of the main determinants of effective and positive parental behaviors (2).

Parenting Self-Efficacy is based on Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory. This theory explains that previous experiences of completing tasks efficaciously are the most effective way of creating strong feelings of Self-Efficacy (3). According to this theory the level of a person's Self-Efficacy controls how much strength they are willing to employ when meeting a condition(4).

Therefore, prior experiences of success in certain events shape confidence in an individual's ability to influence future opportunities and produce desired consequences. As a result, experiences of struggle, difficulty, and challenge may weaken or deteriorate a person's emotional state of efficacy. On the other hand, parenting Self-Efficacy beliefs are described as the individual's own evaluation of his/her abilities to be a successful and competent parent(5).

It is noticeable that parents are the main factor in warranting the healthy physical, emotional and social, cognitive development of their child. Previous studies demonstrated that the onset of behavioral problems in early childhood have been related with later problems, comprising: illegal behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental and physical health problems(6).

Recently numerous researchers in various majors have paid attention to parenting Self-Efficacy(7).

Likewise the influence of various main related factors such as demographic factor comprising: age, income, parity, educational level, marital status, partner support and quality of partner relationship on parenting Self-Efficacy have been examined in numerous studies(2).

One of the main related factors to parenting Self-Efficacy is marital quality, which has a robust effect on parental well-being, the family functioning as well as child development(8).

Marital satisfaction was rated according to desire and satisfaction among marriage. This concept was determined according to people's ideals and couples' interactions in various aspects of their lives that contribute to a parent's mental health and to control stress and facilitate a properly functional family(9).

Previous studies revealed that a suitable marital relationship is related to desirable effects on child outcomes as well as parent-child relationship and parenting (4).

Similarly, individuals with suitable marital satisfaction have vigorous and good nutrition, and less psychological difficulties such as depression (10).

However there are some controversies and disagreements in the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy(8), for instance several studies indicated that parents who have perception of high level of Self-Efficacy have low level of stress whereas low level of parental Self-Efficacy has been associated with divorce proneness that indicates lower level of marital satisfaction(8, 11). In some studies parenting Self-Efficacy was not related to marital satisfaction(12).

Considering the importance of parenting and its impact on the overall health and social, emotional and cognitive development of the child, as well as the effect on the performance and psychological adjustment of parents, as well as the differences between researchers regarding the relationship among marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy; this study was performed to examine the correlation among marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy among parents of primary school students in Khomeini Shahr city.

## Methods

### 1. Study design and population

This correlational study was conducted in both fathers and mothers of primary school students who were recruited by multistage random sampling, in Khomeini Shahr city, Iran, in 2017.

### 2. Methods

At first 4 primary schools in Khomeini Shahr city were selected randomly, then 150 students who were 7 and 8 years old were entered based on random number table. The parents of selected students were invited to participate to the study by phone call. One hundred and twelve parents answered the invitation; responding rate was 74.6%. Interested parents were evaluated for inclusion. Only four pair (8 parents) who did not completely fill out questionnaires, were excluded. Consent was achieved from the chiefs of the 4 primary schools in Khomeini Shahr city, and all participants gave their agreement before participating in this study. A total of 52 questionnaires from mothers and 52 questionnaires from fathers were collected; the reappearance rate was 92.8% which was acceptable.

### 3. Measuring tools

Demographic and marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy data were measured through self-report questionnaires.

To achieve pertinent information regarding participants' sex, age, number of children, education and employment status a demographic questionnaire was used.

**ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire:** This questionnaire contains 47 items; which need to be responded to on a 5-point Likert scale (1= completely agree, 2= agree, 3= not agree not disagree, 4= disagree, and 5= totally disagree). Scores range is from 47 to 235, the higher scores demonstrating better marital satisfaction. The Persian version of this questionnaire is valid among

the Iranian population. This questionnaire was tested in previous studies and its validity and reliability was approved(13).

The parenting Self-Efficacy was measured by TOPSE which is a program evaluation questionnaire and takes into account the experiences and opinions of parents from a diverse range of educational, cultural and social backgrounds(6). The theoretical supporting of TOPSE is based on the Albert Bandura Self-Efficacy questionnaire(14). This multi-dimensional questionnaire consist of 48 items within eight subscales, each subscale having six items and demonstrating a divergent aspect of parenting: play and enjoyment, emotion and affection, empathy and understanding, discipline and boundaries, control, pressures, self-acceptance, knowledge and learning. Rated on an 11-point Likert scale where 0 exemplifies totally disagrees and 10 represents totally agree. The scale contains negatively and positive phrased items and the answers are summed to make a total score; the lower the score indicates the lower level of Parenting Self-Efficacy(15).

All items of this instrument were translated from English to Persian, and then back-translated to English by 2 expert translators. Inconsistencies among the Persian and English forms were evaluated and discussed through an appraisal meeting. The cultural relevance and content validity of the instrument was assessed by an expert panel. The panel contained 8 experts with experience in fields of health education and promotion and psychology. An expert panel agreed that the translated items were culturally relevant and valid among the Iranian population.

#### 4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria for inclusion were that parents must (a) be able to read and write, (b) were the biological father or mother of at least one child 7 or 8 years old, and (c) be married to the biological parent of this child, (d) be interested in participating. They were excluded if they had filled out the questionnaire incompletely.

#### 5. Ethical consideration

The Research Ethics committee in Isfahan Medical University approved the moral ethics in our study. A license from Isfahan University of Medical Sciences and Education Department of Khomeini Shahr City was acquired. Questionnaires were analyzed anonymously by the research team.

#### 6. Data Analyses

Data were evaluated by SPSS version 20.0 and by descriptive statistics, chi-square test, T-test and were applied to compare groups on the demographic items. Pearson correlations, with pairwise deletion of missing data, were applied to examine relationships between the parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction. The level of Statistical significant was set as 0.05.

## Results

The results indicated that the mean age and mean number of children of participants respectively were  $36\pm 5.17$ ,  $2\pm 0.62$ . Half of the participants were women. Most of the participants (48%) had Diploma. About 47% of the participants were employed and 50% were non-employed, it is noteworthy that housewives were considered as non-employed. In case of marital satisfaction scores, 41.2% of the participants had a great satisfaction and none of them were very unsatisfied (Table 1). To assess the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy scores Pearson's correlation coefficient was used; the results are shown in Table 2. According to the Pearson correlation test, there was a significant relationship among Parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction scores ( $r= 0.362$ ,  $p= 0.001$ ), Therefore by the increase of marital satisfaction, Parenting Self-Efficacy, also increased. Likewise Pearson correlation coefficient showed that between the parenting Self-Efficacy score and fields of play and enjoyment, empathy and understanding, child control, discipline boundaries self-acceptance, learning and knowledge with marital satisfaction score there are a direct relationship ( $p<0.001$ ), but no relationship were observed with the fields of emotion and affection of children and pressures. The mean score for parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction respectively were  $326\pm 50$ ,  $61\pm 16.3$ .

Among the different components of parenting Self-Efficacy, only two components, emotion and affection of children and pressures did not have a significant correlation with marital satisfaction. The highest correlation was found between discipline and boundaries components and marital satisfaction ( $r=0.092$ ,  $p=0.372$ ). The results of Pearson correlation coefficient showed that the age of parents with learning and knowledge component and number of children with pressures component had an inverse relationship. However, there was no significant relationship with other parenting Self-Efficacy component and parental marital satisfaction score (Table 3). The results of Spearman correlation coefficient showed that the level of education of parents with learning and knowledge component score had a direct relationship. However, there was no significant relationship with other parenting Self-Efficacy component and parental marital satisfaction score (Table 3).

The results of Chi-square test showed that there was no significant difference between the parenting Self-Efficacy total scores and employment status of parents. Based on Chi-square test results, the parenting Self-Efficacy total scores employed and non-employed parents was significant only in the dimension of pressure. The descriptive results of the study are summarized in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

## Discussion

The present study's aim was to determine the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy among primary school students parent, in Khomeini Shahr city in 2017. The results revealed that there is a significant relationship among parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction total scores.

**Table 1: Frequency distribution of marital satisfaction level of the parents**

| Marital satisfaction | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Very low             | 0      | 0       |
| Low                  | 11     | 10.8    |
| Medium               | 36     | 35.3    |
| High                 | 42     | 41.2    |
| Very High            | 13     | 12.7    |

**Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficients between marital satisfaction and parenting Self-Efficacy total score and its components in the parent study**

| Parenting Self-Efficacy Total Score and Its Components | Marital satisfaction |         |
|--|----------------------|---------|
|  | r                    | P-value |
| Emotion and Affection                                  | 0.089                | 0.383   |
| Play and Enjoyment                                     | 0.278                | 0.005   |
| Empathy and Understanding                              | 0.325                | 0.001   |
| Control  | 0.228                | 0.025   |
| Discipline and Boundaries                              | 0.422                | <0.001  |
| Pressures  | 0.092                | -0.372  |
| Self-Acceptance  | 0.252                | 0.012   |
| Learning and Knowledge                                 | 0.330                | 0.001   |
| Total TOPSE  | 0.362                | <0.001  |

TOPSE= Tool to measure Parenting Self-Efficacy

**Table 3: Pearson correlation coefficient between age, number of children and Spearman correlation coefficient between educational level with parenting Self-Efficacy total score and its components and marital satisfaction total score in the parent study**

| Parenting Self-Efficacy Total Score and Its Components | Age    |         | N-Child |         | Level of Education |         |
|--|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------|
|  | r      | P-value | r       | P-value | R                  | P-value |
| Emotion and Affection                                  | -0.190 | 0.060   | -0.095  | 0.352   | 0.064              | 0.527   |
| Play and Enjoyment                                     | 0.041  | 0.690   | -0.084  | 0.407   | 0.039              | 0.704   |
| Empathy and Understanding                              | -0.186 | 0.065   | -0.071  | 0.483   | -0.012             | 0.907   |
| Control  | -0.029 | 0.778   | -0.082  | 0.425   | 0.060              | 0.560   |
| Discipline and Boundaries                              | -0.119 | 0.248   | 0.023   | 0.826   | 0.011              | 0.916   |
| Pressures  | 0.058  | 0.574   | -0.218  | 0.033   | -0.169             | 0.100   |
| Self-Acceptance  | 0.053  | 0.607   | 0.049   | 0.631   | -0.088             | 0.390   |
| Learning and Knowledge                                 | -0.276 | 0.006   | -0.103  | 0.314   | 0.283              | 0.005   |
| Total TOPSE  | -0.119 | 0.257   | -0.108  | 0.304   | 0.024              | 0.817   |
| Marital Satisfaction                                   | 0.068  | 0.499   | 0.197   | 0.049   | 0.030              | 0.768   |

These findings are similar to those of Kwok and colleagues in the Hong Kong population(4). The Bryanton study reviews the predictors of early parenting Self-Efficacy; the results showed that Parents who had more satisfaction with their marital relationship had higher parenting Self-Efficacy(2).

Among eight dimensions of parenting Self-Efficacy; there was direct relationship between six dimensions: play and enjoyment, empathy and understanding, child control, discipline and boundaries, self-acceptance, learning and knowledge with marital satisfaction score ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The relationship between parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction has been confirmed in several studies for example, Kwan study(8), and Stutzman study which

indicated that marital satisfaction has a positive effect on child development(16). As well in the study of Chang and colleagues, the quality of marital relationship has an inverse correlation with children's behavioral problems(8). The results of the present study revealed that there is a reverse and significant relationship between age with knowledge and learning score; there is no significant relationship with other areas; the reason can be stated that with increasing age, knowledge and learning of parents decreases.

In contrast with our findings various researcher suggested that older fathers may have Haier resource and fathering role identification(17).

The results of the present study indicated that between the numbers of children with pressure scores there is a reverse and significant relationship; the reason for this can be the experience and ability of parents to grow with their children, and parents with more children naturally had more experience in this field and felt less pressure.

The study also revealed that there is a direct correlation between the level of education and the knowledge and learning domain score ( $r= 0.283$ ,  $p= 0.005$ ). This finding points to the necessity for intervention for fathers with lower literacy level.

The present study's results revealed that there is no significant relationship between sex with parenting, Self-Efficacy total score and its domains ( $p>0.05$ ); contrary to these findings, the results of study by Kwan and colleagues showed that the father's role in the care of their children is less than mothers(8).

The present study's results showed that there is a significant relationship between employment status and pressure scores; and employed parents, although having less time, can better manage the pressures.

The present study's results revealed that there was no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and educational level; this finding was in alignment with the study and uneven with the studies of Heshmati(18), Azarian(19), Ziaei(13), and Kwan(8).

These findings are confirmed by other similar studies(20). In contrast with our findings in some studies in our country marital satisfaction was higher among those with higher education (8, 13, 18, 19).

It seems that the lack of correlation between these two variables is that only the attention to the level of education cannot be regarded as indicative of an increase in the level of culture and a factor for adaptation in marital relations. Also, the results of this study revealed that there was no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and age, which was aligned with the study of Alder and colleagues(20), Ismail and colleagues(21) and Ziaei and colleagues(13) study and uneven with the Kwok(4) study.

Also, the results of the present study revealed that there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the number of children. This finding was consistent with the Kwan study(8) and inconsistent with the Ismail(21), Ziaei(13) and Kwok(4) studies.

Also, the results of this study showed that there is no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and gender ( $P=0.348$ ).

Additionally, there was no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and employment status; contrary to our study, Kwan's study (8) showed that the employment situation is a significant negative predictor for marital satisfaction of fathers.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to our study. Firstly, although the size of the sample was acceptable, broader generalizing must importune a larger and more diverse sample. Second, we can use self-reporting tools to study the variables of the study, and also because the research project is of a correlation type, cognitive explanations and explanations cannot be deduced from its findings.

## Conclusion

The results of the study indicate a significant and direct relationship between parenting Self-Efficacy and marital satisfaction. Hence, it is recommended that schools and other educational institute organize educational intervention to increase marital satisfaction and successful parenting.

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