



Predict Marital Conflicts and Emotional Divorce based on the Character Strengths among spouses

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ABSTRACT

The research was to examine marital conflicts and Emotional Divorce based on the Character Strengths among Iranian spouses. For this reason 400 married women were selected by convenient sampling in Tehran as capital of Iran. Consequently three questionnaires, strengths of character, emotional divorce and marital conflict were used. The findings of structural equation modeling showed the measurement model of character strength is fitted and also have a proper reliability and convergent validity. The composite reliability of the scale was more than 70. In addition the character strength in terms of spirituality, acknowledgements, honesty, personalized control, kindness, loyalty and love predicts 33 percent of emotional divorce variance and 58 percent of marital conflict variance. Lastly the structural model of relation between variables had good fit. Therefore, it can be concluded that character strengths have influence on couple's relationships. Thus the improving of character strengths can be reduced emotionally divorce and marital conflict in couples.

Keywords: character strength, emotional divorce, marital conflicts, marital spouses

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INTRODUCTION

According to research recently published Ahmadi, Saadat, and Noushad (2016); Gager, Yabiku, and Linver (2016) obtained evidence that suggests marital conflicts has a significant impact on the quality of life of spouses and particularly children's future. Quality of marital relationships has an important role in mental health of spouses. In cases where marital interactions are inappropriate, marital conflict also occurs (Umberson, Williams, Powers, Liu, & Needham, 2006; Yang, Zhu, Chen, Song, & Wang, 2016; Young & Long, 1998). Although spouses' conflicts are inevitable and their interests and views will not be completely similar (Kline,

Pleasant, Whitton, & Markman, 2006) but, if the conflicts are continued and severe, the quality of their marriage will be deteriorated (Holt-Lunstad, Birmingham, & Jones, 2008; Tavakolizadeh, Nejatian, & Soori, 2015) . The most common effect of marital conflict is the breakdown of relations between spouses, and evidences suggest that about half of today's marriages ends in divorce (Young & Long, 1998). But divorce as a result of continuous marital conflicts not only has negative effects on spouses but also on their children (Gager et al., 2016). In this regard Ambert (2005) states that the impact of conflicts and emotional divorce between spouses can result in behavioral and emotional problems in teenagers that

sometimes accompany him to the young adulthood. So it will be very important to pay attention to the spouses' conflicts and their emotional divorce.

Family, as the first social unit that children and adolescents deal with it plays the main role in the development of children future personality. So, instability of bases of family causes destructive consequences, which children as the first victims of the consequences will suffer many psychological trauma (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001). This can occur through marital conflict (Al Gharaibeh, 2015).

Marital conflicts have a direct relationship with psychological well-being (Galinsky & Waite, 2014), insecure attachment style (Gouin et al., 2009), multiple mental disorders such as internal disorders (Brock & Lawrence, 2011), depression (Miller et al., 2014), anxiety disorders (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004), sexual dysfunction (Metz & Epstein, 2002), physical health problems (Galinsky & Waite, 2014), such as high blood pressure (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008), chronic pain (Cano, Gillis, Heinz, Geisser, & Foran, 2004) and ischemic heart diseases (Galinsky & Waite, 2014). Output of marital conflict can also end in divorce where is raised in two forms: formal divorce, and emotional divorce (Al Gharaibeh, 2015). When the end of a relationship is divorce; its result and effect is largely unknown and unpredictable, but in families that have preserved their appearance and parents still live together formalized, emotional divorce will have more destructive effects on children and their personality and sometimes damages resulting from marital conflicts will cause more severe losses than formal divorce (Bokharaei, 2007).

On the other hand, several studies have shown that good relations between spouses play an important role in adaptation and marital satisfaction (Ghanbaripناه, Sharif, & Roslee, 2013; Halford, Sanders, & Behrens, 2001; Shirali, 2008; Yalcin & Karahan, 2007). One of the cases which effectiveness on marital conflict is referred in various studies is character or behavioral features of individuals. The possible impact of character strengths on marital conflict and emotional divorce can be seen in almost parallel studies in this field. These include a study by Goddard, Marshall, Olson, and Dennis (2012) on the effect of strengths of character and marital satisfaction. Their findings on 829 statistical samples of spouses have shown that some elements of character strength (such as kindness, teamwork, empathy, commitment and religious beliefs) have shown a significant relationship with marital satisfaction. On this basis, it appears that non-attainment of these features or character strengths in people could lead to conflicts and subsequently legal and emotional divorce in spouses. In this regard, Cummings and Davies (2002) suggest that marital conflict occurs in relationships where a person's behavior is not consistent with the expectations of the other person. Conflict in life is an inevitable part of human existence which in most cases originates from behaviors and personality traits of parties. Based on the results of studies by Askari (2011) and Sharif, Soleimani, Mani, and Keshavarzi (2013), it is also found that marital conflict can be reduced by providing some training and strengthening the behavioral and personality capabilities in the couple, in other words, couple's relationship quality can be a

function of the rate of some behavioral and personality features and functionality.

In general, one of the cases that can examine personality traits as multi-dimensional and comprehensive and is noted in recent studies by researchers is the issue of people character strengths and personality abilities. In this regard, Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) have stated that creation and reinforcement of positive character traits (character strengths) can prevent the occurrence of negative consequences in the lives of individuals. In recent years, character and moral issues were of great interest to the broad public, policy makers, educators and parents (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Strengths of character are important components of human optimal growth. Studies on character have shown the main role of character strengths in successful development in life and resolving tensions in the interface between individuals (Colby, James, & Hart, 1998). In another study, Park, Park, and Peterson (2010) has stated that without positive character, people do not tend to do what is right. One should have a desire to do well and this is the role of character, the qualities of the people that leads them to seek goodness and pursuing them. It accordingly seems that having character strength can lead spouses to the sound management of marital conflict and avoiding emotional divorce. Park et al. (2010) divided the character strengths into six general categories: wisdom and knowledge (awareness), courage, humanity (mercy), justice, temperance and transcendence. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) all people want to act positively and have a happy and prosperous life. These objectives are interests and basic rights of human beings. But most young people do not know that the necessity of establishing and managing relationships requires what behavioral characteristics or personality.

Perhaps understanding character positive strengths is a good place to start. Character strengths or their personality are aspects that are morally valuable. Character strengths when applied not only avoid the adverse consequences in life (Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995), but also are important as signs and reasons for healthy growth in life. Increasing evidence suggests that character special strengths (for example, hope, kindness, social intelligence, personalized control and relevance) against the negative effects of stress and emotional shock act like bumpers, so they prevent problems or limit them. Park and Peterson (2006), based on their studies state that the character strengths are associated with life satisfaction, acknowledgements, hope, enthusiasm, curiosity and, most of all love which is necessary as the ability to survive of the close relationship with others and for good mental life, people should especially identify the strengths and nurture them. According to the review, as mentioned in connection with the subject, it can be said that so far many studies have studied the incidence of divorce and its reasons, but in few studies we have observed it which has examined the importance of psychological factors influencing the reduction and control of conflicts and divorce, especially emotional divorce. According to the survey on the other research, it can be said that the character strength as a subject that has been noticed recently in the field of positive psychology, having multiple 24 components is one of the issues that can be related

to marital conflicts and emotional divorce that according to the lack of studies in this field, the purpose of this research is:

- To investigate the measurement model of character strengths.
- To investigate the structural model of relationship between the components of
- Character strength, emotional divorce and marital conflict.

METHODOLOGY

This study is applied in terms of objective and a field survey as well as correlational. Since each member of a family can appropriately reflect family characteristics (Honariyan & Younesi, 2011), so the statistical population in this study consisted of all mothers with no formal job (and having at least diploma and age between 25 to 40 years old) with at least one girl student in elementary school in Tehran in 2014-15 school year. The convenient sampling method was utilized in this study in which 400 samples have participated where 24.5 percent (98) were aged 25 to 30 years, 42 percent (168) were aged 31 to 35 years and 33.5 percent (134) were in the age group 36 to 40 years old. Also, 56 spouses (14%) had a diploma, 83 spouses (21%) had an associate degree, 165 (41%) undergraduate education, 96 (24%) had a master's degree (with respect to the accompanying researcher at the time of completion of the questionnaires by the required sample, information was received on the character traits completely).

In this study, questionnaire was used to collect data. To measure the character strengths, Peterson and Seligman strengths and virtues of character inventory (2004) was utilized. This questionnaire was designed and measured in 6 components: wisdom and knowledge - courage - humanity and love - justice - moderation - spirituality and transcendence containing 48 questions on a 5 options Likert scale. Overall this tool is consisted of 24 sub-scales that each has been formed from two questions. Virtues and abilities are as follows: 1. Wisdom and knowledge: curiosity, love of learning, judgment, initiation, enlightenment 2. Courage: courage, perseverance, honesty 3. Justice: citizenship, fairness and equality, leadership 4. Moderation: personalized control, insight, humility 5. Transcendence: understanding beauty and excellence, acknowledgement, hope, spirituality, forgiveness, joy and humor, charm 6. Love for diversity: love, kindness and social intelligence (Barati, 2006). Peterson and Seligman (2004), reported the reliability of the test as a whole 0.70. The reliability of the test by Nikouzadeh (2009) has been reported as follows: wisdom and knowledge (0.84), courage (0.87), love and humanity (0.67), justice (0.70), moderation (0.6), spirituality and transcendence (0.7). Also, the reliability of the questionnaire on capabilities by Barati (2006), reported the internal consistency of the questions using Cronbach's alpha

equal to 0.9 and retest correlation coefficient at a distance of five weeks as $r = 0.9$.

To evaluate the incidence of marital conflict, 42-item marital conflict questionnaire (MCQ) was used in which 5-point Likert scale was used to answer questions. The reliability of this tool by Barati (2006) was equal to 0.52, by Farahbakhsh (2005) was 0.69. Low score indicates low conflict and a higher score shows the intensity of the conflict.

To measure the emotional divorce, Gottman and DeClaire (2001) questionnaire with 24 questions was utilized. Options to answer the questions was based on yes and no options. In the interpretation of the questionnaire, after summing up the Yes responses, if the number was equal to 8 and higher, marital life of person was at risk of emotional divorce. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire has been reviewed and approved by John Gottman. The reliability of the questionnaire has been reported 0.877 (Jazayeri, 2009).

It should be added that SMART.PLS3 was used to analyze the data. To determine the fitness, character strength measurement model and the structural relationships between variables were utilized. Due to the fact that the structure of the questionnaire of character strengths has two items, SMART.PLS.3 was used. If the researcher intends to use the models in which there are structures with one or two items, the first generation of structural equation modeling techniques (such as: EQS, AMOS, LISREL) cannot be used. Accordingly, in these software, we need structures with at least three questions per structure to test the models (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013).

FINDINGS

The results of the first hypothesis that the measurement model of character strength scale has a good fit is shown in Figure 1. Load factor are calculated by calculating the correlation of a structure indices with the structure that if this amount is equal to or greater than 0.4, confirms that the variance between the structure and its indicators is greater than the measurement error variance of the structure and reliability of the measurement model is acceptable. According to the results obtained in this section, it can be stated that generally the reliability of each structure of character strength scale (with a total of 24 structures that number of questions related to each of the structures is listed on it) is approved (the exact values obtained from the measurement model to increase readability are listed in Table 1).

According to the reported results of factor loadings, it becomes clear that all items of each of the structures of character strength has values greater than 0.4 and there is no need to remove them. In other words, the intended items have a high reliability to explain their latent variable.

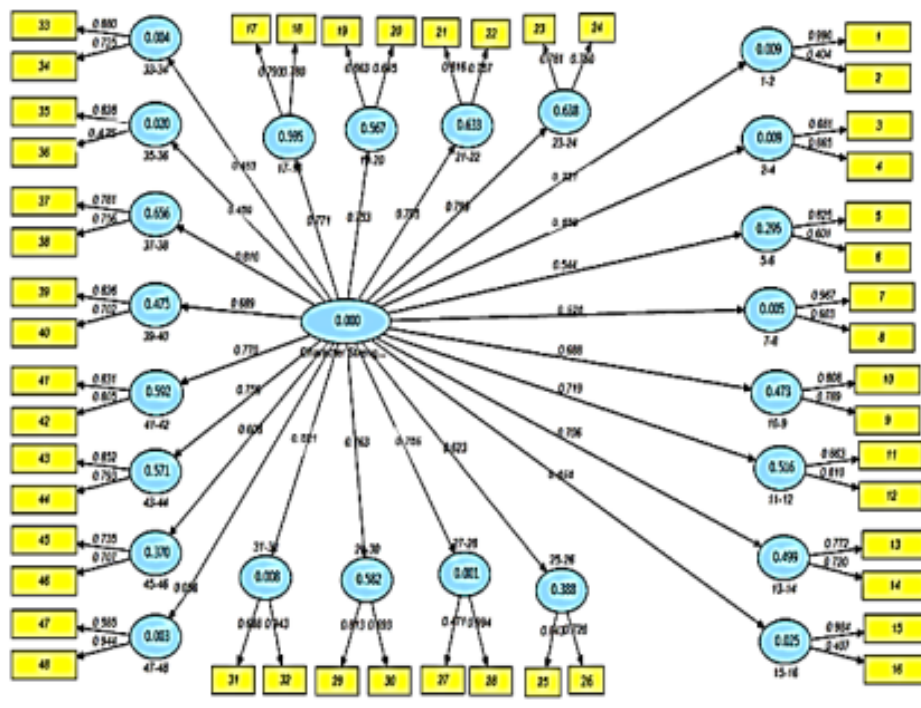


Figure 1. The model implemented with factor loadings coefficients (character strength)

Factor loadings values reported in Table 1 are listed in columns following the number of questions.

Table 1. Results of factor loadings of each structure of character strength

Curiosity	Love of learning	Verdict	Initiation	social intelligence	Enlightenment
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
0.990	0.681	0.825	0.967	0.808	0.863
0.404	0.865	0.601	0.603	0.789	0.810
Resistance	Perseverance	Honesty	Kindness	Loving	Loyalty
13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
0.772	0.984	0.793	0.863	0.816	0.781
0.720	0.407	0.780	0.645	0.757	0.760
Equity	Leadership	Personaliz control	Insight	Humility	Respect for beauty
25-26	27-28	29-30	31-32	33-34	35-36
0.843	0.471	0.813	0.688	0.880	0.828
0.720	0.994	0.693	0.943	0.725	0.441
Acknowledgements	Hope	Spirituality	Generosity	Liveliness	Enthusiasm
37-38	39-40	41-42	43-44	45-46	47-48
0.781	0.826	0.831	0.852	0.735	0.585
0.756	0.702	0.805	0.793	0.707	0.944

Also, to determine the validity of the tool, convergent validity (AVE) was used, which is one of the most important criteria in determining the fitness of measurement model, in which the correlation of structure with questions (indicators)

are examined. The appropriate values for AVE is 0.5 and higher. According to the results reported in Table 2, it is observed that all the criteria calculated for the latent variables reported a right amount (AVE > 0.5).

Table 2. Results of convergent validity in the scale of character strength

AVE	Questionnaire items	AVE	Questionnaire items
0.572292	29-30	0.610069	1-2
0.692408	31-32	0.638179	10-9
0.599603	33-34	0.701087	11-12
0.580895	35-36	0.555392	13-14
0.590477	37-38	0.583361	15-16
0.588528	39-40	0.617428	17-18
0.668323	41-42	0.582985	19-20
0.678392	43-44	0.605965	2-4
0.519515	45-46	0.619694	21-22
0.563454	47-48	0.592445	23-24
0.521248	5-6	0.614875	25-26
0.688915	7-8	0.557052	27-28

To examine the second hypothesis, the relationship between the variables (standardized coefficients between exogenous variables i.e. character strength and endogenous variables i.e.

emotional divorce and marital conflict) are investigated and the results of which are shown in Figure 2.

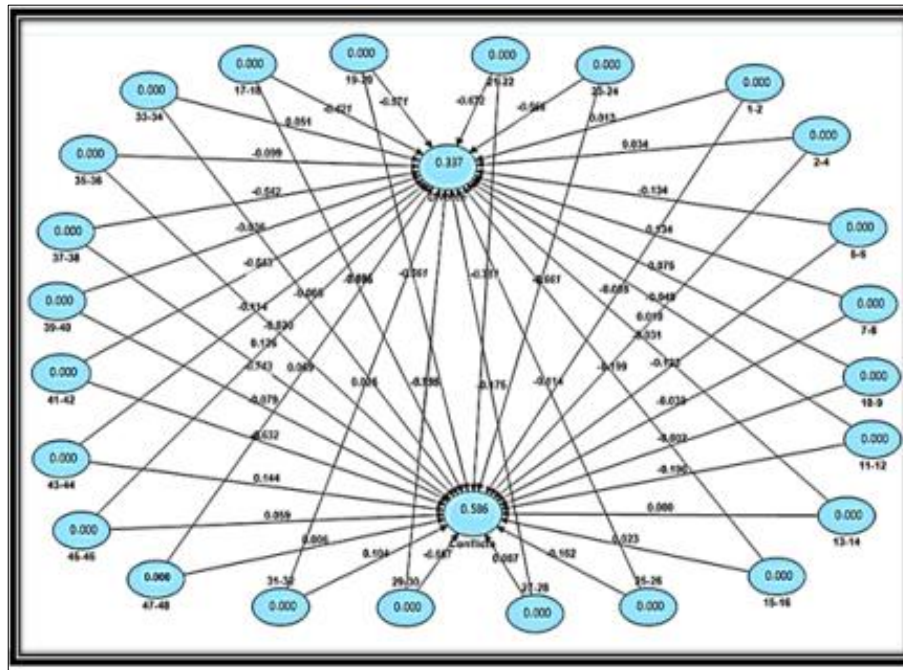


Figure 2. Values of standardized coefficients in structural relations

In this section, the standardized coefficients of the path between components of character strength and emotional divorce and marital conflict were assessed and only in the following cases the coefficients were higher than 0.4.

Table 4. Values of standardized coefficients in structural relations

Acknowledgements	Spirituality	Personalized control	Honesty	Kindness	Loving	Loyalty
37-38	42-41	29-30	17-18	19-20	21-22	23-24
-0.542	-0.543	-0.567	-0.421	-0.571	-0.672	-0.566
-0.743	-0.632	-0.195	-0.695	-0.561	-0.751	-0.661

It should be noted that the values of the coefficient of determination (R^2) in the structural model on each of the two

endogenous variables (marital conflicts and emotional divorce) are specified and confirms that components of

character strength can generally predict 58 percent of marital conflicts variations and 33% of emotional divorce. In other words, the coefficient shows the percent of alignment between changes of variances between independent and dependent variables and implies that the structural model from the relationship between the components of character strength, emotional divorce and marital conflict fitted perfectly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to a survey in this research on other studies in the field of conflict and divorce, it should be stated that in none of these studies, character strength as an independent variable was not investigated. But in these studies, similar independent variables such as impact of personality characteristics has been used that can be referred. The results showed that there is an inverse relationship between some of the components of character strength and emotional divorce and marital conflict. Amanollahi Fard (2005) in their study showed that a significant relationship can be observed between the personal characteristics and the incidence of marital conflict. Their results showed that there is a direct relationship between anger and marital dissatisfaction that is consistent with the findings of this paper in which its' otherwise is examined. In this study, it is observed that if the person has proper personalized control and forgiveness, less marital conflict can be seen. It should be noted that in another part of the study by Amalzadeh, Eftekhar, and Naderi (2009) the association between variables like intimacy and marital conflicts were studied, in which a negative relationship was observed. These findings are consistent with results obtained in the present study, the findings also show that kindness and love (that have a semantic relationship with intimacy among spouses), and with the incidence of marital conflict and emotional divorce has a negative relationship. In other words, it can be said that findings of the present study are aligned with study by Amalzadeh et al. (2009) and confirm the result of each other. Only in the present study, personality traits are more studied. It should be noted that in some studies, marital conflicts are considered as a factor on violence against spouses, such as study by Naeim (2008) that confirms the positive relations between the two. In his study, the alignment between marital conflict and divorce is stressed by the incidence of violence against spouses, it should be noted that Naeim (2008) in another part of his study, examined and confirmed the direct relationship between intimate relations with spouse and marital conflicts, and reduced incidence of violence against spouses that his findings are consistent with the findings of this study with regard to the negative relationship between characteristics like kindness, love, justice, personalized control, generosity and acknowledgements and marital conflict and emotional divorce. Adib Rad (2005) also noted that marital conflict is a factor in the incidence of divorce. In

another study, Amanollahi Fard (2005) showed that a negative relationship exists between anger and marital satisfaction, but there is a positive relationship between extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness and marital satisfaction. In this study, extroversion can be equated with vitality and social intelligence and also openness and compromise equal to personalized control, forgiveness and enlightenment. Also, conscientiousness is equal to equity in character strength, which is consistent with findings of both studies. The findings can be seen in the study by Tafvizi, Salehi, Sadiqi, and Kholghi (2012) which compared the personality traits of normal and conflicting spouses. Also Ghasemi, Etemadi, Rangi, and Dehghan (2012) demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between the characteristics of stability and conscientious with marital satisfaction. But, there is no significant relationship between the agreeableness, extraversion and flexibility with marital satisfaction. The stability is a feature in which the person is upset and angry later and is not irritable and sensitive and conscientious is a personality trait in which the individual characteristic is sensitive about law and respect for the rights of others. In studies abroad, we can also refer to results of Kirby, Baucom, and Peterman (2005) who showed that personality traits including unmet intimate relations among spouses has a negative effect on their general satisfaction with the relationship. It is aligned with the results of this study for components of generosity, kindness and love. In a study by Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, and Rooke (2010) it is also shown that four personality traits like low neuroticism, high compatibility, high consciousness and high extraversion had a significant relationship with marital satisfaction. On the other hand, findings of the study are consistent with the results of Goddard et al. (2012). The study examines the impact of character strength and religious beliefs with marital satisfaction. The results also showed that some elements of character strengths such as kindness, compassion, loyalty, and attendance in church with religiousness of subjects, at 95% confidence level, can properly predict the dependent variable in this study i.e. the marital satisfaction that in this study, personality traits showed a significant relationship with marital conflicts, but in general it can be said that two of the above studies are common on mentioned parameters and in both, significant relationship was observed based on the mentioned components. Only in the study by Goddard et al. (2012) examined the satisfaction and in the present study examined the marital conflicts that can be said that the two are equal but opposite each other. Accordingly, it could be stated that the outcome of the findings of this study and other studies at home and abroad confirms the fact that character strengths are the important issues in the marital relationship which observation or strengthening some of these features may reduce the incidence of marital conflict and emotional or formal divorce.

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