

## **Investigation the Mediating Role of Differentiation of Self in Relationship between Depression and Marital Satisfaction**

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**ABSTRACT**— The aim of current study was investigation the relationship between depression and marital satisfaction and differentiation of self as moderator in women who referred to counseling center of Islamic Azad university of Karaj. For this purpose, 167 women that referred to counseling center of Islamic Azad University of Karaj, were selected through the convenience sampling and responded to the three questionnaires of differentiation of self, Enrich marital satisfaction and Beck depressive inventory .For data analyzing, structural equation model and Boot strop were used. Structural equation model analyses emphasis on fitness of proposed model with empirical data. The results supported the direct effect of depressive symptoms on marital satisfaction and indirect effect of this variable on marital satisfaction through differentiation of self and its subscales such as emotional cutoff, emotional reactivity, I position and fusion with other.

**KEYWORDS:** differentiation, depression, marital satisfaction

### **Introduction**

Marital satisfaction is a mental construct based on meeting the needs, expectations, and aspirations of people based on marriage (Burpee & Langer, 2005). Gottman, Gottman & De Claire, (2006) concluded based on his research that a happy and satisfying marriage, a marriage in which the couple act as a good and intimate friend together and their marital conflicts are managed in gentle, respectful and positive way. While, unhappy marriage is marked by depressive symptoms in individuals (Peleg, 2008), Depression left many negative influences on inter-personal relations. Depression has a strong negative correlation with marital satisfaction in couples (Uebelacker, Courtnage & Whisman, 2003), but we can confidently predict the collapse of their relationship (Ertel, Rich-Edwards & Koenen, 2011). In fact, some estimates suggest that depressed spouse have reported marital conflicts 25 times more than non- depressed spouse (Bulloch, Williams, Lavorato, & Patten, 2009). One of the sources of this strong relationship is tendency of depressed people to engage in interpersonal disturbing behaviors (Uebelacker, Courtnage & Whisman, 2003) For example, they represent more differentiation of self, negative emotions, criticism, more defensive modes, as well as lower levels show of Openness of emotion in their marital satisfaction. The spouse of depressed people also represent more criticism and negativism against their depressed partner and their marital relations (Benazon & Coyne, 2000). New research has shown that confrontational behaviors such as blaming and demanding behaviors may be distressing, so that these behaviors could reduce the quality of the relationship over time. (Meltzer, McNulty & Karney, 2012) In this regard, McNulty & Russell (2010) showed that confrontational behaviors such as blaming and demanding behaviors may be with severe problems and low levels of marital satisfaction. Lurent et al, (2009) were examined longitudinal relationship between marital conflict and symptoms of depression and found the spouse engagement with each other and physical aggression during conflict is associated with symptoms of depression just in woman. In one two-way study, Proulx, Buehler & Helms, (2009) also found that the husband's violent behavior during marital interaction were predicted higher levels of symptoms of depression in women after three years and women's violence was associated to the symptoms of depression in their husbands. It was also revealed that differentiation of self was positively associated with mental health and marital satisfaction. For example, Skowron, Stanley & Shapiro (2009) found that high levels of differentiation was associated with high psychological symptoms and lower inter personal problems. Depression levels were negatively correlated with differentiation of self (Elieson, & Rubin, 2001). Non-depressed people showed higher levels of differentiation of self than depressed people. Differentiation is basic theory of Bowen that refers to person's ability to experience intimacy with others and stay in emotional atmosphere to maintain the independence. In other words, differentiation represents inter personal performance, the ability to separating the logical and emotional processes and inter

personal performance, the ability to experience intimacy with independence and the good balance between them (HeidenRootes, Jankowski & Sandage, 2010). In other words, people with differentiation of self can make healthy relationships with others, control their emotions, to maintain their own identity, and they think, feel and act for themselves. (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000) They are able to distinguish between emotional and rational processes and respond to stressor situations in efficient and adaptive manner (Gushue, & Constantine, 2003). In a series of studies an inverse correlation between differentiation and anxiety (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), psychiatric symptoms and depression (Jankowski & Hooper, 2012 ;), physical symptoms (Peleg & Rahal, 2012) and stress (Bartle-Haring & Lal, 2010) was found. In addition, a positive correlation between differentiation of self and the ability to solve social problems (Skowron, 2004), mental health (Jankowski & Hooper, 2012), and marital satisfaction (Peleg, 2008) was found. Bowen (1978) stated that people with differentiation of self are satisfied from their life and relationships (Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia & Scabini, 2006). The theoretical possibility can correlate differentiation of self and two variables of marital satisfaction and depression. The empirical study of relationships previously been done. Studies on differentiation of self and marital satisfaction has led to the general conclusion that higher levels of differentiation of self makes the spouses be very satisfied their marital relations (Peleg, 2008). Hence, researchers seek to examine the mediating role of differentiation of self in relationship between marital satisfaction and depression syndrome so that it can be a procedure for consultants in the field of diagnosis and treatment of marital problems.

### Research Methodology:

This study was correlation. Study population include women referred to the Counseling Center of Islamic Azad University of Karaj who spent at least two years of their marriage. Sample composed 167 women were referred to counseling center of Islamic Azad University of Karaj, who were selected through the convenience sampling. To collect the data, after permission from the presidency of the University Counseling Center in collaboration with researchers for data collection, two researchers who were responsible for data collection, three days of week for a month were presented to counseling center of Islamic Azad University and requested the women referred to the Counseling Center who spent at least two years of their marriage to participate in research. After explaining the purpose of the study and obtaining their consent to participate in research, questionnaires distributed between them. It should be noted, the clients who had not enjoyed the studied specification, were removed from the study. To collect the required data, three questionnaires were used as follows:

A) Differentiation of self-Inventory-Revised: This questionnaire was prepared by Skowron & Friendlander (1998) and then was revised in 2003 by them. The questionnaire has 46 items and responses are ranked on a scale of 6 items scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). High score represents differentiation of self and low score means non differentiation. This inventory includes 4 subscale as follows:

Emotional reactions (12 items) tends to react to environment drives based on automatic response and emotional outbursts. Subscales of I position (10 items) that measure a sense of autonomy and individual ability and loyalty to what he believes. Subscale of emotional cutoff (12 items) represents fear of intimacy or drowning in close relationships and also defensive behavior to deal with this fears. Subscale of fusion with others (12 items) reflect intense emotional involvement with important people and strong assimilation with one parent. This questionnaire includes four subtests as emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, fusing with others, and I position. Skowron, & Schmitt( 2003) were obtained the reliability of the questionnaire and its subscales using Cronbach alpha as follows: total inventory 0.92, emotional reactivity 0.89, I position 0.81, emotional cutoff 0.84, and fusion with others 0.86. In Iran, Najaflooe (2005) tested the reliability of this inventory using Cronbach's alpha as follows: total inventory 0.72, emotional reactivity 0.81, I position 0.64, emotional cutoff 0.76, and fusion with others 0.64. To determine the validity of sample, Azadi, Nahidpoor & Khosravi (2014) study was used exploratory factor analysis to determine the validity of test. To perform exploratory factor analysis, at first the correlation matrix quality for inventory items and also the ability to content sampling were studied. The value of test of sphericity was 4.78 in significant level 0.001 and KMO coefficient was 0.73 which indicates information contained in the data matrix is meaningful and satisfying sample size. Based on the results obtained from exploratory factor analysis using main components analysis and Varimax rotation, 4 factors greater than 1% was extracted that accounted for a total of 59.63% of total scale variance. Verified factors measure the variance percentage of special value in order to measure convergent validity follows: average variance extracted for the scale of emotional reaction (0.71), emotional cutoff (0.66), fusion with others (0.60), and I position (0.53). Reliability of these instruments were obtained using Cronbach alpha in two groups of 30 women and girls as follows.

B) Beck Depression Inventory -II: Beck Depression Inventory is a self-report questionnaire with 21 items was developed to measure the severity of depression symptoms (Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996). The inventory measures a range of psychological and physiological functions such as sensitivity, changes in appetite, sleep difficulty and concentrating difficulty. Each item ranked on a scale of 0 to 3, with a total score of 63. High scores on this questionnaire indicating more severe symptoms of depression. Total scores from 0 to 63 indicates severe depression. Score of 0 to 13 represents low, 14-19 mild, 20-29 moderate, and 30-63 severe depression (Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996). Depression inventory is one of the most widely used Depression Inventory from a high internal consistency ( $\alpha=0.94$ ), the overall correlation range from 0.54 to 0.74 (Arnau, Meagher, Norris & Bramson, 2001). Raes (2010) was reported the internal consistency to 0.90. In different samples, similar reliability for example, outpatients ( $\alpha=0.92$ ) and students ( $\alpha=0.93$ ) were reported (Smith & Erford, 1998). High test-retest reliability ( $\alpha=0.94$ ) in the first and last week

of outpatient study was obtained (Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996). Construct validity was assessed in comparison with the SCL-90 and found there is a strong correlation between depression subscale 0.89 and Beck Depression Inventory. In Iran, Besharat (2004) reported reliability of the inventory using Cronbach's alpha for normal subjects vary from 0.85 to 0.92 and 0.83 to 0.91 for the individual patient. Dobson & Mohammad-Khani (2006) were evaluated psychometric properties of the test using a sample of 354 Iranian and found the results of this test confirms high validity of the diagnosis of the Structured Clinical Interview for Diagnosis and severity of depression. They were calculated reliability of test using Cronbach's alpha 0.96. Also, in the current study, the reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha and halving as 0.89 and 0.82 respectively. Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire: In this study, 47 items Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire was used. Each question has 5 items (strongly agree,, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree, no idea) which is from 1 to 5 or in contrary from 5 to 1. scaling is done by two methods: (1) overall marital satisfaction score: individual scores of all 47 matters are summed in accordance with listed scores in questionnaire key and finally gives the score of overall satisfaction. (2) the sub-scales score that include personality, marital relation, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationships, marriage and children, relatives and friends, religious issues , then the total scores' for each subscale are calculated separately and then divide the total score on 5 . Soleimanian (1994) obtained test reliability using Cronbach's alpha for short-form as 0.95. Mardani & Haidari, (2010) also showed that this inventory had content validity and was obtained reliability by using retest as 0.82. Finally, in the current study, researchers were calculated reliability using Cronbach Alpha and halving as 0.95 and 0.90 respectively.

**Findings**

**Tables 1:** calculated correlation between marital satisfaction and symptoms of depression in studied women

7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Variables
						—	Symptoms of Depression
						-0/62**	Differentiation of Self
					-0/75**	0/39**	Separation Emotional
				0/66**	-0/82**	0/26**	Emotional Response
			0/78**	0/70**	-0/73**	0/34**	Engagement with Others
		0/58**	-0/71**	-0/62**	0/84**	-0/18 **	Self-Status
	0/25**	-0/38**	-0/46**	-0/34**	0/50 **	-0/59**	Marital Satisfaction

As seen in the above table, the calculated correlation between variables is statistically significant at the level 0.01

**Table 2:** comparison of fitness indices of the proposed and experimental model

Chi-square	P-Value	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	Model
41/05	0/000	0/18	0/73	0/86	0/90	0/83	experimental model

According to the results of above table, the proposed model in all fitness indices such as NFI, CFI, AGFI, GFI has a relatively good fitness. Fitness indices suggest that obtained data in experimental models are consistent with a conceptual model (Suggested) .In other hand, data and the empirical model are consistent with each other and data supported empirical model. As seen in above table, two indices GFI=0.73 and AGFA=0.86 are close to 1, closer these two indicators to 1 indicate a perfect fit of experimental model.

**Table 3.** Results Bootstrap for direct effect of depressive symptoms on marital satisfaction and indirect effect of this variable on marital satisfaction through differentiation of self and its subscales

Confidence Level 0/95		SD	Bias	Boot	Data	Indirect Routes
Max	Min					
0/506	0/859	0/215	0/005	0/7168	0/7149	Symptoms of depression on marital satisfaction through differentiation
0/246	0/703	0/022	0/003	0/4321	0/4287	Symptoms of depression on marital satisfaction through emotional cutoff
0/058	0/541	0/080	0/007	0/2518	0/2460	Symptoms of depression on marital satisfaction through emotional reactivity
0/033	0/386	0/075	0/004	0/2268	0/2152	Symptoms of depression on marital satisfaction through I position
0/037	0/329	0/142	0/002	0/1928	0/1934	Symptoms of depression on marital satisfaction through fusion with other

Confidence interval for the contents of above table indicates no zero at this interval and significant indirect routes, finally hypothesis 2 to 6 are verified. This means that the symptoms of depression in women has indirect effect on marital satisfaction through differentiation and subscales of emotional cutoff, emotional reactivity, I position and fusion with other.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the present study show a significant relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction and depression. The findings of this study is consistent with studies that investigate the relationship between differentiation of self, depression and marital satisfaction in women's. For example, Skowron (2000) and Knerr & Bartel-Haring (2010) concluded that only emotional cutoff of all differentiation dimensions could anticipate little marital satisfaction in women. Peleg (2008) study shown women's marital satisfaction was significantly related to emotional cutoff. This is while, in men only the emotional reaction and I position were important. Yousefi et al (2009) also showed that all aspects of their differentiation is associated with marital satisfaction. Kaleta (2014) also found there is positive relation of marital satisfaction and differentiation of self and I position but there is negative relationship between marital satisfaction, emotional cutoff emotional reaction, and fusion with others. Uebelacker, Courtnage & Whisman (2003) found that symptoms of depression is correlated to self-repression and communication patterns as described in wife-applicant and husband-retiring prson. Also, an inverse correlation between symptoms of depression and marital satisfaction was significant for women but not for men. Women experience less marital satisfaction than men and more faced to marital conflict such as marital burnout and psychological distress (Vandeleur et al, 2009). Whisman (2001) conducted a meta-analytic study about the symptoms of depression and non-marital satisfaction which included 26 studies. He found that almost 18 percent of the variance of the symptoms of depression in women and 14 percent in men could be justify by non-marital satisfaction (This association was significant for women than men). Davila (2001) stated that there is not direct causal relation between marital satisfaction and depression symptoms. Because these two phenomena are likely to interact with each other. The relationship between marital satisfaction and depression is changed when differentiation of self is added as a mediator. What appears to be a complex system, where differentiation of self-influence on basic levels of marital satisfaction and depression symptoms and change of both phenomena over time. Differentiation of self has considered as a mediator variable distinction in various studies or moderating the relationship between different variables, quality of marital relationships, forgiveness and marital discord (Dekel, 2010). Hence, the researchers used differentiation of self as a mediator variable to investigate the relationship between marital satisfaction and depression symptoms. The results showed that their distinction and its subscales such as emotional cutoff, emotional reaction, I position, and fuse with the other is a mediator between marital satisfaction and depression in women. The findings of this study expanded previous researches that indicated differentiation in marital satisfaction and depression symptoms and their relationship. These findings are consistent with other research findings .Khaddouma, Gordon & Bolden (2015) concluded that the total score and both subscales of differentiation as fusion with others and I position were mediator between mindfulness and marital satisfaction. Also, Kaleta (2014) showed that the mediating role of differentiation of self in relations between marital satisfaction and stress in women. In other words, stress through differentiation of self and its subscales affect marital satisfaction. As previous research showed symptoms of mental and physical illness and social problems, especially marital discord, are related to the level of differentiation of self (Skowron, Stanley & Shapiro, 2009; Skowron, 2000). People without differentiation of self-react the stressor with the eruption of irrational emotional reactions, they have high dependency in their relations to others, has tendency to end the relation to others and separated from the people as a way to deal with conflict and action, and experience instable mood and emotions (Peleg, 2013). These findings are consistent with the theory Bowen (1978) insisted that the level of differentiation is of utmost importance to experience the intimacy and involvement of a marital relation, and marital problems are created when spouses are without differentiation of self. While, differentiation of self plays a mediating role in relations between marital satisfaction and depression. The relationship between marital satisfaction and depression is related to emotional reactions, I position, feel free to fuse with other and emotional cutoff. Emotional cutoff may act as a barrier to marital relation and a method of coping with stress in a marriage to be understood (Peleg, 2008). Avoidance of interactions is associated with increased feelings of loneliness in the relationship (Gottman, 1999) and makes the person deprived of his/ her partner support and decreases marital satisfaction. The lack of marital satisfaction in people with no differentiation of self (Neff & Karney, 2009) may lead to anxiety and depression ( Krycak, Murdock & Marszalek,2012) . People who guided by emotions or desire to engage in broken relationships, will loss emotional support from other people. This is because the distance from others or corrosive and irritating nature of behaviors associated with emotional reactions. Lack of support can lead to experience the psychological distress (Murdock & Core, 2004), and problems in interpersonal relationships (Wei et al, 2005) to prevent adaption in difficult situation.

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