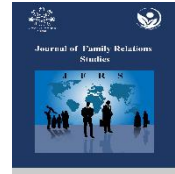




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Research Paper

The Role of Neuroticism, Marital Empathy, and Marital Forgiveness in Predicting Marital Satisfaction in Married Women



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research was conducted to investigate the role of neuroticism, marital empathy, and marital forgiveness in predicting marital satisfaction in married women.

Methods: The research method utilized in the present study was the correlation-regression method. The research population comprised married women residing in the geographical area of Lorestan province. The research sample was selected using the multi-stage cluster random sampling method, with a total of 840 participants. The instruments of the present study comprised standard questionnaires, including the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale, the NEO-FFI Questionnaire, the Marital Empathy Scale, and the Marital Forgiveness Scale. Employing SPSS software, the acquired data underwent comprehensive analysis.

Results: Through multiple linear regression, the model explains 46% of marital satisfaction variance. Standardized coefficients highlight neuroticism's adverse impact, while empathy and forgiveness positively influence satisfaction. A unit increase in forgiveness and empathy corresponds to 0.349 and 0.285 satisfaction units, respectively, whereas neuroticism predicts a 0.324 unit decrease. Hierarchically, forgiveness exerts the greatest influence, followed by neuroticism and empathy.

Conclusion: This research emphasizes the need to address neuroticism, encourage marital empathy, and promote forgiveness as essential factors enhancing marital satisfaction, offering valuable insights for individuals and professionals in family counseling, therapy, and policymaking.

1. Introduction

Marital satisfaction demonstrates a robust correlation with both physical and mental health, as heightened levels of such satisfaction among individuals are inversely associated with the prevalence of depression and anxiety, whereas diminished marital satisfaction is positively linked to elevated negative self-perceptions of aging, accompanied by an increase in symptoms indicative of anxiety and depression (Yang et al., 2023;

Kasalova et al., 2017). Furthermore, marital satisfaction appears to function as a protective factor, potentially mitigating the impact of stressors such as a pandemic, leading to diminished stress levels and fewer manifestations of anxiety and depression (Fernandes-Pires et al., 2023). The recent alarming escalation in separation and divorce rates, as evidenced by global research, underscores a disconcerting trend where nearly

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two-thirds of inaugural matrimonial unions culminate in divorce, thereby highlighting the challenges associated with attaining and sustaining marital contentment, consequently accentuating the diminishing levels of matrimonial satisfaction (Czechowska-Bieluga & Lewicka-Zelent, 2021).

In the realm of marital relationships, extant scholarly investigations have consistently demonstrated an incontrovertible association between heightened levels of neuroticism and a discernible diminution in the overall satisfaction derived from matrimonial unions. (Brudek & Kaleta, 2023; Parpae et al., 2022; Hoesni & Zakaria, 2022; Abid et al., 2022; Sayehmiri et al., 2020). Neuroticism, a personality trait characterized by affective instability and challenges in adapting to various situations, can be consistently associated with unfavorable outcomes, including heightened negative emotions, increased susceptibility to adverse health conditions, elevated mortality risk, and incurring substantial societal costs, thereby underscoring its profound impact on individual well-being and interpersonal relationships (Park et al., 2023; Butler et al., 2023; Cao et al., 2019). Neuroticism has been identified as a potential contributor to enduring vulnerabilities within couples, influencing their capacity to navigate stress (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Karney & Bradbury, 1997). These enduring vulnerabilities, although not conclusively determined, may exert a notable impact on how couples adapt to challenging experiences. Negative communication patterns could potentially emerge as a consequence of these enduring vulnerabilities, thereby constituting a noteworthy factor in marital dissatisfaction. Research findings consistently indicate an association between neuroticism and negative communication (Caughlin et al., 2000), as well as interpersonal conflicts in daily life (Bolger & Schilling, 1991). Individuals with elevated levels of neuroticism may tend to express negative emotions more frequently compared to those with lower levels of neuroticism (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004), potentially leading to the development of chronic negative emotions that significantly impact marital adjustment (Bouchard et al., 1999). This inclination may result from the negative affectivity associated with neuroticism, suggesting that individuals with heightened neuroticism may be less inclined to perceive their partners in an idealized manner, which can contribute to diminished levels of marital adjustment (Murray et al., 1996). Furthermore, individuals characterized by high negative affectivity may engage in making unfavorable negative attributions regarding their partners and relationship issues, thereby fostering more negative evaluations of the relationship (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004). The interplay of neuroticism levels between spouses significantly influences their perceptions of marital quality, as evidenced by various studies (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Karney & Bradbury, 1997;

Kurdek, 1991). The reciprocal impact is particularly notable, with men partnered with emotionally unstable women reporting diminished satisfaction across multiple domains of marital contentment, and women's dissatisfaction correlating with the emotional instability of their husbands (Shackelford & Buss, 2000). Moreover, individuals characterized by higher neuroticism tend to experience heightened distress in their daily lives due to suboptimal reactions to stressful situations. It is essential to highlight that the magnitude of changes in marital satisfaction is not solely contingent upon neuroticism; however, its potential association may be influenced by the dynamic interplay between neuroticism and stressful events (Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995).

In the domain of conjugal relationships, extant scholarly inquiries have consistently revealed an incontrovertible correlation between elevated levels of empathy and a perceptible augmentation in the overall satisfaction derived from matrimonial unions (Wen et al., 2022; Rajabi et al., 2022; Ghafurian Ghahramani & Mahdavian, 2022; Plopa et al., 2019; Ahmadi Ardakani & Fatemi Oghada, 2019; Łada & Kaźmierczak, 2019; Naderi & Nory, 2017). The construct of empathy comprises cognitive and affective dimensions, with cognitive empathy emphasizing the discernment of others' emotions for nuanced understanding, while affective empathy involves sharing and experientially undergoing those emotions (Surguladze & Bergen-Cico, 2020). Elevated empathy correlates with increased collaboration, moral contemplation, and satisfaction in interpersonal connections, while research highlights a negative correlation between empathy and narcissism, emphasizing empathy's role in fostering emotional well-being, self-compassion, and robust social networks (Kuhnley et al., 2023; Brett et al., 2023). By engaging in empathetic interactions with their partners, individuals may potentially augment their comprehension of their partner's thoughts and emotions, thereby promoting effective communication and problem-solving prowess (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; Worthington, 2006). Consequently, the intentional and proactive fostering of empathy in relational contexts emerges as an essential process, offering numerous benefits by facilitating a deep comprehension of others' emotions and potentially enhancing satisfaction levels within marital dynamics.

In the context of marital relationships, current scholarly investigations consistently posit a plausible correlation between heightened forgiveness levels and a discernible augmentation in the overall satisfaction derived from conjugal unions (Fupšová & Záhorcová, 2022; Mendes-Teixeira & Duarte, 2021; Jahan et al., 2021; Kaveh Farsani, 2021; Roberts et al., 2021). Individuals with a strong inclination toward forgiveness not only demonstrate a willingness to pardon transgressions but also experience positive emotions, coupled with a reduction in negative

affective states such as anger and hostility, indicating a significant role of forgiveness in interpersonal dynamics, conflict resolution, and the promotion of social bonds, with implications for psychological and physical well-being (Ridge et al., 2023; Yi et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). Unforgiveness within interpersonal relationships may contribute to the initiation and perpetuation of detrimental cycles of interaction, potentially impeding the resolution of conflicts and elevating the risk of engaging in psychologically aggressive behaviors and unproductive communication (Fincham et al., 2004; Fincham & Beach, 2002; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Roberts & Krokoff, 1990). The capacity to both seek forgiveness and extend forgiveness is posited as a particularly efficacious factor influencing the durability and satisfaction of marital relationships (Fenell, 1993). This propensity toward forgiveness not only fosters the reconciliation of partners but also serves to enhance intimacy and facilitate constructive communication, as suggested by Fincham and Beach (2002). In the realm of interpersonal dynamics, the transgressions committed by a partner possess the potential to disrupt the constructive resolution of conflicts, thereby inducing a retreat from the engagement and fostering retaliatory responses. Such reactions, in turn, bear adverse consequences on the goodwill extended toward the spouse, the efficacy of conflict resolution endeavors, and the overall marital satisfaction experienced by the individuals involved (Fincham et al., 2004). The investigation of forgiveness within romantic relationships reveals compelling associations with positive outcomes, including enhanced couple adjustment, increased intimacy, and reduced instances of psychological aggression (Gordon, 2003; Paleari et al., 2005; Fincham & Beach, 2002; Finkel et al., 2002). Unforgiveness, characterized by the manifestation of anger, resentment, withdrawal, and the assignment of blame, has been suggested in extant literature to potentially exert a detrimental influence on the overall satisfaction within marital relationships (Gordon et al., 2009; Fincham & Linfield, 1997). The inclination to forgiveness emerges as a potential facilitator of intimacy and emotional recovery in interpersonal relationships (Finkel et al., 2002; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015; Menahem & Love, 2013). Moreover, the literature suggests that forgiveness is linked to various positive outcomes in romantic relationships, such as increased satisfaction, heightened commitment levels, and overall improved relationship quality (Aalgaard et al., 2016; Finkel et al., 2002; Berry & Worthington, 2001). As underscored by collective insights, cultivating and enhancing forgiveness within relationships is associated with potential advantages, fostering a more harmonious and satisfying relational environment, thereby contributing to heightened contentment in marital bonds. Various factors can exert an influence on the degree of

contentment within a marital partnership (Gharadaghi & Masoumi Ala, 2022; Shokrzadeh et al., 2024; Saeedi, 2024). In response to the growing number of reports highlighting an increase in divorce rates and a noticeable decline in marital satisfaction in recent years, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of expanding research efforts to investigate factors relevant to marital contentment. Conducting research, particularly in the examination of concurrent relationships among diverse variables, holds the potential to furnish valuable insights for family counselors, therapists, and policymakers. Such insights, derived from investigations, have the capacity to empower these professionals, enabling them to formulate and implement strategies that are more efficacious in the pursuit of augmenting levels of marital satisfaction. The examination of intricate dynamics influencing marital satisfaction reveals a notable gap in antecedent investigations that have not delved into the simultaneous interplay of the variables outlined in this study as antecedent indicators of marital satisfaction, necessitating further exploration in this realm. Consequently, in pursuit of understanding the intricate dynamics of marital satisfaction among women, this study aims to evaluate the predictive significance of neuroticism, empathy, and forgiveness, aligning with the hypothesis that these factors play a pivotal role in shaping such dynamics.

2. Materials and Methods

The research method utilized in the present study was the correlation-regression method. The research population comprised married women residing in the geographical area of Lorestan province. The research sample was selected using the multi-stage cluster random sampling method, with a total of 840 participants. The study's entry criteria encompassed several key requirements. Firstly, participants needed to self-identify as females and be in a married relationship. Additionally, a prerequisite for inclusion was a certain level of literacy that ensured individuals could effectively read and write. This literacy requirement served as a pivotal factor in guaranteeing the accurate comprehension of the research questions and surveys, thus facilitating participants' ability to provide informed and meaningful responses. Moreover, the selection process heavily relied on the willingness and satisfaction of potential participants to actively engage in the research. On the flip side, exclusion criteria were established to filter out certain individuals. It is noteworthy that specific factors could lead to exclusion from the study. Participants who faced challenges in comprehending and responding to the presented questions were considered for removal from the research, as their contributions might have introduced potential biases or inaccuracies in the data. Additionally, individuals demonstrating a lack of willingness or interest in continuing their participation

were also taken into account for exclusion from the study. Prior to the initiation of the questionnaire completion phase, participants were subjected to comprehensive elucidation, wherein meticulous explications were proffered to ensure their cognizance and comprehension of salient factors. Primarily, the explication extended to the importance of confidentiality and the safeguarding of personal data, thereby assuring participants that their data would be handled with the utmost circumspection and aegis. With a commitment to privacy, participants were unequivocally reassured that their responses would remain anonymous, solely earmarked for research endeavors, strictly adhering to ethical protocols and legal imperatives. Furthermore, participants were explicitly apprised of their unequivocal prerogative to disengage from the research at any juncture, sans any attendant prejudice or deleterious consequence. Comprehensive directives were articulated concerning the accurate completion of questionnaires, thereby ensuring the veracity and uniformity of participant responses. Participants were expressly apprised that responses to queries lacked a prescriptive dichotomy of correctness, cultivating an environment devoid of judgment and conducive to candid and unfeigned responses. The emphasis on precision and veracity served to underscore the gravity of each participant's contribution, cultivating an enhanced comprehension of research objectives and the ramifications of truthful responses. Following rigorous scrutiny of the normality of the amassed data, the subsequent analytical phase involved the deployment of the Pearson correlation test to scrutinize the interrelationships between the variables under investigation. In tandem, the regression test was executed to scrutinize the primary hypothesis positing the role of neuroticism, marital empathy, and marital forgiveness in prognosticating marital satisfaction among married women. To expedite the data analysis process, the statistical software SPSS version 27 was employed.

Research Tools

The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale: This scale, which was initially developed by [Olson et al. \(1987\)](#), has emerged as a comprehensive assessment tool encompassing various facets of marital satisfaction. This scale consists of numerous subscales, including contractual response, marital satisfaction, personality issues, marital communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relations, marriage and children, family and friends, the role of gender equality, and religious orientation. These subscales play a pivotal role in evaluating different dimensions of marital satisfaction, employing the widely used five-point Likert scale. Through this scale, participants can express their level of agreement or disagreement with specific statements, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The ensuing step involves assigning numerical

values from one to five to each answer, providing a quantitative framework for analysis. The Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire, in its original form, demonstrated robust internal consistency with an alpha coefficient of 0.92 ([Olson et al., 1987](#)). This remarkable level of internal consistency points to the dependability and coherence of the questionnaire, suggesting that it effectively captures and assesses marital satisfaction comprehensively and accurately. Moreover, [Soleimanian \(1994\)](#) contributed to the development of the scale by presenting a succinct version comprising 47 questions, further validating its effectiveness in capturing essential aspects of marital satisfaction. This validation study shed light on the reliability of the scale, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84. Furthermore, in two other studies conducted separately, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the short version was reported as 0.95 ([Vojdany et al., 2014](#); [Khademi et al., 2015](#)).

The NEO Five Personality Factor Questionnaire (NEO-FFI): This questionnaire served as the evaluative instrument in this research, specifically focusing on the neuroticism trait. Comprising a comprehensive array of 60 inquiries meticulously crafted to gauge diverse facets of personality, each participant engaged in assigning numerical values spanning the continuum from zero to four. Responses ranged from strong agreement to strong disagreement, thus furnishing a nuanced assessment. Developed to scrutinize the quintessential personality factors, namely neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, this questionnaire distributed 12 questions per factor, yielding individual scores ranging from 0 to 48 ([Costa & McCrae, 1992](#)). After the meticulous exploration conducted by [Koucheki et al. \(2022\)](#), the reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness stood at 0.87, 0.85, 0.75, 0.81, and 0.88, respectively. Correspondingly, [Rabiee et al. \(2023\)](#) underscored coefficients of 0.83, 0.81, 0.67, 0.72, and 0.77 for identical personality traits.

The Marital Empathy Scale: This scale, which was initially developed by [Jolliffe and Farrington in 2006](#), is designed to evaluate and measure the various aspects of empathy within the context of relationships. The scale comprises a total of 20 items, meticulously designed to encompass the cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy that play a critical role in interpersonal interactions within a relationship. By utilizing a five-point Likert scale that spans from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the empathy scale enables individuals to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements provided, thus facilitating the assessment of empathy within the marital context. [Albiero et al. \(2009\)](#) conducted a study where they confirmed the validity and

reliability of this scale. The validity of the findings was determined by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which produced noteworthy results. The total scale had a coefficient of 0.87, demonstrating strong reliability. Furthermore, the emotional subscale had a coefficient of 0.86, indicating its high reliability as well. The cognitive subscale also showcased good reliability with a coefficient of 0.74. These findings highlight the robustness and consistency of the scale. The reliability of this scale in Iran has been assessed to be between 0.74 and 0.80 using Cronbach's alpha method, and between 0.72 and 0.80 using the retest method, demonstrating a reasonably satisfactory level of reliability (Jafari et al., 2017). Additionally, they found that the construct validity of this scale was supported by the results of factor analysis using principal components. Similarly, Mohammadi Farshi et al. (2022) reported a reliability of 0.84 for the tool, based on Cronbach's alpha.

The Marital Offence-Specific Forgiveness Scale: This scale, which was developed by Paleari et al. in 2009, comprises a total of 10 items specifically designed to measure forgiveness within the landscape of marital relationships. The primary objective of this scale is to evaluate the extent to which individuals exhibit forgiveness, particularly by examining their disposition towards benevolence and their avoidance of anger within the marital context. The scale requires participants to make choices within a range of options that range from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with each answer being assigned a score between one and six. It should be noted that when calculating the total score, if only marital forgiveness is being measured, the scoring for the Anger-Avoidance subscale is reversed. Upon analyzing the results of Pallari et al.'s (2009) study, it was found that the benevolence subscale demonstrated Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.80 for men and 0.75 for women, indicating good internal consistency. Similarly, the anger-avoidance subscale exhibited coefficients of 0.83 for men and 0.79 for women, attesting to its reliability. The validation process of the questionnaire yielded satisfactory results in terms of both validity and reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis provided compelling evidence for the presence of two distinct factors within the questionnaire, namely benevolence and anger-avoidance. In Iran, a study was conducted by Azarkish et al. (2017) wherein they determined and confirmed the face and

content validity of this scale. During the post-test phase, its reliability was reported with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.74. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Ragabi et al. (2017) conducted an additional study in which they reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.91 for this scale. This coefficient signifies a high level of internal consistency, indicating that the items within the scale are highly correlated and accurately measure the construct being assessed.

3. Results

In scrutinizing the demographic profile of the study's participants, an examination of age distribution has revealed an average age of 36.59 years. This pivotal metric serves as a fundamental determinant of central age tendency across diverse age cohorts. The concomitant standard deviation, quantified at 7.928, emerges as a crucial quantitative measure, encapsulating the span of age dispersion within the dataset. Noteworthy is the observation that the age spectrum encapsulated in this investigation spans the gamut from the age of 15 to the more seasoned age of 62, thereby indicative of a markedly heterogeneous age distribution amongst the study's participants. Furthermore, the study's findings underscore that, on average, participants have been wedded for approximately 14.72 years. This finding underscores the substantial temporal and resource investments dedicated to the cultivation and perpetuation of these marital unions. Augmenting this insight is the standard deviation of 8.198, providing discerning perspectives into the variances surrounding the temporal dimensions of participants' matrimonial affiliations. With marriage durations ranging from 1 year to 43 years, the participant pool furnishes an exemplary foundation for the examination of the examined variables. An exploration into the educational attainments of the respondents has delineated a prevailing preponderance of individuals endowed with diploma-level education. In contrast, those with educational accomplishments at the master's level or beyond constitute the demographic with the highest educational achievement. Notably, the lowest echelon of educational attainment is discerned among individuals whose qualifications fall short of the diploma threshold. The encapsulation of the descriptive indices of the research variables within Table 1 serves as an elucidative conduit, presenting the outcomes of the study holistically.

Table 1. Descriptive Indices Characterizing the Research Variables

	Neuroticism	Empathy	Forgiveness	Marital Satisfaction
Mean	28.50	80.30	34.57	146.78
Median	29.00	80.00	35.00	143.00
Mode	26	80	34 ^a	136
Std. Deviation	8.196	9.303	6.252	31.211
Skewness	-0.223	-0.215	-0.110	0.282
Kurtosis	-0.082	0.248	-0.104	-0.454

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Upon scrutinizing the data presented in Table 1, it becomes evident that the standard deviation values serve as meticulous indicators, adeptly encapsulating the nuanced spectrum of diversity and individual variances within the domains of neuroticism, marital empathy, marital forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. This insight illuminates the intricate fabric of interpersonal dynamics under examination. Furthermore, the scrutiny of Kurtosis and skewness values across all variables in this scholarly inquiry reveals a balanced congruence, indicative of a

distribution that refrains from excessive elongation or skewness, instead manifesting a balanced distribution that aligns harmoniously with the expectations of a normal distribution. The uniformity observed around the mean in these distributions serves as evidence of their noteworthy nature, instilling confidence in their aptitude for subsequent analytical endeavors, particularly those involving Pearson correlation and regression analyses as detailed in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2. Correlations

	Zero-order	Sig.	Partial	Part
Neuroticism	-0.445**	p<0.01	-0.388	-0.310
Empathy	0.437**	p<0.01	0.338	0.264
Forgiveness	0.549**	p<0.01	0.389	0.311

** . The statistical correlation attains significance at the 0.01 level, employing a two-tailed test.

Upon examination of Table 2, a conspicuous and significant inverse correlation ($p<0.01$) emerges between the personality trait of neuroticism and the level of satisfaction in marital unions. This correlation implies that individuals characterized by elevated neuroticism levels are predisposed to encountering challenges within the context of their spousal relationships, thereby facing difficulties in maintaining a positive and gratifying rapport with their life partners. Moreover, the implication derived from this correlation is that those with heightened neuroticism may necessitate additional attention and support in fostering heightened satisfaction within the context of their marital union. The findings of this investigation underscore a correlation ($p<0.01$) between empathy and the degree of satisfaction within the marital context. The relationship posits that individuals endowed with a heightened capacity for empathic understanding are predisposed to encounter elevated levels of satisfaction within the confines of matrimonial alliances. Conversely, those exhibiting diminished proclivities for empathetic engagement may find themselves at an

augmented risk of experiencing dissatisfaction within the marital context. Consequently, the cultivation and augmentation of empathetic abilities emerge as pivotal factors that could substantially contribute to the amplification of overall marital satisfaction. In light of the obtained findings, it becomes evident that a correlation exists between forgiveness and the degree of satisfaction in the context of marital unions ($p<0.01$). This discerned association underscores that couples who manifest a proclivity towards the expression of forgiveness are predisposed to experiencing heightened levels of contentment within the framework of their matrimonial relationship. Conversely, individuals grappling with the arduous nature of forgiveness are confronted with an augmented probability of encountering diminished levels of gratification, thereby implicating a negative impact on their overall marital fulfillment. Consequently, the cultivation and refinement of attributes such as forgiveness wield a considerable impact on the qualitative aspects of spousal relationships, thereby culminating in heightened degrees of satisfaction.

Table 3. Model Summary ^b

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
0.678 ^a	0.460	0.458	22.977	0.460	237.368	3	836	0.000	1.966

^a. Predictors: Neuroticism, Empathy, Forgiveness

^b. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

Table 3 encapsulates a succinct overview delineating the performance of the statistical model in the anticipation of marital satisfaction. The model incorporates diverse predictors, notably neuroticism, empathy, and forgiveness. The outcomes underscore the model's accuracy, underscored by a level of statistical significance denoted by $p<0.01$, signifying the substantial impact of the independent variables on the prognostication of marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the calculated Durbin-Watson values, specifically 1.966,

dispel any concerns related to significant autocorrelation, affirming the absence of a noteworthy relationship between errors inherent in the model. Collectively, these results coalesce to assert the reliability of this statistical model as a predictive tool for marital satisfaction. Within this investigation, the coefficient of determination (R^2) emerges as a pivotal metric, attaining a numerical value of 0.460. This metric elucidates the extent of correlation among the factors influencing marital satisfaction, specifically neuroticism, empathy, and forgiveness. This

numerical manifestation conveys that these characteristics wield a substantive influence on marital

satisfaction, accounting for nearly 46% of the variability within marital relationships.

Table 4. Coefficients ^a

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Neuroticism	-1.233	0.101	-0.324	-12.181	p<0.01	0.914	1.094
Empathy	0.956	0.092	0.285	10.401	p<0.01	0.860	1.162
Forgiveness	1.742	0.143	0.349	12.217	p<0.01	0.792	1.263

^a. Dependent Variable: Marital Satisfaction

Employing the methodology of regression analysis, the discerned outcomes have been documented and are presented in Table 4. A paramount consideration in this analytical endeavor was the evaluation of potential multicollinearity issues among the predictors, a concern addressed through the incorporation of collinear statistics such as Tolerance and VIF. The outcome of this scrutiny revealed an absence of significant apprehensions, thereby affirming the analytical integrity of the regression model. The absence of noteworthy multicollinearity concerns underscores the model's strength, substantiating its credibility as a reliable predictor of marital satisfaction. The results of this study demonstrate that certain personality traits, such as neuroticism, empathy, and forgiveness, play significant roles in determining the degree of satisfaction experienced in a marital relationship. In fact, these particular factors were found to be so important that they were given standard coefficients, which indicated that they had achieved notable statistical significance. This outcome provides support for the central hypothesis of the study, which was that these variables would prove to be significant when it came to evaluating the overall satisfaction of a marriage. Looking more closely at the data, it was revealed that an increase in neuroticism of just one unit would lead to a decrease of 0.324 units in marital satisfaction. On the other hand, a one-unit increase in empathy would result in an increase of 0.285 units in marital satisfaction. Finally, forgiveness had the most significant impact of all the factors studied, with a one-unit increase in this trait relating to a noteworthy increase of 0.349 units in marital satisfaction. The notable aspect of these findings lies in the intricate interplay among factors, where forgiveness emerged as the most influential trait among the three examined, exhibiting a significantly robust correlation with overall marital satisfaction compared to neuroticism or empathy, underscoring the complexity of relational dynamics.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In pursuit of understanding the intricate dynamics of marital satisfaction among women, this study aims to evaluate the predictive significance of neuroticism, empathy, and forgiveness, aligning with the hypothesis that these factors play a pivotal role in shaping such dynamics. The research disclosed a significant inverse

relationship between neuroticism and marital satisfaction, aligning with consistent prior findings, exemplified by investigations conducted by [Brudek and Kaleta \(2023\)](#), [Parpaee et al. \(2022\)](#), [Hoesni and Zakaria \(2022\)](#), [Abid et al. \(2022\)](#), and [Sayehmiri et al. \(2020\)](#), emphasizing the pervasive nature of this negative association. In elucidating the relationship between neuroticism and marital satisfaction, it is posited that neuroticism, an affectively unstable personality trait entailing difficulties in adapting to diverse circumstances, exhibits a consistent association with adverse consequences, such as heightened negative emotions, augmented vulnerability to deleterious health conditions, elevated mortality risk, and incurring substantial societal costs, thereby highlighting its substantial influence on individual well-being and interpersonal relationships ([Park et al., 2023](#); [Butler et al., 2023](#); [Cao et al., 2019](#)).

Neuroticism emerges as a potential catalyst for enduring vulnerabilities within couples, thereby exerting influence over their aptitude to navigate stressors ([Karney & Bradbury, 1995](#); [Karney & Bradbury, 1997](#)). While these enduring vulnerabilities remain conclusively undetermined, their potential to exert a noteworthy impact on couples' adaptive responses to challenging circumstances is discernible. Negative communication patterns may conceivably manifest as a consequence of these enduring vulnerabilities, thereby constituting a salient determinant in marital dissatisfaction. Empirical evidence consistently underscores the nexus between neuroticism and negative communication ([Caughlin et al., 2000](#)) as well as interpersonal conflicts within the quotidian ([Bolger & Schilling, 1991](#)). Individuals exhibiting elevated levels of neuroticism are prone to the more frequent expression of negative emotions compared to their counterparts with lower neuroticism levels ([Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004](#)), potentially culminating in the development of chronic negative emotions with substantive implications for marital adjustment ([Bouchard et al., 1999](#)). This predilection is purportedly rooted in the negative affectivity concomitant with neuroticism, positing that individuals with heightened neuroticism may be disinclined to perceive their partners in an idealized manner, thereby contributing to diminished levels of marital adjustment ([Murray et al., 1996](#)). Additionally, individuals characterized by high negative affectivity may

engage in the formulation of unfavorable negative attributions concerning their partners and relational issues, thereby fostering more pessimistic evaluations of the relationship (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2004). The interplay of neuroticism levels between spouses significantly influences their perceptions of marital quality, as substantiated by diverse studies (Bouchard et al., 1999; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1991). Notably, the reciprocal impact is discernible, with men partnered with emotionally unstable women reporting diminished satisfaction across multiple domains of marital contentment, while women's dissatisfaction correlates with the emotional instability of their husbands (Shackelford & Buss, 2000). Furthermore, individuals characterized by higher neuroticism tend to endure heightened distress in their daily lives due to suboptimal responses to stressful situations. It is imperative to underscore that the magnitude of changes in marital satisfaction is not solely contingent upon neuroticism; however, its potential association may be influenced by the dynamic interplay between neuroticism and stressful events (Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995).

Our research reveals a statistically significant relationship between empathy and marital satisfaction, consistent with contemporary investigations conducted in diverse geographic areas, such as Wen et al.'s (2022) emphasis on the pivotal role of empathy in fortifying intimate relationships and Rajabi et al.'s (2022) identification of a positive and significant association between marital empathy and satisfaction. Further contributing to the discourse, Ghafurian Ghahramani and Mahdavian (2022) accentuate the predictive influence of empathy on the marital contentment of women domiciled in Tehran. Moreover, Plopa et al. (2019) ascertain that the manifestation of empathy by both partners constitutes a substantive predictor of satisfaction within relationships involving engaged couples and husbands. Ahmadi Ardakani and Fatemi Oghada's (2019) empirical investigation amplifies the discourse by showcasing the considerable impact of empathy on heightened marital satisfaction, whether exercised directly or indirectly. Additionally, Łada and Kaźmierczak's (2019) scholarly inquiry underscores the pivotal role of empathy in adjudicating the satisfaction quotient within the context of a relationship. It is imperative to underscore that Naderi and Nory's (2017) exploration intimates that the degree of empathy shared between couples may serve as an indicator of their cognitive contentment. In summation, these research endeavors collectively accentuate the salience of empathy as a catalyst for nurturing gratifying relationships. In elucidating the nexus between empathy and marital satisfaction, it can be posited that heightened empathy aligns with heightened levels of collaboration, moral contemplation, and overall contentment in interpersonal relationships, while concurrently demonstrating an inverse

relationship between empathy and narcissism, thereby underscoring empathy's pivotal role in nurturing emotional well-being, self-compassion, and the cultivation of resilient social networks, as supported by research findings (Kuhnley et al., 2023; Brett et al., 2023). By fostering empathetic interactions within interpersonal relationships, individuals have the potential to enhance their understanding of their partner's thoughts and emotions, ultimately facilitating effective communication and bolstering problem-solving abilities (McCullough & Worthington, 1995; Worthington, 2006). Consequently, the imperative role of empathy in relational contexts is underscored as a pivotal process, yielding manifold advantages through the cultivation of a profound comprehension of others' emotions, thereby potentially augmenting satisfaction levels within the dynamics of marital relationships.

Our study has unveiled a conspicuously substantial and meaningful nexus between forgiveness and the levels of marital satisfaction experienced by individuals. This discernment underscores that those who manifest a disposition toward forgiveness tend to articulate elevated contentment within the context of their marital unions. In accordance with antecedent investigations, the present study harmoniously aligns with antecedent scholarly inquiries that have consistently validated a positive correlation between forgiveness and the satisfaction derived from marital relationships. For an illustrative exemplar of this correlation, one may refer to the scholarly contributions of Fupšová and Záhorecová (2022). Their analytical exploration, which encapsulated a multifaceted array of factors contributing to relationship satisfaction, identified a partner's proclivity for forgiveness as the preeminent predictor. This identification accentuates the indispensable role that the virtue of forgiveness assumes in the augmentation and cultivation of gratifying relationships, thereby underscoring its significance as a pivotal determinant in the dynamics of interpersonal connections. Similarly, Mendes-Teixeira and Duarte (2021), in their exhaustive systematic review spanning 25 studies, disclosed a positively bidirectional relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction. Their inquiry not only established a significant linkage between forgiveness and heightened levels of marital satisfaction but also delineated that marital satisfaction reciprocally exerts a positive influence on the proclivity for forgiveness. In congruence with this scholarly trajectory, the investigation conducted by Jahan et al. (2021) brought forth a study that elucidated an affirmative correlation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction, thereby spotlighting the substantive predictive prowess of forgiveness with regard to marital contentment. Moreover, the research undertaken by Kaveh Farsani in 2021 uncovered a direct and favorable impact of forgiveness on marital satisfaction, further buttressing the cumulative evidence supporting the pivotal role of

forgiveness in fortifying and nurturing fulfilling marital relationships. Additionally, the discernments of Roberts et al. (2021) revealed a notable association between forgiveness and the broader domain of relationship satisfaction. In amalgamation, these diverse investigations collectively furnish robust evidentiary foundations that underscore the centrality of forgiveness as an influential determinant in the fortification and nurturing of gratifying marital relationships. In elucidating the correlation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction, it is asserted that individuals exhibiting a pronounced propensity for forgiveness not only manifest a readiness to pardon transgressions but also undergo positive emotional states, concomitant with a diminution in adverse affective conditions such as anger and hostility, thereby signifying a noteworthy influence of forgiveness on interpersonal dynamics, conflict resolution, and the fostering of social bonds, with ramifications for psychological and physical well-being (Ridge et al., 2023; Yi et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). Initiation and perpetuation of deleterious cycles within interpersonal relationships may ensue from the harboring of unforgiveness, potentially impeding the resolution of conflicts and elevating the proclivity for engaging in psychologically aggressive behaviors and counterproductive communication (Fincham et al., 2004; Fincham & Beach, 2002; Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Roberts & Krokoff, 1990). The capacity to both solicit forgiveness and extend it is posited as a particularly efficacious factor influencing the durability and satisfaction of marital relationships (Fenell, 1993). This inclination toward forgiveness not only catalyzes the reconciliation of partners but also functions to augment intimacy and facilitate constructive communication, as posited by Fincham and Beach (2002). In the domain of interpersonal dynamics, transgressions committed by a partner possess the potential to disrupt the constructive resolution of conflicts, thereby inducing a retreat from engagement and fostering retaliatory responses. These reactions, in turn, have adverse consequences on the goodwill extended toward the spouse, the efficacy of conflict resolution endeavors, and the overall marital satisfaction experienced by the individuals involved (Fincham et al., 2004). The examination of forgiveness within romantic relationships elucidates compelling associations with positive outcomes, including enhanced couple adjustment, increased intimacy, and reduced instances of psychological aggression (Gordon, 2003; Paleari et al., 2005; Fincham & Beach, 2002; Finkel et al., 2002). Unforgiveness, characterized by the manifestation of anger, resentment, withdrawal, and the assignment of blame, has been suggested in extant literature to potentially exert a detrimental influence on the overall satisfaction within marital relationships (Gordon et al., 2009; Fincham & Linfield, 1997). The propensity for forgiveness emerges as a potential facilitator of intimacy and emotional

recovery in interpersonal relationships (Finkel et al., 2002; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015; Menahem & Love, 2013). Furthermore, the literature posits that forgiveness is intricately linked to various positive outcomes in romantic relationships, such as heightened satisfaction, increased commitment levels, and an overall enhancement in relationship quality (Aalgaard et al., 2016; Finkel et al., 2002; Berry & Worthington, 2001). As underscored by collective insights, the cultivation and enhancement of forgiveness within relationships are associated with potential advantages, fostering a more harmonious and satisfying relational environment, thereby contributing to heightened contentment in marital bonds.

In illuminating the landscape of marital satisfaction among married women in Lorestan province, this study, while commendable, is not without its inherent limitations. The exclusive focus on a specific geographic region prompts contemplation regarding the broad applicability of the findings across diverse populations with disparate cultural, social, and economic contexts. Moreover, the imposition of a literacy prerequisite, designed to enhance the fidelity of comprehension of research inquiries, may inadvertently introduce a potential bias against individuals possessing lower literacy levels, thereby circumscribing the external validity of the study. Additionally, the study's singular emphasis on women's perspectives inadvertently sidelines the valuable insights that may emanate from an examination of the experiences of married men. It is imperative to advocate for future research endeavors that adopt a more inclusive approach, encompassing a holistic exploration of the multifaceted factors influencing marital satisfaction. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the necessity of addressing neuroticism, fostering marital empathy, and cultivating forgiveness as essential components contributing to the augmentation of marital satisfaction. Individuals characterized by heightened levels of neuroticism may encounter challenges in maintaining marital contentment, given their inclination towards experiencing adverse emotions such as anxiety and depression, which subsequently hinder effective communication and conflict resolution within the marital context. Conversely, the positive correlation observed between marital empathy and satisfaction underscores the pivotal role played by understanding and compassion in the dynamics of marital relationships. Couples capable of empathizing with their partner's experiences, emotions, and perspectives are more likely to establish robust emotional connections, thereby facilitating effective communication and mutual support, ultimately leading to heightened marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the constructive association between marital forgiveness and satisfaction accentuates the significance of forgiveness in fostering a resilient marital bond. The ability to forgive and release past grievances within the marital union empowers couples to rebuild trust, enhance communication, and

cultivate a positive and nurturing environment conducive to elevated satisfaction and enduring relationship success. These findings, thus, provide invaluable insights for individuals seeking to enhance their marital satisfaction and bear the potential to offer pertinent guidance for family counselors, therapists, and policymakers operating within this domain. In the realm of psychological interventions, it is recommended to prioritize the promotion of individual therapy as a means of addressing heightened neuroticism, underscored by its pivotal role in fortifying emotional equilibrium. An imperative facet of fostering relational harmony involves advocating for the engagement of couples in communication workshops, wherein the emphasis is consistently placed on the refinement of active listening skills and the astute interpretation of non-verbal cues. Furthermore, the endorsement of couples therapy is warranted to amplify empathetic connections within the relational framework. In the pursuit of cultivating forgiveness within marital relationships, the advocacy for forgiveness workshops and therapeutic interventions emerges as a crucial strategy, duly recognizing their capacity to contribute to the amelioration of relational discord.

5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

Adhering to ethical principles was of utmost importance throughout the research process, as participants were comprehensively informed and confidentiality was meticulously upheld in accordance with established guidelines, thereby emphasizing the researchers' steadfast commitment and underscoring the study's integrity, while also respecting participants' rights and well-being.

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Authors' contributions

In the collaborative research endeavor, the primary author spearheaded data collection, analysis, and initial drafting, while the second author provided ongoing support, advice, and comprehensive editorial input, fostering a cohesive scholarly outcome.

Conflicts of interest

With respect to the present investigation, it is imperative to explicitly state that the authors involved in this scholarly endeavor affirm the absence of any conflicts of interest requiring disclosure.

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