




Developing a Pre-Marital Counseling Model Based on Compatibility and Interaction: Analyzing Work Adjustment Theory and Its Adaptation to a Pre-Marital Counseling Model

Somayeh. Nayeri¹, Zahra. Yousefi^{2*}, Hajar. Torkan²

¹ Doctoral Student, Department of Conseling, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

² Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: z.yousefi@khuisf.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to develop a pre-marital counseling model based on Davis's (2005) Work Adjustment Theory.

Methods: The research was qualitative in nature and utilized content analysis. The environment for this study included all texts related to the aforementioned theory. Participants were selected purposefully from texts on work adjustment within the period from 2013 to 2022. The criterion for the number of texts was based on the principle of data saturation. The data collection method involved line-by-line examination of texts, based on questions related to the components of adjustment in this theory. Data derived from the text analysis were analyzed using the conventional content analysis method by Hsieh and Shannon (2005).

Findings: The results of the content analysis indicated that all content from Davis's Work Adjustment Theory can be summarized into three main concepts: compatibility, interaction, and adjustment. When adapted to pre-marital counseling, these concepts were described as follows: the concept of compatibility is divided into two subcategories: satisfaction for the family and satisfaction with the family. The concept of interaction includes sub-concepts of adjustment styles. The third concept, adjustment, encompasses the style of managing marital life tasks. Accordingly, the compatibility-based pre-marital counseling model was designed based on these three dimensions.

Conclusion: Overall, given the process of extracting this model, it can be qualitatively stated that this model is valid.

Keywords: marriage, pre-marital counseling, content analysis, adjustment.

1. Introduction

Marriage, along with career choice, is considered one of the two major decisions individuals make, significantly influencing their personal, social, and spiritual development. On the other hand, it can also lead to various

problems, potentially resulting in a desire for divorce. In recent years, many new marriages have ended in divorce; thus, the importance of premarital counseling has become increasingly evident to social custodians and the general public. Premarital counseling can help couples achieve a longer and more successful marriage from the outset,

providing a non-biased framework that prepares them to address problems by gaining awareness and skills for problem-solving before encountering marital issues (Mokhtari et al., 2021; Mokhtari et al., 2022).

Various models for marriage counseling have been introduced, encouraging couples to discuss financial matters, communication, beliefs and values, roles in marriage, affection and sexual issues, the desire for children, decision-making, handling anger, and how to spend time together (Jokar et al., 2023; Jokar et al., 2022; Khanbani et al., 2022). Some view this counseling as encompassing conflict resolution, evaluation of personal values, financial decisions, career and educational activities, family planning, extended family issues, intimacy and romance, social communications, religion, and home management (Jokar et al., 2022).

The results of premarital counseling have shown changes in individual perspectives, understanding the cultural impacts on communication, reducing dysfunctional behaviors, improving communication, enhancing identity, and reducing emotional isolation and avoidance (Kavehi Sedehi et al., 2020). These results can help individuals manage the effects of their personality traits. Other benefits include developing communication skills, providing opportunities to explain family issues, planning for the future, and becoming more rational rather than emotion-driven. Some marriage counseling models include elements such as relationship strengths and growth areas, enhancing couple communication skills, conflict resolution, exploring family-of-origin issues, setting an executable budget and financial plan, and setting personal, couple, and family goals (Kavehi Sedehi et al., 2020).

In Iran, models for marriage counseling have also been introduced. For instance, Mokhtari, Yousefi, and Manshaei (2023) and Mokhtari et al. (2023) introduced a model based on untimely singleness of girls and a schema modification model for correcting marriage-related constructs, based on cognitive-behavioral and emotional errors and role models for single girls (Mokhtari et al., 2021; Mokhtari et al., 2022). Furthermore, Razavi, Jazayeri, Ahmadi, and Etemadi (2017) introduced a native model for marriage counseling covering important marriage criteria, dowry and living arrangements, education about the personality traits of the couples, management of family interventions, sexual limitations during engagement, financial and occupational challenges, virtual space, and marital relations (Razavi et al., 2018). These premarital education programs aimed to encourage

students to marry on time and focus on important points in selection.

Numerous studies on marriage have been conducted, including Rostami, Navabinejad, and Farzad (2019), who studied premarital injuries (Rostami et al., 1398); Heidardokht Nazari et al. (2015), who found a relationship between personality traits and pre-marital fears (Heidardokht Nazari et al., 2015); and Abbasi (2019), who demonstrated the effectiveness of the individual awareness program on personal marriage choices (Abbasi, 2019). Kavaei Sedehi et al. (2023) showed the effectiveness of expert-driven premarital education in correcting ideal spouse images and perfectionism (Kavehi Sedehi et al., 2020); Mokhtari et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of schema-based premarital education on schema mindsets and marriage inclination in single girls (Mokhtari et al., 2022).

One important aspect of choosing a spouse is finding someone who matches in cultural, personality, social, physical, age, and family characteristics, ensuring mutual satisfaction. However, the ability to interact is also crucial. Thus, a model for premarital counseling should cover both compatibility in selection and the ability to interact post-selection. In this context, the Work Adjustment Theory (Swanson & Schneider, 2013), although focused on person-job fit, can be adapted for marriage counseling. Given the rising divorce rates and short duration of marriages, developing culturally rich models for marriage is essential. Such models can fill gaps and meet the needs of this field more effectively (Williams, 2007). A model considering the two superconstructs of compatibility and interaction can cover many important constructs in making correct choices and avoiding incorrect ones. Therefore, this study aimed to develop a compatibility and interaction-based premarital counseling model through qualitative content analysis. The results of this study could be a significant help to counselors and youth affairs officials in the field of marriage, answering the question of what components form the compatibility and interaction premarital counseling model.

2. Methods

2.1. Study Design

Given that the subject of this study was the examination of the components of the Work Adjustment Theory to extract its main concepts and adapt them to marriage counseling, this study utilized a qualitative research approach and content analysis based on the conventional design by Hsieh

and Shannon (2005). This design is applicable when theories and research texts related to the subject of study exist. In this study, the existing theory was the Work Adjustment Theory, and all codes and categories were directly extracted from the texts and then adapted for marriage counseling. The guiding role of the family therapist and premarital counselor, along with other colleagues in this field, was crucial in this process.

The research environment included texts related to the Work Adjustment Theory. The selection of texts continued until data saturation was achieved, which occurred after five sources, though the number of texts was increased to 10. These texts were examined over a period from 2012 to 2022, including books, articles, and theses focused on the Work Adjustment Theory. Inclusion criteria were: primary and original texts, texts from the last ten years, and texts where one of the main concepts was the Work Adjustment Theory. Exclusion criteria included: texts without reputable publishers and undergraduate theses. According to database reviews, no published article in Persian was found on the subject until the time of writing this article.

2.2. Tools

To collect data, a guide questionnaire and detailed study of texts were used. The questions in this guide prompted the researcher to focus on the two concepts of compatibility and interaction in the relevant texts, noting key and important phrases. After identifying the sources to be analyzed, these sources were examined line by line, content analyzed, coded, and reviewed by the supervisor and advisor. At this stage, the coherence and consistency of the data in terms of meaning and concept were reviewed, while clear and distinct differences between the content were created. Subsequently, the sources were thoroughly reviewed with the help of supervisors and advisors, and the resulting themes were revisited. It is noteworthy that data were analyzed concurrently with collection, involving a back-and-forth interaction between what is known and what needs to be known, ensuring validity and reliability.

2.3. Data Analysis

Simultaneous data collection and analysis, along with repeated back-and-forth movements between data and codes, were performed. To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, the following points were observed based on Rose and Johnson (2020):

Usefulness: This criterion indicates that the findings from qualitative research are useful and illuminating for the study

under consideration. Given that the aim of this research was to develop a compatibility and interaction-based premarital counseling model, it can be informative and effective for family counselors and clients in improving premarital counseling.

Contextual Completeness: This criterion means that the phenomenon under study is examined in relation to its context. In this research, all variables were considered to comprehensively describe the study context.

Researcher Positioning: This criterion indicates that the researcher is aware of their position and avoids unconscious influence on text interpretation. The researcher in this study tried to avoid bias in selecting participants, analyzing, and interpreting interviews, and sought assistance from another expert in analyses to avoid any unconscious influence.

Reporting Method: This criterion ensures that the style of reporting allows other specialists and users to understand the research results. Efforts were made to present qualitative reports in tables and charts for easier understanding.

Triangulation of Researchers: This criterion ensures that different individuals perform coding and data analysis. In this study, the interviews were coded by the researcher, with data analysis performed by the researcher, the supervisor, and a qualitative research coding expert.

3. Findings and Results

Overall, for data analysis, the conventional content analysis method by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was used, which included the following steps: 1) All conceptual units of the selected texts were extracted; 2) The texts were read line by line and primary coding of conceptual units was performed; 3) To ensure consistency of the codes and categories with the texts, the extracted concepts were preliminarily reviewed by the supervisor and consultant; 4) The validity and reliability of the coding were assessed by all research team members except the student (specialists). Extracted paragraphs from the texts along with their codes were presented to the supervisors, consultants, and a qualitative analysis expert. In the final step, 5) Conclusions based on coding and categorization were confirmed by the supervisors, consultants, and qualitative experts. It is noteworthy that this method is applicable when relevant theories and research texts are available, and all codes and categories are directly extracted from the texts. Finally, adaptation to premarital counseling was carried out by the supervisor and his colleagues in the field, replacing each extracted concept and sub-concepts with appropriate

concepts based on the experience and knowledge of expert family therapists. Figure 1 shows the general schematic of

the compatibility components based on the compatibility and interaction model.

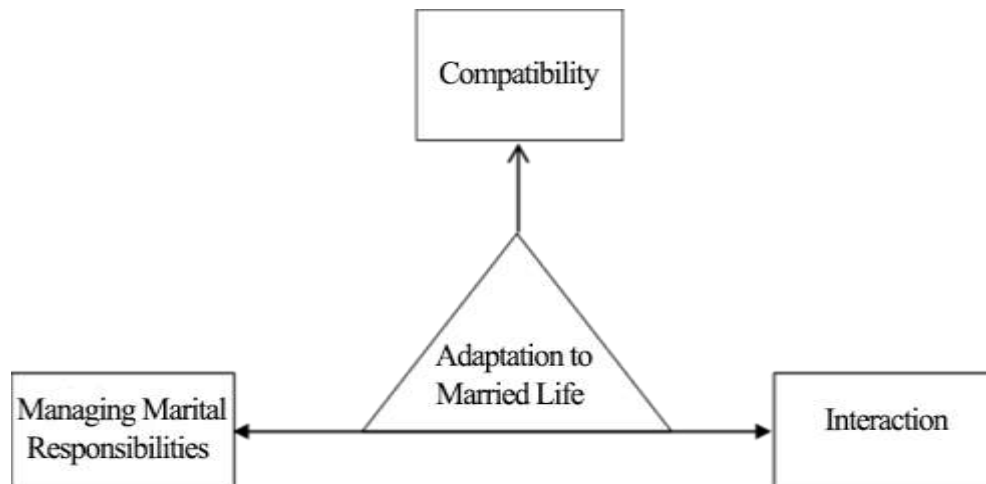
Table 1

Content Analysis and Expert Opinion on the Application of Concepts from Davis's Work Adjustment Theory to Three Functions of Premarital Counseling (Self-knowledge, Spouse Knowledge, and Evaluation of Interaction and Commitment Ability)

No.	Main Concepts of Davis's Theory	Sub-concepts	Coding	Alignment of Qualitative Analysis Concepts with Premarital Counseling According to 7 Marriage Counseling Experts
1	Compatibility	Satisfaction (Alignment of individual capabilities with marital and family demands) Satisfaction (alignment of each spouse's needs and values with reinforcement and reward patterns of the other)	Compatibility of individual capabilities (ability to communicate, ability to meet spouse's gender needs, commitment to marital duties, ability to endure family cycle ambiguities) with marital and family environment requirements (adaptation to personality differences, adaptation to preferences and interests, adaptation to changes from individual to marital life) Compatibility of values and individual needs (maintaining relationships, commitment, conflict management, respect, forgiveness, loyalty, trust, honesty, family, empathy-compassion, and fulfilling gender roles and needs including value, acceptance, importance, security, and connection) with family reinforcement and marital environment patterns (individual attractiveness to spouse and ability to avoid ignoring sensitivities)	Interaction and commitment (7 experts) Self-knowledge and spouse knowledge (7 experts)
2	Interaction	Adaptation styles with spouse, marriage, and family environment (requiring personality assessment and extended family evaluation)	Flexible, Active, Reactive, Resistant	Compatibility (7 experts) Interaction (7 experts)
3	Response style to duties	Management of marital duties (management of family participation duties and marital tasks)	Speed of response to duties, Intensity of response to duties, Endurance of duties, Response to duties	Interaction (7 experts)

Figure 1

General Schematic of Premarital Counseling Model Based on Work Adjustment Theory



To assess family counselors' opinions, they were asked to evaluate the three major functions of premarital counseling according to Kavaei Sedehi et al. (2023): self-knowledge, spouse knowledge, and evaluation of interaction and

commitment abilities, based on selected concepts (Kavehi Sedehi et al., 2020). The last column of Table 1 shows the results of the content validity review and the opinion of premarital counselors regarding this model. As shown in

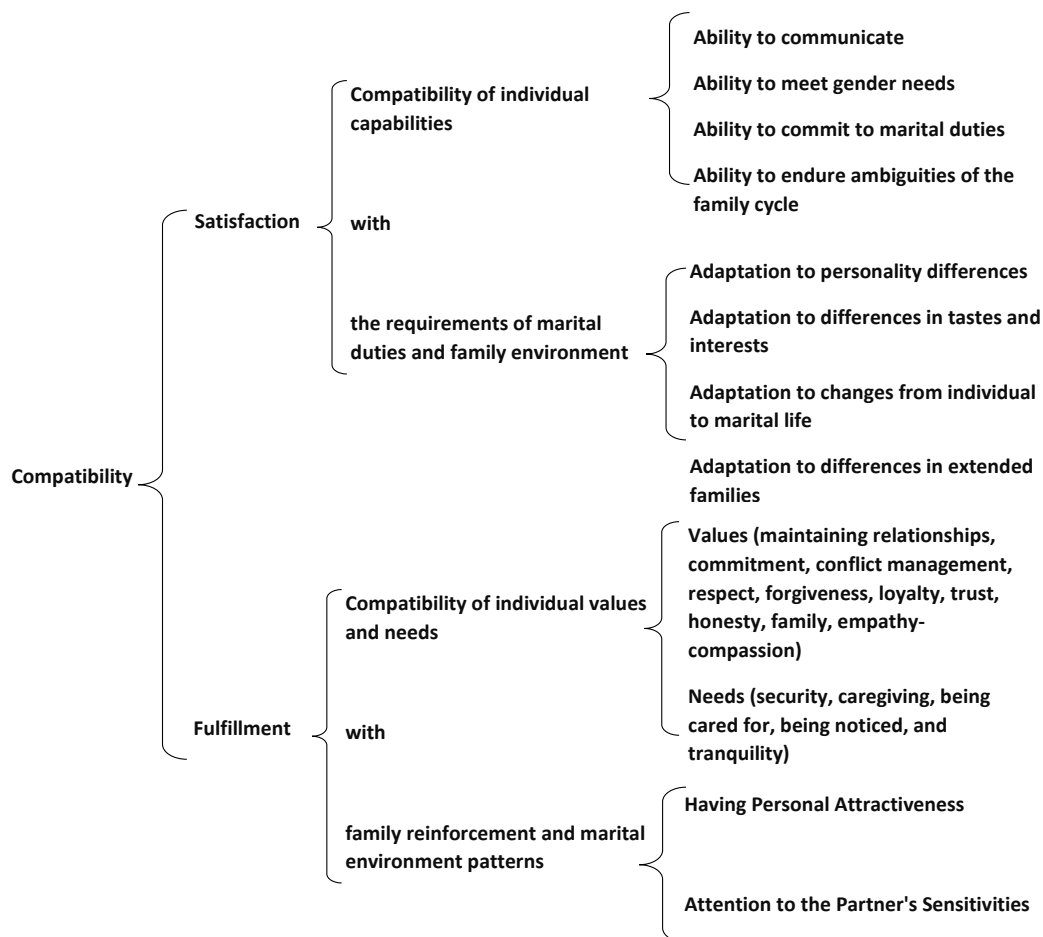
Table 1, all content from Davis's Work Adjustment Theory is summarized into three main concepts: compatibility, interaction, and task management.

The concept of compatibility is divided into two subcategories: satisfaction and fulfillment. In the sub-concept of satisfaction within the main concept of compatibility, the focus is on couples' abilities to respond to marital and family life demands. According to the supervisor's opinion, the sub-concepts are defined as follows: "ability to communicate, ability to meet spouse's gender needs, commitment to marital duties, ability to endure family cycle ambiguities." In the sub-concept of fulfillment for couples, "compatibility of needs with the partner's capabilities and alignment of values with family reinforcement patterns, personal attractiveness to the spouse,

and ability to avoid ignoring partner's sensitivities" were considered. Based on the supervisor's previous experiences (source specified due to double-blind peer review), family values include: financial and monetary values, childbearing, social prestige, peace, political, scientific, artistic, one's own family, spouse's family, purely physical, independence, and beauty. The family environment should provide resources matching these values, as values define couples' sensitivities, and neglecting one spouse's values can provoke their sensitivities. Therefore, for couples to be satisfied with their marriage, spouses must be able to meet each other's needs. It is worth noting that at this stage, seven family therapists confirmed the supervisor's opinions regarding values and needs. Figure 2 shows the general schematic of compatibility and its sub-concepts in this model.

Figure 2

General Schematic of Compatibility and its Sub-concepts



The second concept in Table 1 relates to the individual's ability to interact with: 1) the spouse, 2) both families, and 3) family conditions. Interaction reflects the individual's

ability to initiate and sustain adaptation. At this stage, it should be examined whether the individual is familiar with four reactions in interacting with the spouse and family

environment: 1) flexible interaction, where the individual endures the difficult or unpleasant situations of the spouse, families, and family conditions; 2) active interaction, where couples strive to change the family environment and tasks to preserve the family; 3) passive interaction, where couples try to align themselves with the family environment and spouse

without seeking external changes; and 4) resistance, referring to the individual's ability to endure difficult conditions of the spouse and family environment without changes. This part of the findings was also confirmed by seven family therapists.

Figure 3

Schematic of Adaptability During Interaction with the Marital and Family Environment

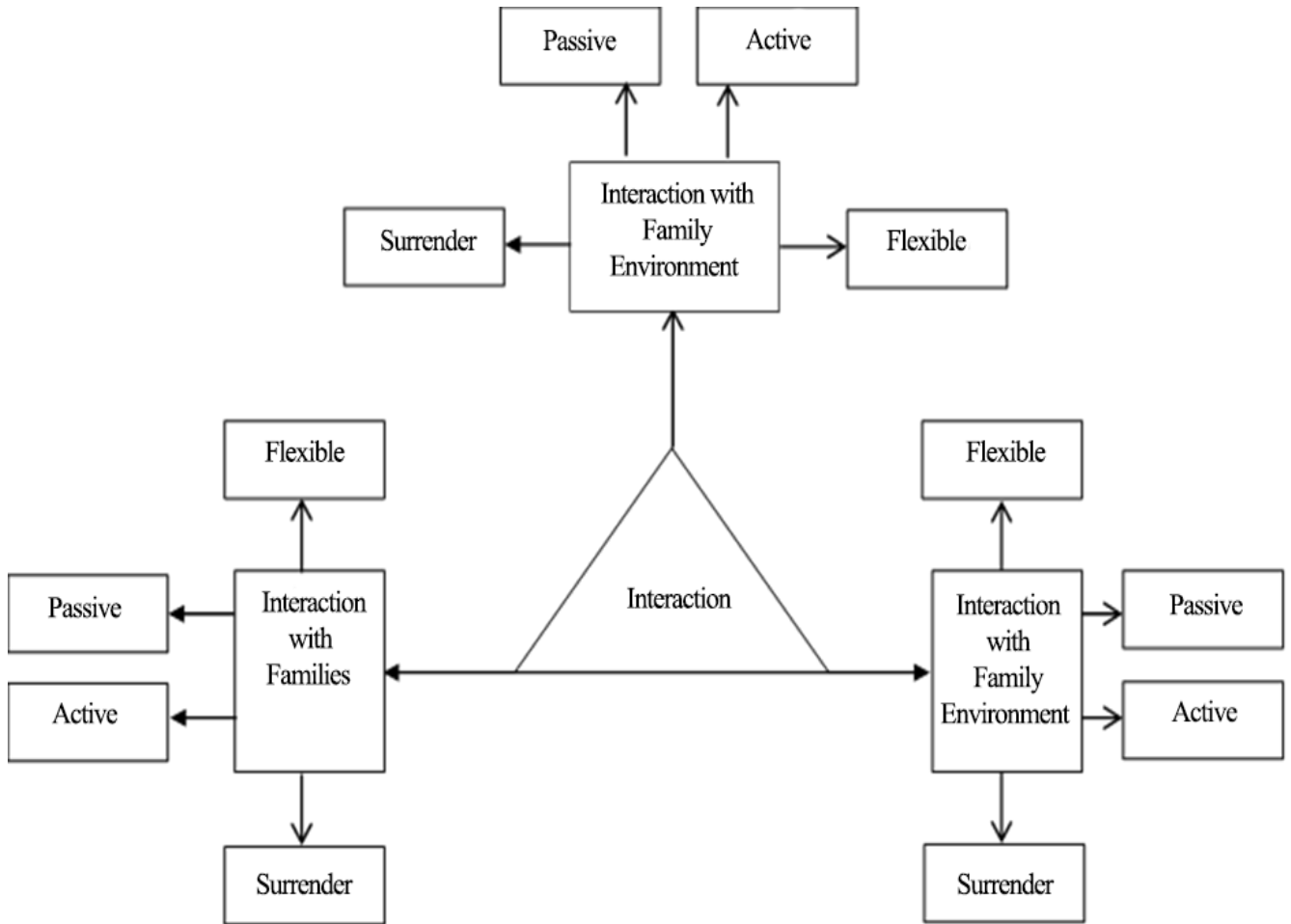
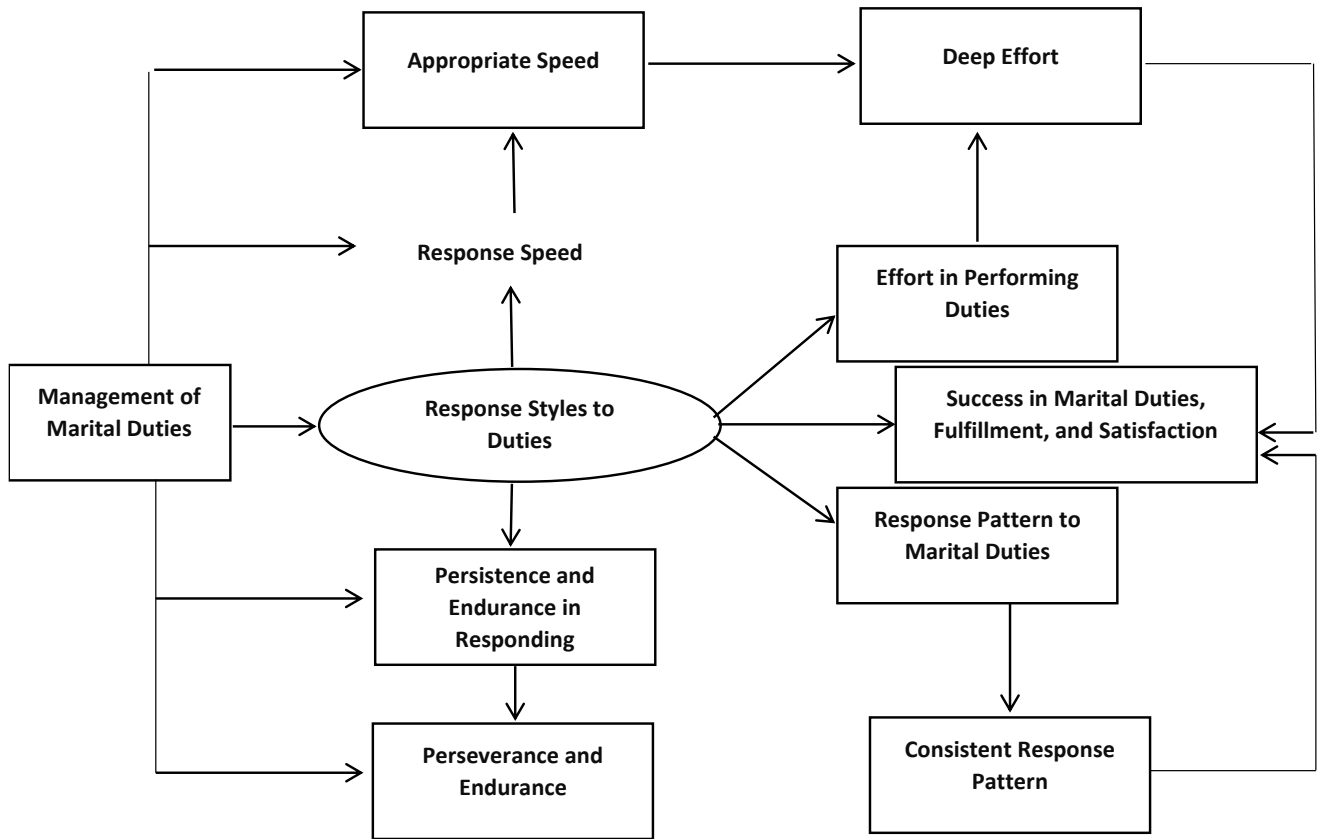


Figure 4

General Schematic of Task Management Components



The third concept in Table 1 relates to the individual's ability to manage expected duties in marital life, reflecting personal characteristics in responding to marital and family duties. These include: 1) reaction speed and the time gap from recognizing the necessity of a duty to performing it; 2) reaction intensity to duties, indicating the depth of value placed on performing marital and family duties—the more value placed, the better the task completion; 3) endurance of duties, relating to couples' resilience against heavy marital responsibilities; and 4) response pattern, indicating stability in response speed. This part was also confirmed by seven therapists. Figure 4 shows the general schematic of task management components.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the question of what components make up the compatibility and interaction premarital counseling model. Content analysis results showed that the compatibility and interaction counseling model for marriage encompasses three main concepts: compatibility, interaction, and task management. Compatibility is divided into two subcategories: satisfaction (with sub-concepts of communication ability, ability to meet spouse's gender needs, commitment to marital duties, ability

to endure family cycle ambiguities) and fulfillment (compatibility of needs with the partner's capabilities and alignment of values with family reinforcement patterns, personal attractiveness to the spouse, and ability to avoid partner's sensitivities).

The concept of interaction shows the individual's ability to interact with the spouse, both families, and the family environment, encompassing interaction styles (with sub-concepts of active, passive, flexible, and resistant interaction). The third concept, task management, refers to the individual's management style of marital duties, addressing personal characteristics in responding to marital and family duties and examining sub-concepts of reaction speed and the time gap from recognizing the necessity of a duty to performing it, reaction intensity to duties, and endurance of duties.

In relation to other research findings, various studies on marriage counseling and successful marriage models have been conducted. For example, Jafarian and Labafi (2018) showed that economic thinking in spouse selection is one of the causes of problematic marriages in Isfahan (Jafarian & Labafi, 2018); Mokhtari et al. (2021; 2022) sought to correct constructs that hinder timely marriage among girls (Mokhtari et al., 2021; Mokhtari et al., 2022), while Jokar et

al. (2022) explained untimely singleness among educated men. Jokar, Yousefi, and Torkan (2022) also addressed timely marriage (Jokar et al., 2022). Kavaei Sedehi et al. (2023) introduced expert-driven marriage counseling components (Kavehi Sedehi et al., 2020), but no published research has specifically addressed compatibility and interaction in premarital counseling.

In explaining the concept of compatibility and the sub-concept of fulfillment (with sub-concepts of communication ability, ability to meet spouse's gender needs, commitment to marital duties, ability to endure family cycle ambiguities), it can be said that one of the main reasons for forming a family is meeting various needs healthily within the family context, which requires communication. In most family therapy theories, including structural, strategic, and Milan systems, effective communication (Alexander & Robbins, 2019) is a crucial tool for family maintenance and survival (Dehghani Sheshdeh & Yousefi, 2019). Couples also have gender needs that should be addressed, such as attention for women and being a pillar of support for men (Padash et al., 2023). According to the family cycle theory, the family goes through stages that involve tasks and crises, which must be resolved before moving to the next stage. As the entire family system is involved in task completion, ambiguities may arise, and couples must endure the associated anxiety until clarity is achieved (Alexander & Robbins, 2019; Navabinejad et al., 2024). Couples unable to master these skills will face difficulties in creating compatibility and satisfaction, causing family disruption.

In explaining the other aspect of compatibility, fulfillment (with sub-concepts of needs compatibility with the partner's capabilities and alignment of values with family reinforcement patterns, personal attractiveness to the spouse, and ability to avoid partner's sensitivities), it can be said that during spouse selection, individuals have needs that the partner should meet. Failure to meet these psychological, social, or physical needs leads to dissatisfaction and disillusionment (Jokar et al., 2022; Seifi Ghozlu et al., 2015), which lays the foundation for family breakdown. Additionally, each spouse brings values into the marriage, and if the formed system cannot provide suitable reinforcement patterns to attend to these values, dissatisfaction with the spouse ensues (Seifi Ghozlu et al., 2015). Couples should also possess minimal repelling forces and maximal attracting forces to prevent marital disillusionment. Understanding and avoiding triggering each other's sensitivities are crucial; for example, high excitement-seeking in one partner and low excitement-

seeking in the other can ignite marital conflicts (Razavi et al., 2018). Therefore, in evaluating compatibility in marriage counseling, the values, needs, capabilities, and reinforcement patterns each individual offers should be identified to assess the level of satisfaction and fulfillment.

In explaining the concept of interaction in the premarital counseling model, it can be said that typically, marriage counseling models assess couples' compatibility. However, despite compatibility resulting in satisfaction and fulfillment, the next stage of marriage is interaction. Effective communication between couples can help maintain the family. Results showed that these interactions occur at three important levels: ability to interact with the spouse, both families, and the family environment. However, it is crucial for couples to understand that during life cycles, they will face periods of discord that must be managed with appropriate interaction styles (with sub-concepts of active, passive, flexible, and resistant interactions, as defined in the results section) to avoid emotional separation and communication breakdowns.

In explaining the concept of evaluating the ability to manage marital life duties in the premarital counseling model, it can be said that family durability and survival depend on the couple's ability to manage marital life duties and accept role responsibilities within the family. Inability to adapt to family conditions and transition from individual to marital life can lead to numerous issues for the couple (Vernig, 2011). Even if compatibility and interaction are established, inability to commit to responsibilities jeopardizes them. Therefore, managing duties and roles supplements the other two aspects of compatibility and interaction. Couples must perform duties with quick reaction speed, minimizing the time gap from recognizing a duty's necessity to performing it, maintain high reaction intensity, adhering to minimum standards, and endure repetitive and potentially tedious family tasks, reflecting resilience against heavy marital responsibilities. Premarital counselors should assess couples' capability to manage daily marital duties. Overall, these three dimensions together facilitate couples' compatibility and family harmony.

Considering these results, one premarital counseling model for counselors is the compatibility and interaction model, focusing on evaluating potential for mutual satisfaction and fulfillment and assessing interaction abilities, including spouse management, family interactions, and family environment communication. Finally, task management supplements these two dimensions, highlighting the importance of reaction speed, intensity,

consistency, and endurance in maintaining compatibility and interaction. Thus, initial compatibility and subsequent interaction without task management are fragile. Therefore, empowering and capability-building are central to this model, completing the counseling process by empowering couples.

5. Suggestions and Limitations

Like other studies, this research had limitations, such as not interviewing couples or expert counselors in compatibility and interaction. Although part of the triangulation process involved premarital counseling experts validating this model, it did not introduce assessment tools for these three dimensions, which could be the subject of future research.

It is suggested that future studies examine the effectiveness and efficiency of this premarital counseling model compared to other models. Counselors are encouraged to use the extracted model to enhance it and prepare comprehensive training courses for premarital counselors based on the compatibility-interaction counseling framework. Additionally, educational packages in the form of tasks for couples should be prepared by counselors and provided to them. Finally, educational packages for counseling students interested in this field should be prepared using the model derived from this research.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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