

## Self-Esteem in Marital Relationships

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The objective of this study is to explore the role of self-esteem in marital relationships, examining how self-esteem influences marital satisfaction, communication, and overall relationship dynamics.

**Methods:** This research utilizes a descriptive analytical narrative review approach. Data were collected from valid scientific databases, including both Persian and English sources such as Google Scholar, PubMed, SID, Magiran, and IranDoc. The inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed studies that examined the link between self-esteem and marital relationships. A qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify key themes, patterns, and differences across the literature.

**Findings:** The analysis reveals that self-esteem is a critical factor in marital satisfaction, with individuals possessing higher self-esteem experiencing more fulfilling and stable relationships. Self-esteem also plays a significant role in improving communication between couples, reducing marital conflicts, and enhancing emotional intimacy. Furthermore, the review highlights a reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and sexual satisfaction, where individuals with higher sexual self-esteem demonstrate better marital functioning. Cross-cultural comparisons between Persian and English literature suggest similar themes but also reveal cultural nuances in the perception and role of self-esteem within marriages.

**Conclusion:** The findings emphasize the importance of self-esteem in marital relationships, suggesting that higher self-esteem leads to better marital satisfaction, improved communication, and reduced conflicts. Interventions aimed at boosting self-esteem, particularly among women, could have a positive impact on marital dynamics and overall family well-being. The study calls for greater attention from family counselors and institutions to promote self-esteem through workshops and educational programs, ultimately contributing to happier and more stable marriages.

**Keywords:** *self-esteem, marital relationships, happiness, life satisfaction, marital relations*

### 1. Introduction

T

he family is the first naturally occurring group on which society is built. The manner and quality of family functioning in fulfilling its roles is a suitable indicator for

assessing societal health. The better and healthier a family functions, the more stability and health society will experience. Conversely, the worse and more dysfunctional the family is, the greater the threat to society. This is because dysfunction in family performance signals dysfunction within the family system, pushing the family toward disintegration. Scientists argue that most abnormal and troubled individuals come from dysfunctional families, and children from high-conflict families, due to a lack of psychological calm and focus, are more prone to maladaptive behaviors. Statistical data show that the majority of regions around the world suffer from an increase in crimes committed by maladjusted individuals. The rise in adolescent maladjustment rates in transitioning countries is particularly concerning. Studies show that poor family functioning is the most significant predictor of adolescent maladjustment. For example, research conducted in France indicates that 80% of maladjusted individuals come from families marked by discord, conflict, and a continuously tense family environment (Abedi et al., 2024; Almurumudhe et al., 2024; Korahng Behshti & Torkaman, 2023; Lee, 2023).

Most experts consider self-esteem (a positive self-evaluation) to be a central and fundamental factor in emotional and social adjustment. Initially, psychologists and sociologists, including William James, Herbert Mead, and Charles Cooley, emphasized the importance of positive self-esteem. A few years later, neo-Freudians such as Sullivan and Horney incorporated "self-concept" into their personality theories. Years later, psychologists combined these theories with empirical work and concluded that self-esteem (a positive self-evaluation) has a reciprocal relationship with individual happiness and functional performance (Darbani & Parsakia, 2022; Heydari et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021).

A child who feels good about themselves is better able to cope with problems. They may approach them in a way that makes it seem as if no significant problem has ever existed for them. Having self-esteem is not only a part of mental health but is also associated with academic achievement. Researchers have found a correlation between positive self-esteem and high grades in schools (Mokhles et al., 2021; Yeon & Choi, 2020).

All individuals, regardless of age, gender, cultural background, or the direction and type of work they pursue in life, need self-esteem. Self-esteem affects all aspects of life. Various psychological studies suggest that if the need for self-esteem is not fulfilled, broader needs such as the need

for creativity, achievement, or realizing one's potential remain limited. Individuals who feel good about themselves generally also feel good about life. They can face life's challenges and responsibilities with confidence and are able to handle them (Hoseinpour Lakani et al., 2015; Korahng Behshti & Torkaman, 2023; Lee, 2023). The objective of this study is to explore the role of self-esteem in marital relationships, examining how self-esteem influences marital satisfaction, communication, and overall relationship dynamics.

## 2. Methods

This study adopts a descriptive analytical narrative review approach to explore the role of self-esteem in marital relationships. The narrative review method allows for a comprehensive synthesis of existing literature in both Persian and English, offering insights into the relationship between self-esteem and marital dynamics. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing self-esteem within the context of marriage by systematically reviewing and interpreting available data.

The data for this review were collected from both Persian and English scientific articles available in valid databases. To ensure a thorough exploration of the topic, articles were sourced from reliable academic databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, as well as prominent Persian-language databases such as SID (Scientific Information Database), Magiran, and IranDoc. The search focused on peer-reviewed journals, books, and relevant academic papers published in both languages.

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to synthesize findings from the collected literature. The data analysis process included:

1. **Thematic Analysis:** Key themes related to self-esteem in marital relationships were identified and categorized. These themes include factors affecting self-esteem, its impact on marital satisfaction, and the interaction between self-esteem and communication in couples.
2. **Comparative Review:** A comparison between Persian and English literature was undertaken to identify similarities, differences, and cultural variations in the understanding of self-esteem's role in marital relationships.
3. **Synthesis of Results:** The results from both Persian and English sources were synthesized to provide a comprehensive view of the topic. This

allowed for the identification of key findings, theoretical perspectives, and emerging trends across different cultural contexts.

### 3. Literature Review

Many factors influence self-esteem, which we will discuss below:

**Family.** The family is the guarantor of personality stability and psychological balance in individuals. Mental health is formed within the family. The family is the center for growth, development, and the transmission of values. A family that welcomes the birth of a child enthusiastically and meets the child's needs, places the child at the center of attention, and shows affection takes effective initial steps in this regard. If the parents raising the child are independent individuals with appropriate emotions and awareness of educational issues, they can easily transmit self-esteem to their child. Regarding behavior control in children, parents' self-confidence must be enhanced, instilling in them the belief that they play the primary role in changing their children's behavior. Warmth and affection in the family environment are crucial in strengthening children's and adolescents' self-confidence and fostering positive and constructive qualities. In a typical family, parents, through mutual respect and solidarity, provide a sense of physical and psychological security for their children. An environment based on intimacy and respect raises healthy, creative, and self-reliant children. A person with a positive mindset is more likely to draw logical conclusions when faced with challenges (Habibzadeh, 2013).

**Individuals associated with the child.** Those who interact with the child can instill a sense of love and acceptance by building strong emotional connections, encouraging the child, and welcoming them into their social circles. This creates a strong support system for the child's confidence (Sowislo & Orth, 2013).

**School.** The educational environment, especially the school and the early years of learning, is extremely important. The school can foster confidence in the child by considering individual differences, interests, and family backgrounds, or it can undermine the self-confidence instilled by the family if it neglects these critical aspects.

**The individual's will.** By reaching a level of self-awareness and insight, the individual can take essential steps toward building self-esteem. It is important to note that self-confidence is not entirely inherited; it is also acquired. Therefore, individuals must work to develop it through their

efforts. A person seeking self-esteem can achieve it by asserting their self-worth, maintaining positive attitudes, and disregarding negativity (Mohammadi, 2009).

**Economic and social factors.** These factors are also influential, although exceptions exist. We have seen people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who have achieved significant success, driven by high self-esteem. These factors can be further divided into subsets. For example, in the family, the personality of the parents, all their temperamental, physical, social, and cultural characteristics play a role. For the individual, issues such as physical inferiority, mental retardation, and various disabilities are noteworthy (Azizi, 2010).

For example, a child experiencing academic failure develops a negative and limited self-image, perceiving themselves as incompetent. This negative self-concept can extend throughout their life, portraying a defeated and incapable personality that significantly impacts their performance in all areas. Thus, the above factors influence the healthy development of self-esteem.

Most experts view self-esteem as a central and essential factor in marital life. This belief is widespread because self-esteem affects all aspects of life. Individuals need to feel that they are good and valuable, both physically, mentally, and morally. Such a feeling provides the necessary motivation for success and the fulfillment of tasks. High self-esteem reduces tendencies toward isolation and social separation, as well as colonial or hostile dependency attitudes. People with self-esteem are less likely to dissociate themselves from their inner experiences and tend to experience less anxiety. One reason for the importance of the present study is its potential impact on the personality of each spouse (Bajaj et al., 2018; Baumeister, 2007; Baumeister et al., 2003).

People with high self-esteem are less sensitive to criticism from others and more inclined to express controversial opinions, focusing more on personal values than on group norms. They tend to enjoy better physical health, have more fulfilling relationships, value independence, embrace competition, and expect greater success. Self-esteem, with these characteristics, has a close connection with other aspects of human existence, including psychological dimensions, which are expected to be closely related to self-esteem, especially marital satisfaction (Bajaj et al., 2018; Hoseinpour Lakani et al., 2015).

Since self-esteem is an individual's overall emotional evaluation of their self-worth, it plays a significant role in reducing stress and negative emotions and enhancing positive emotions. High self-esteem is a positive factor in

mental health, whereas low self-esteem predisposes individuals to psychological distress (Bajaj et al., 2018). Consequently, a relationship between self-esteem and marital conflict is expected. Individuals with high self-esteem focus on their positive competencies and interpret events and react to them in a way that maintains their positive self-worth (Baumeister et al., 2003; Habibzadeh, 2013; Zare Mehrjerdi, 2016; Zolfaghari, 2011).

Therefore, the key question in this research is the impact of self-esteem and the factors that increase or decrease it on marital relationships and the numerous effects it has on the mental health of family members, especially couples. First, we will examine the factors and dimensions of marital satisfaction, provide a general definition of self-esteem, its dimensions, and its importance, and then discuss the significance and role of self-esteem in life and the factors that enhance it, particularly in marital satisfaction. Finally, we will examine the role of self-esteem in marital relationships and the factors that increase it. Given the review of previous studies, previous research has examined the variable of self-esteem in marital relationships using quantitative methods. However, the authors of this article will investigate the variables qualitatively, incorporating content analysis and rational arguments derived from previous studies.

#### 4. Definition of Family and Marital Relationship

The family is one of the most important and enduring institutions of human society, and its health plays a crucial role in the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. The happiness and well-being of spouses, as well as the growth and development of children, depend on the success of the family. Ignoring this fact may lead to various harms such as domestic violence, addiction, divorce, infidelity, and running away from home. Therefore, attention to the family becomes even more significant. The family arises from the interaction between a man and a woman who have fulfilled certain legal conditions, held a ceremony for their marriage, and whose union is legally recognized, referred to as marriage (Javanbakht & Yousefi, 2022; Navabinejad et al., 2024; Russell & Yang, 2024). One of the most important factors affecting the effective functioning of the family is the satisfaction of family members, particularly the husband and wife, with each other. Satisfaction is an attitudinal variable, and therefore, it is considered a personal characteristic of the husband and wife.

The family is the smallest social unit, yet it is also the most important social institution. This significance stems from several reasons: First, the family is the most widespread institution demographically. No other institution has as many members as the family. All human beings, even those who do not marry, are considered part of a family in some way. Second, the family is also the most widespread institution in terms of time, encompassing the lives of individuals from beginning to end. It is almost impossible to imagine a time when a person is not part of a family. Third, the family is the center of human upbringing, where the destiny of individuals, both in this world and the hereafter, is shaped. Undoubtedly, the early years of life, which are the most crucial in shaping personality and destiny, are spent within the family. Even during adolescence and young adulthood, the family continues to play a fundamental role. Later, during the formation of one's own family, the spouse becomes an essential factor in determining success and well-being. Fourth, society is composed of families, and therefore, the fate of society is linked to the fate of the family. If the family, as a piece of the societal puzzle, is well-organized and functions as a center for raising the community's members, it will undoubtedly have an extraordinary impact on the success and organization of society (Russell & Yang, 2024; Yang & McDonnell, 2024).

#### 5. Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is often defined as an individual's general attitude or feelings about their spouse and relationship, meaning that satisfaction is an intrapersonal phenomenon and a personal perception of the spouse and the relationship. This definition suggests that marital satisfaction is a one-dimensional concept, representing an overall evaluation of the spouse and the relationship (Zolfaghari, 2011).

In another definition, marital satisfaction is a psychological state reflecting the perceived benefits and costs of being married to a particular person. The greater the costs one spouse imposes on the other, the less marital satisfaction is experienced, and vice versa. The more benefits perceived in the marital relationship, the higher the satisfaction with the marriage (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Satisfaction occurs when the relationship between the husband and wife is reported to be normal in all areas. According to Albert Ellis, there are various ways to achieve marital satisfaction in life. One of the best definitions of marital satisfaction is offered by Hawkins, who defines it as

an objective feeling of contentment, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by spouses when considering all aspects of their marriage. Marital satisfaction is an attitudinal variable, and thus, it is considered a personal characteristic of the husband and wife. Feelings of marital satisfaction arise from the exchange of positive and rewarding behaviors, and dissatisfaction occurs when spouses experience distress (Zolfaghari, 2011).

## 6. Dimensions of Marital Satisfaction

Researchers have divided marital satisfaction into four fundamental dimensions for ease of measurement and operationalization:

1. **Attraction:** This refers to the aspect of an object, activity, or person that elicits a response of closeness from others. In marital satisfaction, physical and sexual attraction are considered.
2. **Understanding:** A relationship based on mutual acceptance, free from tension and concern, established between two individuals.
3. **Attitude:** An emotional and internal inclination that explains an individual's actions. This definition inherently involves intent and purpose.
4. **Investment:** This term refers to actions taken by either spouse to improve the relationship or the other spouse's well-being, or to refrain from certain behaviors. It also involves reciprocal actions when the spouse's behavior is rewarding, and refraining from retaliation when the spouse's behavior is not rewarding (Bagheri, 2009).

### 6.1. Factors Enhancing Marital Satisfaction

Researchers have identified several factors that influence the level of marital satisfaction among spouses. Similarities in ideological beliefs, emotional growth, religious alignment, economic status, social class, educational background, expressions of love and affection, agreement in sexual relations, and communication skills are all factors repeatedly found to impact marital satisfaction (Johnson & Anderson, 2013; Johnson & Galambos, 2014).

Additionally, other factors contribute to increased compatibility between individuals, including:

#### **Intrapersonal skills:**

- a) Emotional self-awareness: Recognizing and understanding one's feelings
- b) Expression of emotions, thoughts, and defense of personal rights in a constructive manner

- c) Self-regulation: Awareness, acceptance, and respect for oneself
- d) Independence: Self-therapy and self-control in thinking and freedom from dependence

#### **Interpersonal skills:**

- a) Personal relationships: Understanding and recognizing the feelings of others and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships
- b) Social commitment: Demonstrating oneself as an effective and constructive partner
- c) Empathy: The ability to be aware of, understand, and appreciate others' feelings

#### **Adaptability:**

- a) Problem-solving: Identifying, analyzing, and creating useful and appropriate solutions
- b) Reality testing: Assessing the alignment between subjective experiences and objective reality
- c) Flexibility: Adjusting emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in response to changing situations and conditions

#### **Emotional control:**

- a) Stress tolerance: Resisting adverse events and stressful situations
- b) Impulse control: Withstanding or denying impulses

#### **General mood:**

- a) Happiness: Feeling satisfied with oneself and bringing happiness to oneself and others
- b) Optimism: Looking at the bright side of life and maintaining a positive outlook in the face of adversity, essentially having positive and constructive feelings (Bagheri, 2009).

## 7. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem refers to a personal judgment about one's worth or lack of worth, which manifests in one's attitude. In fact, a person may view themselves as others see them (Shamloo, 2008). Self-esteem is one of the primary determinants in shaping emotional and behavioral patterns and reflects an individual's attitude toward themselves and the external world. Individuals who feel good about themselves can easily overcome conflicts, resist negative pressures, and enjoy life (Habibzadeh, 2013).

Shamloo (1999) believes that self-esteem is a continuous evaluation that a person makes regarding their own worth. Self-esteem can be defined as a personal judgment of one's intrinsic value, and it represents a need that involves the

exchange of feelings with others. It implies that we need to share our feelings with others, perceive ourselves as valuable, and believe that others are valuable as well. Erikson believes that the best stage for developing trust occurs between the ages of 0 and 1, as this stage is named "trust vs. mistrust." Adequate care and genuine affection lead a child to perceive the world as safe and trustworthy, while insufficient care and rejection make the child fear and doubt the world. According to Erikson, "A child's perception of themselves and the culture in which they are raised is as important as the drives emphasized by Freud" (Shamloo, 2008).

Self-esteem reflects the degree of approval, acceptance, and worth that a person feels toward themselves, which may either be in comparison with others or independent of them (Knapp et al., 2016).

The functions of self-esteem are actively reflected in various aspects of life, including success, achievement, life satisfaction, and coping with illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Conversely, low self-esteem plays a critical role in the development of psychological disorders and social problems such as depression, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, anxiety, violence, substance abuse, and risk-taking behaviors (Mann et al., 2004).

### 7.1. Sources of Self-Esteem

The sources of self-esteem include the following:

1. **Power:** When a person feels powerful, they can influence others and perform their tasks well, which increases their self-esteem.
2. **Importance:** When a person realizes that they matter and are important in the lives of others, their self-esteem increases.
3. **Adherence to social and moral norms.**
4. **Success.**
5. Self-esteem arises from the need for positive regard and includes warmth, affection, respect, intimacy, acceptance, and kindness, which are provided by the social environment, particularly by parents. Therefore, the social environment plays a crucial role in the development of self-esteem, which is a byproduct of social life and its values. It is important to consider the perspective with which students choose their field of study, employees select their jobs, and professionals assess their contributions to humanity. For example, how a disabled individual can play a role in society, how

much they are valued, and their adherence to religion, Islamic ethics, and Iranian culture, as well as their past successes, all contribute to self-esteem (Ahmadi, 2001).

## 8. Theories of Self-Esteem

### 8.1. Mear's Theory:

A psychological and physiological outcome of self-esteem is that individuals with high self-esteem not only avoid depression but also suffer less from nervous disorders and insomnia, and are less likely to turn to addiction and alcoholism (Zolfaghari et al., 2024).

### 8.2. Erikson's Theory:

Erikson considers adolescence as a critical period for choosing between self-esteem and inferiority. He believes that adolescents can assert themselves through successful actions and gain the self-confidence necessary to transition from childhood to adulthood. Alternatively, they may feel inadequate and incompetent, leading to hostility toward themselves and others (Turani & Akhoundzadeh, 2024; Wagner et al., 2024).

### 8.3. Coopersmith's Theory:

Self-concept is a crucial factor in determining behavior. Individuals with a positive self-concept exhibit more socially acceptable behavior than those with a negative self-concept. Coopersmith defines individual evaluation as a judgment of one's worthiness, rather than an immediate or specific reaction to particular situations (Linardi et al., 2024; Massoodi, 2024).

### 8.4. Rogers' Theory:

A developed self-image leads individuals to adapt to the external world. This image grows in response to environmental interactions, and personal judgment and attitude depend on social or familial situations. Hence, the need for positive regard, which includes feedback and warm, affectionate interactions, respect, acceptance, and kindness from the environment, especially from parents, is essential for developing self-esteem in an individual. The world a person perceives is more important than the world others envision. The existence and essence of each person are embedded in a constantly changing world of experiences,

and the individual is the center of these changes and experiences (Burkitt, 2024; Iqbal, 2024).

#### 8.5. *Gordon Allport's Theory:*

Allport believes that the feeling of "self" is the only true guarantee of a person's existence. This feeling develops in stages, beginning with the child's awareness of their own body and progressing toward the formation of personal identity. Allport coined the term "proprium," which he related to personal survival, self-respect, and identity (Almurumudhe et al., 2024).

#### 8.6. *Store's Theory:*

Store (1902), based on the psychoanalytic school, developed a formula for self-esteem. According to this theory, a newborn gradually becomes aware of their dependence and inability and their need for adults. If the child is born into a family that is accepting and affectionate, they will gradually develop self-worth throughout their growth and internalize their parents as positive internal objects. Repeated external affirmations foster an internal sense of worth. Conversely, if a child is born into a family that does not offer acceptance, affection, and care, they will develop a sense of worthlessness from an early age, which will affect their behavior as they grow (Zolfaghari et al., 2024).

Bowlby (1973) considered self-esteem as part of personality development and emphasized the importance of achieving security during childhood as a foundational principle for internalizing self-confidence. Martin (1983), Epstein, and Gomurtiya (1971), through their research, found that individuals with low and moderate self-esteem significantly relied on external control, while those with high self-esteem had an internal locus of control (Zare Mehrjerdi, 2016).

#### 8.7. *The Importance of Self-Esteem in Life*

Since self-esteem is an overall emotional evaluation of one's worth, it plays a vital role in reducing stress and negative emotions while promoting positive emotions. High self-esteem is a positive factor in mental health, whereas low self-esteem predisposes individuals to psychological distress (Bajaj et al., 2018).

Naturally, feelings of self-worth and competence lead to positive emotions and experiences. However, individuals with low self-esteem tend to avoid social gatherings and

experience more isolation and depression. These individuals, when facing external threats and stress, experience negative arousal and psychological breakdown (Rezaeean Bilandi et al., 2023).

In children, self-esteem is a general evaluation of the self, based on their beliefs such as "I am a good person" or "I usually like things about myself." Bowlby (1973) emphasized the importance of achieving security during childhood as a foundational principle for internalizing self-confidence. Rosenberg (1965) conducted the first scientific studies on self-esteem, examining the influence of social variables, social class, race, religion, birth order, and parental relationships on self-esteem in a large group of adolescents. His work popularized self-esteem measurement scales. Additionally, parents who exercise appropriate control and impose age-appropriate limitations raise children with positive self-esteem. Epstein and Gomurtiya (1971), in their research, found that individuals with low and moderate self-esteem significantly relied on external control, while those with high self-esteem had an internal locus of control (Habibzadeh, 2013).

People with self-esteem are generally happier than those without it. Self-esteem is the best indicator of happiness and well-being. However, in the short term, achieving self-esteem requires effort and acceptance of hardship. Achieving self-actualization necessitates enduring temporary challenges (Branden, 2023).

#### 8.8. *Factors Related to Self-Esteem*

Healthy self-esteem is closely linked to independence, flexibility, the ability to face change, willingness to admit mistakes, altruism, and a desire for cooperation and collaboration.

- **Independence:** Having independence of thought is a sign and result of healthy self-esteem. Accepting responsibility for oneself is also a sign of healthy self-esteem. A person who is responsible for their success, happiness, and goals has a healthy self-esteem. A mind that trusts itself is light-hearted and joyful.

- **Flexibility:** Adequate flexibility means being able to adapt easily to changes in work and life conditions. Clinging to the past in changing circumstances indicates a lack of security and self-confidence. Rigidity and inflexibility are sometimes displayed by frightened animals, freezing in place. Similarly, many companies, when faced with strong competition, become inflexible, refusing to ask what they can learn from their competitors and clinging to old ways.

Rigidity often arises because the mind lacks confidence in facing unfamiliar conditions. On the other hand, flexibility is a sign of healthy self-esteem.

- **Ability to Face Change:** Self-esteem does not fear change. It deals with realities, while doubt and indecision are its enemies. Self-esteem speeds up reaction time, whereas doubt slows it down. This is why, in today's rapidly changing world, organizations and businesses focus on teaching self-esteem to their employees. Schools and universities also teach students self-esteem to help them succeed in today's world.

- **Willingness to Admit (and Correct) Mistakes:** One feature of healthy self-esteem is prioritizing facts and realities over beliefs. Truth is more justified than simply being right, and if self-confidence is connected with respect for truth, correcting a mistake takes precedence over pretending not to have made one. A person with healthy self-esteem has no fear in admitting a mistake. Denial and defensiveness are signs of insecurity, guilt, inadequacy, and shame. A person without self-esteem equates admitting mistakes with humiliation.

- **Altruism and Cooperation:** When a child is respected, they internalize that respect and reciprocate kindness and respect toward others. Conversely, a child who is mistreated will also mistreat others. If I feel secure and believe in my right to say "yes" when I want to say "yes" and "no" when I want to say "no," altruism and goodwill naturally result. There is no need to fear others. If I believe that living is my right, and I trust that I belong to myself without fearing others' self-confidence, cooperation with them to achieve common goals arises naturally. A person with these characteristics can easily meet their needs and is never paralyzed by doubt and fear. Empathy and compassion are abundant in those with healthy self-esteem (Branden, 2023).

## 9. The Impact of Self-Esteem on Marital Relationships

Marriage is a sacred bond that has existed among all nations and peoples throughout time and across places. It is a long-standing tradition in which a man and a woman begin a shared life and pledge to be companions, supporters, and caregivers, to understand and bring happiness to one another, to love each other, and to end their solitude through marriage (Pordehghan et al., 2008). Through marriage, individuals gain independence, form a small social unit, take on responsibilities, and achieve independence; their lives gain purpose, and by accepting the responsibility of managing their family, they become decision-makers. They find peace

in each other's presence. As God states in the Quran (Surah Ar-Rum), "We created mates for you from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. In this are signs for those who reflect" (Salehi Fardi, 1996).

## 10. Explanation of Self-Esteem

One of the most important human needs that protects against anxiety and stressful events is self-esteem. Self-esteem manifests in all of a person's daily activities and is thus one of the most important aspects of personality, determining behavioral traits. It is considered a key factor in emotional and social adjustment. Another aspect of self-esteem that influences marital relationships is sexual self-esteem, which refers to effective personal responses to one's own subjective evaluations and thoughts related to gender, feelings, and behaviors. It includes components such as skill and experience (the ability to enjoy one's partner), attractiveness (believing in one's beauty and charm), control (the ability to manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors), moral judgment (the ability to evaluate one's thoughts, feelings, and actions against moral standards), and adaptability (the ability to align one's behaviors with personal and others' goals). Therefore, behavior is a part of one's personality, encompassing a set of beliefs, attitudes, and actions in relation to the opposite sex and related matters (Javaheri et al., 2019).

## 11. Factors Increasing Marital Satisfaction

Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury (2001) conducted a study that demonstrated how positive perceptions of a spouse's interest lead to emotional security, supportive behaviors, and marital satisfaction. They measured marital satisfaction at six months and one year after marriage. The results showed that when emotional security and self-confidence exist in spousal relationships, communication improves, leading to increased marital satisfaction (Cobb et al., 2001).

It is important to note that self-esteem is a crucial factor for individuals' progress and success in all areas, including marital life, and the environment significantly influences its development. Marital satisfaction results from the exchange of rewarding behaviors. It is the subjective feeling of contentment, satisfaction, and pleasure experienced by a couple when considering all aspects of their marriage. When individuals evaluate their characteristics positively, they have high self-esteem, and when the evaluation is negative, they have low self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem



have higher and more diverse goals and are eager to face new challenges that engage their talents and strengths.

In another study, self-esteem was defined as an internal (subjective) evaluation of one's worth (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), which positively correlates with mental and physical health (Sowislo & Orth, 2013), relationship satisfaction (Shackelford, 2001; Tackett et al., 2013), the quality of romantic relationships (Johnson & Anderson, 2013; Johnson & Galambos, 2014), and the stability of romantic relationships (Stinson et al., 2010). People with high self-esteem tend to experience better romantic relationships (Robinson & Cameron, 2012). Romantic relationships where both partners report high self-esteem are usually more emotionally satisfying and have stronger bonds (Shackelford, 2001).

In reviewing the research literature, many studies have examined the relationship between self-esteem and human well-being indicators such as mental health and happiness. For instance, the findings of Lyubomirsky et al. (2006) indicate that individuals' experiences of happiness depend on their feelings about themselves. People with low self-esteem typically do not feel happy (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006). Additionally, Baumeister et al. (2003) stated that happiness is a consequence of high self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem use more adaptive self-regulation strategies compared to those with low self-esteem. These individuals respond more effectively to challenges, which in turn leads to higher levels of reported happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003).

Furthermore, research has shown that self-esteem is related to positive and constructive coping strategies, high motivation, and positive emotions (Shope & Coplend, 1993). Besides intrinsic qualities, interpersonal factors also affect individual well-being, including marital relationships. Young couples face several responsibilities as they form a family, requiring them to reach an understanding on many small details related to daily life. It is through this process that marital relationships take shape (Bakhtiari, 2008). Within this context, spouses are expected to establish a unique relationship based on honesty, affection, intimacy, and support (Azkhosh & Asgari, 2007). The findings of Hawkins and Booth (2005, p. 452) in their study of couples who had been married for over 12 years showed that the quality of marital relationships significantly impacts the well-being of spouses. Poor marital quality reduces happiness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction.

## 12. Factors Increasing Self-Esteem in the Family

Valuing individual differences is essential, which means understanding that my child is not an extension of myself but a unique individual with different thoughts, feelings, and preferences that are valuable. Children raised with this mindset will grow up to understand that their spouse, their spouse's family, friends, and others are distinct individuals who may think and behave differently but are still valuable. Overlooking minor mistakes is also important. If material things are valued more than people in a family, how can one feel a sense of worth? If we are constantly blamed, punished, or questioned for every small mistake, we gradually come to believe that everything else is more valuable than we are! Flexibility in family rules is another key factor. The more flexible the family rules, the greater the sense of worth felt by family members. It is also crucial for body language, tone, and speech to align with behavior. For example, if you tell your child, "Let's play," but your tone and body language show boredom and disinterest, you are not meeting your child's needs (Harter, 1999).

## 13. Conclusion

The results show that as the quality of individuals' lives improves, their satisfaction with life also increases. The more enjoyable the living environment, the more significantly life satisfaction improves. This environment can include the country, city, neighborhood, and home. The findings of this research emphasize the importance of self-esteem in marital relationships. Previous studies have shown that there is a reciprocal relationship between sexual self-esteem and sexual dysfunction. This means that individuals with higher sexual self-esteem have better sexual performance, and vice versa. Self-esteem makes individuals feel like valuable members of their family who are loved and respected.

As a result, couples with higher self-esteem are less likely to experience marital conflicts, while those with lower self-esteem are more likely to face conflicts when dealing with marital issues. Therefore, healthy and normal self-esteem increases the quality of life, marital relationships, and intra-family dynamics (Behrami & Akbari Borang, 2023).

Since women are considered the central pillar of societal health, any conditions that increase their self-esteem, and consequently their happiness and vitality, will also impact the entire society. Indeed, women's happiness is a fundamental element in achieving societal happiness. Therefore, institutions responsible for family and women's affairs must hold workshops and classes to teach marital

relationships, boost self-esteem, and enhance the dignity and self-confidence of women, creating the necessary conditions for their well-being. In particular, family counselors should invest in strengthening self-esteem and deepening marital relationships, ultimately fostering happiness and vitality across society.

### 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

Not applicable.

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