Predicting sexual satisfaction: Big five personality factors, attachment styles, triangular love and happiness

Parisa Donyadari¹ and *Zahra Yousefi (Corresponding Author)², Katayoun Shafiei³
1. Department of Psychology, Ne Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.
2. Assistant Professor in Psychology, Department of Psychology, Isfahan Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran.
3. Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Behavioral Sciences Research Center, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

Abstract: This study investigated the relationships between five personality factors, attachment styles, triangular love and happiness with sexual satisfaction among mother’s center of Isfahan. We surveyed 125 volunteer women who had registered in mother’s center of Isfahan using Sexual satisfaction inventory, Sternberg’s Triangular love scale, Subjective Happiness scale and Big five Inventory – 10 (BFI -10). The data was analyzed by statistical methods including Pearson correlation, and multiple regressions. The results showed that sexual satisfaction was significantly and meaningfully associated with intimacy, commitment, passion, happiness and openness to experiences. Passion and openness to experience can predict sexual satisfaction.

Key Words: sexual satisfaction, Big five personality factors, attachment styles, triangular love and happiness

Introduction
Many theories of sexual satisfaction have explained sexual satisfaction. Interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction proposes that sexual satisfaction is influenced by physical pleasure, sense of intimacy and its costs such as time and effort that the individuals experience in sexual relationships. When costs and reward are balanced, sexual satisfaction is experienced by the persons (Lawrance & Byers, 1995).
Lauman et al. (1994) paid two dimensions to measure sexual satisfaction: physically pleasurable and emotionally pleasurable activates.
Rational – choice theories take in to partners organize people’s goals for their sexual life. Lauman et al. (1994) suggested that finding a partner and bargaining in sexual relations imply investing a series of resources such as time, money and love. Then, if finding a new partner is a difficult process, people will make a rational selection by evaluating which partners are more beneficial for their physical and emotional needs. Thus, stability long – term temporal horizon, higher degree of sexual exclusiveness (Waite & Joyner, 2001).
Empirical studies of the sexual behavior and satisfaction of representative samples of people in Iran are very few in number. Edwards and Booth (1994) showed sexual satisfaction is related to marital quality and marital stability. Yeh, Lorenz, wickroma, Conger & Elder (2006) reported that sexual satisfaction influences on marital quality, both directly and indirectly via an influence on marital instability.
Delamater, Hyde and Fong (2008) conclude the sexual satisfaction was related to marital / relationship satisfaction and frequency of sexual activity.
Barrientos and pA’ez (2006) reported being in love is linked with sexual satisfaction.
Science sexuality has gained a great deal of scientific focus during the last several decades, a large body of work has accumulated provides evidence of different factors that influence on sexual life but in Iran there are no powerful literature about sexual life especially in sexual satisfaction area. We were interested in learning more about the multiple relations between big five personality factors, attachment styles, intimacy, commitment, passion and
happiness. The following is the main goals of this research: To investigate among of big five personality factors, triangular love and attachment styles which is most in sexual satisfaction.

The big five personality factors model (MacaCare & Costa, 1997) represents the dominant conceptualization of personality structure. This model is included five relatively independent dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness reside at the highest level of the personality hierarchy.

Extraversion reflects tendencies associated with being assertive, talkative, and sociable (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Neuroticism reflects the tendency to experience distress (McCrae & John, 1992). It includes being anxious, depressed, emotional, worried and insecure (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Openness to experience is related to scientific and artistic creativity, divergent thinking and political liberalism (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002). The behavioral tendencies typically associated with it include being imaginative cultured, curious, intelligent and artistically sensitive. Agreeableness is the fourth factor which describes tendencies typically associated with this factor includes being courteous, good – natured, co-operative, soft hearted and tolerant. The final factor is conscientiousness. The typical behaviors associated with conscientiousness comprise being hard working, achievement – oriented, and preserving (Barrick and Mount, 1991). We investigated whether big five personality factors play important roles in sexual satisfaction.

**Attachment styles**

Berman and Sperling (1994) pointed out adult attachment is the stable tendency to seek and maintain closeness to and contact with one or a few specific individuals who ready the subjective potential for physical and psychological safety and security as well as a base from which to explore.

Researchers have emphasized three major styles of infant attachment: anxious/ ambivalent and avoidant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Bates & Wall, 1978).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) classified three attachment styles: Secure, anxious or avoid art to describe these relationships. Many studies propose that attachment style is a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (Simpson, 1990). Kobak and Hazan (1991) found that marital satisfaction was associated with a person’s reliance on his or her partner and that the partner’s reliance on self.

Compelling reasons exist for expecting an association between attachment style and communication patterns, because communication is vital in development of internal model for closeness (Freeny & Noller, 1996). We examined whether attachment styles are related in sexual satisfaction.

**Intimacy, passion and commitment**

The triangular theory of love developed by Sternberg (2007) According to the triangular theory, the three components of love is introduced: (a) intimacy which encompasses feelings of attachment, closeness, connectedness and bondedness, (b) passion which includes drives to both limerence and sexual attraction and (c) commitment which comprises the decision to remain with another in the short term, and the shared achievements and plans made with the other in the long term (Sternberg, 2007).

Intimacy involves feelings of closeness and bondedness in romantic relationship. It includes feelings of experienced happiness with a partner, mutual understanding and intimate communication with the loved one (Sternberg, 1986). Hatfield (1998) defined passionate love as the profound desire to be with another which through combination of emotions and behaviors. It encompasses the most intense feelings. Commitment consists of two aspects in the short term is the decision to love (Sternberg, 2007). This aspect includes the exclusivity and fidelity.

Many researchers have documented a significant association between commitment with satisfaction (e.g Sternberg, 1986, Sternberg & Barnes, 1985; Acker & Davis, 1992). We investigated whether intimacy, passion and commitment have any relations with sexual satisfaction.

**Happiness**

One of the most researched topics in positive psychology is happiness. Iranian culture has embraced happiness as one of its most important goals, because in Islamic culture as the part of Iranian culture, happiness means life satisfaction and being satisfied from God.

In positive psychology, the word happiness is synonymous with (quality of life) or (well – being). In this meaning it denotes that life is good (Veenhoven, 2006). Philosophers have distinguished two model of happiness: Hedonism and life satisfaction.

Hedonists identify happiness with the individuals' balance of pleasant over pleasant experience (Morris, 2011). Life satisfaction identify happiness with having a favorable toward on’s life as whole (Suiikkanen, 2011; Brulde, 2007). The emotional state view identifies happiness with an agent’s emotional condition as whole. Hybrid views identify happiness with both life satisfaction and pleasure or emotional state (Brulde, 2007). Few studies have examined directly or indirectly on happiness influence on women’s sexual satisfaction.
Rahmani, khoei and alah Gholi (2009) showed happiness and marital satisfaction related to sexual satisfaction among married men and women. We examined whether happiness are related in sexual satisfaction.

**Method**

Participants were 125 volunteer women who had registered in mother’s center of Isfahan. They were randomly selected among the women. Their average age and standard deviation respectively were 36.2, 4.53. According to their evaluation, % 75 belonged average levels; %7 belonged low levels and %18 belonged high levels ESS. All of them had child.

**Instruments**

Sexual satisfaction Inventory (Whitley & Paulsen, 1975): We used Persian version of the inventory. The original instrument contained 32 likert – types items designed to allow individuals to rate the level of sexual satisfaction, they received from various sexual activates. Whitley and Paulsen (1975) reported, the Cranach alpha coefficient for the 32 item was .78. Other psychometric characters were reported favorable (whitely & Paulsen, 1975). We examined internal consistency in our sample (α = .78).

Sternberg’s Triangular love scale (STLS) (Sternberg 1997). We applied STLS to measure commitment, intimacy and passion in our sample. It has 45 items, with 15 for intimacy, 15 for passion and 15 for commitment. All the items have a blank to be filled with the name of a single loved one; we filled it with "my husband" and are answered on a liker type scale of 1 to 9. We scored it on a 5- item scale. We examined internal consistency in our sample (for commitment, α = .88; for intimacy, α = .82 and for passion α=.75).

Subjective Happiness scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999): Subjective Happiness scale is a 4- item scale designed to measure subjective happiness. Each of items is completed by choosing one of seven options that finish a given sentence fragment. A single composite score for total subjective happiness is computed by averaging responses to the four items (the fourth reverse – coded). Lyubomirsky and lepper (1999) reported well to excellent reliability, and construct, convergent and discriminate validities.

Big five Inventory – 10 (BFI -10) (Ramstad, John, 2007). We used the Persian version of BFI -10. Ramstad and John (2007) selected 2 BFI item for each big five dimension. Every item is reacted on a five step scale from 1= disagree strongly” to five = “agree strongly”. They reported test - retest reliability, structural validity, convergent validity with the NEO-PI-R and its dimensions and external validity using peer voting’s. Results showed that the BFI- 10 scales retain significant levels of reliability and validity.

**Results**

To response to research questions, data was examined in two steps. The first step was to examine the intercorrelations matrix between dependent and independent variables. The results showed sexual satisfaction was significantly and meaningfully associated with intimacy (r= .341, p= .0001), commitment (r= .345, p=.0001), passion (r= .402, p=.0001), happiness(r= .215, p= .0001), and openness to experiences (r= .273, p= .0001).

**Predicting Depression**

Multiple regression analyses was conducted to responses research questions in relation to predicting sexual satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction was entered as the dependent variable, and Intimacy, commitment, passion, happiness, five factor personality and attachment styles were entered as the independent variables. Summary data are presented in Table 2.

The results indicated a significant model fit, for each models, for model 1, F = 24.45, p = 0.0001, and that the independent variable (passion) included in the model was able to account for 16.1% of the variance (R² = 0.161), for model 2, F= 17.38, p= 0.0001, and that the independent variables (passion and openness to experience) included in the model were able to account for 21.6% of the variance (R² =0.216).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sexual satisfaction</td>
<td>97.01</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2Intimacy</td>
<td>107.19</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.218</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Stepwise multiple regression of depression based on rumination, forgiveness and attachment styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>model</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SEB</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.489</td>
<td>.235</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

We examined the multiple relationships among big five personality traits, attachment styles, intimacy, commitment, passion and happiness with sexual satisfaction. The results of Pearson correlation showed intimacy, commitment, passion, happiness and openness to experiences were significantly and positively associated with sexual satisfaction and multiple regression analysis showed passion and openness to experiences can predict sexual satisfaction. The present findings are congruent with the theoretical base commitments willingness to stay with a certain person, the bonds in family points out to high levels of commitment. Intimacy is how connected, bonded and close to someone, and passion relates to attraction to a person in a romantic and erotic sense (Sternberg, 1986). Therefore, it is expected that commitment, intimacy and passion become correlated to sexual satisfaction. These findings are congruent with other research finding (e.g Aron, Henkemeyer, 1995). However commitment, intimacy and passion cause to string then the friendship and closeness between couples so that they can have sex with each other most comfortable.

Basson (2001 & 2002) reported, sex behavior and sexual arousal in women cannot be explained as regard to psychological need (estrogens and testosterone). The sex need in woman is predicted through intimacy. In fact in women sex need begins with intimacy and passion. In the other hand, it seems, commitment between couples cause they accept responsibility about each other needs.
Other variable had positive correlation with sex satisfaction is happiness. How we can explain the correlation? It seems happiness help to be interested in interaction. It reinforces relationships in long term. In fact, it acts as social glue (levenson, 1999). In the other hand it is a coping procedure to depression, hopelessness and negative affect and mood that they can decrease sex desire.  

One of the most interesting results of the research was the positive correlations of being openness to experience and sexual satisfaction and its predicting power for sexual satisfaction. Reviewing sub traits of openness show it is related to being imaginative curious, intelligent and artistically sensitive. Perhaps people with openness have most cognitive flexibility and creativity that they help the people become more happiness than which persons are not open to new experience. Therefore, they can cope with their problems most comfortable so that they have more time and engage for their needs included sex desire.

References


30


