The Contribution of Personality Macro-Factors in Predicting Marital Satisfaction of Women: A Preliminary Study for Developing a Premarital Counseling Protocol

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Objective: The present study was conducted with the aim of examining the contribution of personality macro-factors in the variance of women's marital satisfaction: a preliminary study for developing a premarital counseling protocol.

Methods and Materials: The research method was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population included all married female students aged 25 to 40 who were studying at Islamic Azad Universities in Isfahan during the 2023–2024 academic year. From this population, 128 individuals were selected using Cochran's formula and the convenience sampling method. They completed the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire (1989) and Cattell's 16 Personality Factors Questionnaire (1993). Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation tests and stepwise multiple regression analysis via SPSS-23.

Findings: The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between the personality trait of extraversion and women's marital satisfaction, and a negative relationship between the personality trait of self-control and women's marital satisfaction. Moreover, the outcomes of regression analysis showed that the personality traits of self-control and anxiety, with determination coefficients of –0.401 and –0.220 respectively, were able to predict marital satisfaction.

Conclusion: Considering the existence of a relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction, the findings of this study can be used in premarital counseling. By identifying women's personality traits, it is possible to predict and enhance their marital satisfaction.

Keywords: *personality macro-factors, marital satisfaction, premarital counseling*

1. Introduction

Marital satisfaction is a multifaceted construct emerging at the intersection of enduring personality dispositions, dyadic processes (communication, conflict management, sexual intimacy), and broader sociocultural conditions across the family life course (Czechowska-Bieluga & Lewicka-Zelent, 2021). Personality psychology has long argued that relatively stable traits shape how partners perceive, interpret, and regulate marital interactions, thereby scaffolding risk and resilience trajectories in intimate relationships (Burger, 2019; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Classic measurement traditions—such as Cattell's 16 Personality Factors (16PF) and the Big Five—offer complementary lenses for operationalizing these "macro-factors," each with distinct theoretical assumptions and empirical footprints in the marriage literature (Cattell & Krug, 1986; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Building on decades of longitudinal and clinical science, contemporary research increasingly views marital satisfaction as a dynamic outcome that is both trait-linked and context-sensitive, making the identification of personality-based predictors essential for prevention and premarital counseling protocols that aim to anticipate and mitigate avoidable distress (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Hawkins et al., 2008).

A robust body of evidence supports the proposition that personality traits prospectively forecast relationship quality. Early longitudinal programs showed that trait configurations relate to marital success and failure over time, implying that trait-informed screening can highlight couples' risk profiles before patterns crystallize into chronic dissatisfaction (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978). More recent longitudinal studies extend these insights: personality exerts both direct and indirect influences on satisfaction, and partners may experience trait change during early marriage in ways that track later marital outcomes (Lavner et al., 2018). Nine-year panel evidence further indicates that Big Five dimensions—especially neuroticism and agreeableness—systematically covary with relationship satisfaction trajectories, strengthening the case for personality-informed interventions and ongoing monitoring across marriage stages (Bach et al., 2025). Among older couples, personality–satisfaction associations persist and appear to be mediated by relational cognitions and forgiveness processes, consistent with lifespan-developmental frameworks such as gerotranscendence (Brudek & Kaleta, 2023; Brudek et al., 2018).

Meta-analytic syntheses and regional studies converge on several patterns. A quantitative review reports reliable associations between trait profiles and marital satisfaction, with notable (and culturally variable) roles for neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Sayehmiri et al., 2020). In Iranian samples, feasibility and correlational results likewise link Big Five markers to satisfaction, echoing international literature and underscoring the contextual relevance of trait indicators for local prevention and counseling services (Heidarinajad et al., 2018; Moradi et al., 2018; Sadeghi et al., 2015). Specific traits such as extraversion have received special attention; meta-analytic work suggests small-to-moderate positive associations with marital satisfaction, consistent with communication and positive affect pathways (Orayzi et al., 2016; Tahmasebi et al., 2016). Complementary findings from Turkey show that personality traits, relationship beliefs, and conflict-resolution styles jointly predict marital adjustment, reinforcing the multivariate nature of satisfaction and providing actionable levers for psychoeducation (Tolan & KiliÇ, 2020). Related Turkish evidence links Big Five traits to marital satisfaction alongside punitive schemas and self-compassion, illustrating how broad dispositions interface with cognitive–emotional regulation patterns—a bridge to clinical practice (Günaydin, 2022).

The clinical and developmental implications are wide-ranging. Emotion regulation liabilities such as high negative affect and inhibition are associated with suicidal ideation and hopelessness among vulnerable adults, highlighting how dysregulation may spill over into intimate relationships and amplify dyadic stress (Hemming et al., 2019; Lynch et al., 2004). Family systems research similarly indicates that parental mental health and marital satisfaction reverberate into children's outcomes through involvement and stress pathways, situating couple functioning within a broader ecology of development (Gottfried, 2021; Lui et al., 2020). Postpartum contexts provide a salient example: comorbid depression/anxiety in the perinatal period is associated with degraded marital satisfaction, a risk pattern documented outside Western settings and relevant for culturally attuned counseling (Öcalan et al., 2024; Odinka et al., 2018). At the same time, trait-linked communication styles appear to interact with contemporary media ecologies; for instance, extraverts may experience technologically mediated interactivity differently than introverts, with downstream implications for perceived responsiveness and relational maintenance in digital and hybrid contexts (Huang et al., 2021).

Premarital counseling emerges as a strategic venue for translating these empirical insights into preventive care. Program evaluations and meta-analyses show that relationship education improves communication, conflict management, and satisfaction, though effects vary by dose, modality, and population risk (Hawkins et al., 2008). Lived-experience accounts portray premarital counseling as building realistic expectations, strengthening empathy, and surfacing latent incompatibilities—process elements that are likely to be moderated by personality configurations (Saulter-Carney, 2024). Religious and community frameworks often scaffold these services; faith-based programs characterize premarital counseling as an intentional process to cultivate virtue, mutual understanding, and covenantal commitment, aligning with trait-informed goals to anticipate friction points and rehearse adaptive responses (Elijah, 2024). Taken together, these strands justify the integration of personality assessment into premarital protocols—especially those designed for diverse cultural settings where family norms, gender roles, and economic pressures interact with individual dispositions (Isma & Turnip, 2019; Kiani Chalmerdi et al., 2021).

Measurement choices shape both science and practice. The 16PF provides a granular profile of primary factors that can be summarized into second-order dimensions such as Extraversion/Introversion, Anxiety, Tough-Mindedness/Receptivity, Independence/Accommodation, and Self-Control/Uninhibitedness—macro-factors that map conceptually onto Big Five space yet retain Cattell's psychometric lineage (Cattell & Krug, 1986). Regional norming studies have supported the instrument's interpretability in Persian-speaking populations, while cautioning clinicians to consider confidence intervals and avoid overinterpreting small sten differences—guidance that is essential for ethical screening in premarital contexts (Barzegar, 1996; Maliani et al., 2009). In parallel, Big Five inventories such as the NEO family have become standard in clinical assessment, offering a cumulative evidence base for nomothetic prediction and idiographic case formulation (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Personality assessment can also anchor discussions of sexual functioning and intimacy—domains that are tightly coupled with satisfaction and amenable to psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic intervention (Ojo Adeshina Akinwumi, 2017; Tahan et al., 2020). When distress co-occurs with mood and anxiety syndromes, psychodynamic and integrative treatments emphasize the modification of relational patterns and affect tolerance—targets that intersect with trait-linked vulnerabilities (e.g., high neuroticism, low agreeableness) and can be flagged early in premarital work (Busch et al., 2016; Girard et al., 2017).

Cultural and life-course contingencies further nuance trait–satisfaction linkages. For example, research with older couples underscores that forgiveness and meaning-making mediate associations between traits and marital well-being, suggesting that personality might exert its influence partly by shaping how partners construe transgressions and repair ruptures (Brudek & Kaleta, 2023). In Tehran-based samples, socioeconomic factors and lifestyle mediate the path from personality to satisfaction, reminding practitioners that trait-informed counseling should be nested within structural realities (employment, housing, kinship obligations) (Moradi et al., 2018). Early experiences and internal working models also matter; perceptions of parents' marriage and attachment styles predict adult adjustment and satisfaction, providing a developmental bridge between trait dispositions and learned relational scripts (Kiani Chalmerdi et al., 2021). Meanwhile, large-sample and meta-analytic studies in Iran and the region repeatedly implicate extraversion and neuroticism as salient correlates of satisfaction, consistent with broader international trends (Heidarinajad et al., 2018; Orayzi et al., 2016; Sadeghi et al., 2015; Sayehmiri et al., 2020). These convergences lend support to building premarital protocols that (a) screen for elevated risk (e.g., high neuroticism, low agreeableness, low conscientiousness), (b) tailor psychoeducation on communication and conflict styles to trait profiles, and (c) incorporate modules on emotion regulation and forgiveness calibrated to personality-linked challenges (Brudek et al., 2018; Günaydin, 2022; Tolan & KiliÇ, 2020).

In addition to cross-sectional associations, personality may influence the *trajectory* of marriage. Newlywed studies show systematic personality changes—often small but meaningful—that covary with satisfaction, potentially via stress reactivity, role negotiation, and dyadic coping (Lavner et al., 2018). Longitudinal evidence confirms that trait profiles are not destiny but probabilistic contexts within which skills training and supportive environments can boost relationship outcomes (Bach et al., 2025). This is particularly relevant in transitional periods—pregnancy, postpartum, work–family rebalancing—where strain is high and trait-linked differences in coping and social support become more consequential (Gottfried, 2021; Öcalan et al., 2024). Digital-era communication adds another layer: differences in perceived interactivity and responsiveness across HCI and CMC platforms can amplify or dampen

perceived partner support depending on personality, implying that premarital curricula should address technology-mediated intimacy and conflict explicitly (Huang et al., 2021). Prevention also intersects with moral and religious frameworks; religiosity frequently surfaces as a protective correlate of marital satisfaction and may moderate trait effects on commitment and conflict behaviors, offering a culturally sensitive entry point for counseling (Taqirijah et al., 2016).

Historically, debates about factor structures (e.g., number of 16PF dimensions, method variance) have sharpened psychometric rigor and improved the interpretability of trait–relationship findings (Cattell & Krug, 1986). Contemporary personality science continues to refine measurement models and hierarchical frameworks, with clinical assessment texts and handbooks offering integrative guidance for translating trait data into case conceptualization and shared decision-making with couples (Burger, 2019; Nars, 2022). At the same time, regional scholarship has advanced contextually grounded models linking traits to satisfaction through culturally salient mediators such as lifestyle, gender role beliefs, and extended-family dynamics, broadening the evidence base for localized protocols (Moradi et al., 2018; Rajabi & Nabgani, 2008). Educational and counseling initiatives benefit from meta-analytic demonstrations that relationship education works—with caveats regarding implementation quality and fit—while qualitative accounts emphasize the importance of aligning content with couples' values and expectations (Elijah, 2024; Hawkins et al., 2008; Saulter-Carney, 2024).

In sum, converging evidence from longitudinal, meta-analytic, clinical, and culturally diverse studies indicates that personality macro-factors constitute practical, ethically appropriate inputs for premarital assessment and tailored psychoeducation. They inform risk stratification (e.g., high neuroticism, low agreeableness/conscientiousness), target selection (communication, emotion regulation, forgiveness, sexual functioning), and delivery choices (technology-mediated skills practice) in ways that can be adapted to local norms and lifecycle contexts (Bach et al., 2025; Gottfried, 2021; Günaydin, 2022; Huang et al., 2021; Isma & Turnip, 2019; Odinka et al., 2018; Sayehmiri et al., 2020; Tahan et al., 2020). The present study contributes to this translational agenda by focusing on second-order personality factors derived from the 16PF alongside marital satisfaction in married women, leveraging regionally normed tools and building on a deep empirical foundation to inform the design of a culturally sensitive premarital counseling protocol

(Barzegar, 1996; Burger, 2019; Cattell & Krug, 1986; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Czechowska-Bieluga & Lewicka-Zelent, 2021; Maliani et al., 2009). Accordingly, the objective of this study is to quantify the contribution of personality macro-factors to the variance in women's marital satisfaction as a preliminary step toward developing an evidence-based premarital counseling protocol tailored to our context

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The present study, considering its objective, was applied in nature and, given the investigation of the relationship between variables, descriptive and correlational in type. The statistical population consisted of all married female students aged 25 to 40 who were studying at Islamic Azad Universities in Isfahan in 2023. To determine the sample size, Cochran's formula was used, and the sample size was calculated to be 128 participants at a 95% confidence level, who were selected through convenience sampling.

Inclusion criteria included an age range of 25 to 40 years, a marriage duration between 5 and 15 years, no history of legal divorce, and no history of drug abuse, addiction, or alcohol use. Exclusion criteria included failure to complete the questionnaires fully and unwillingness to participate.

2.2. Measures

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire consists of 115 items and 14 subscales: Idealistic Distortion (items 1–5), Marital Satisfaction (items 6–15), Personality Issues (items 16–25), Communication (items 26–35), Conflict Resolution (items 36–45), Financial Management (items 46–55), Leisure Activities (items 56–65), Sexual Relationship (items 66–75), Children and Parenting (items 76–85), Family and Friends (items 86–95), Egalitarian Roles (items 96–105), and Religious Orientation (items 106–115). Each item has five response options ranging from "very high" to "very low," scored from 0 to 4. The maximum possible score in this questionnaire is 460, with higher scores indicating greater marital satisfaction.

Reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the Enrich questionnaire in Olson and Fournier's (1989) study for the subscales of Idealistic Distortion, Marital Satisfaction, Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure Activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and Friends,

and Egalitarian Roles were .90, .81, .73, .68, .75, .74, .76, .48, .77, .72, and .71, respectively. The correlation of the Enrich questionnaire with family satisfaction scales ranged from .41 to .60, and with life satisfaction scales from .32 to .41, indicating construct validity. All subscales of the Enrich questionnaire differentiate between satisfied and dissatisfied couples, supporting good criterion validity (Sattari, 2008). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .87.

Cattell's 16 Personality Factors Questionnaire (16 PF), Fifth Edition. This questionnaire consists of 187 items that measure 16 primary personality factors. Each scale comprises 10 to 15 items. Except for Scale B, the test items are presented with a three-choice response format, where the middle option is marked with a question mark (?). It is designed for individuals aged 16 and above, with normative data based on participants aged 15 to 92. The test can be scored either manually using an answer key or electronically via system software. All raw scores are converted to sten scores using normative tables. Sten scores are reported on a 10-point scale with a mean of 5.5 and a standard deviation of 2.

Like the MMPI, sten scores can be plotted on a profile sheet as a graphical representation. When used with couples, it is recommended that both partners' profiles be plotted on the same sheet, with different colors used to distinguish sten scores. The 16 PF scales are bipolar, with high and low scores representing opposite poles of a single dimension. For example, a low score on Factor A indicates introversion, while a high score indicates extraversion. Clinical professionals should avoid value judgments about high or low scores, as they merely describe normal personality variables. Sten scores between 4 and 7 indicate average ranges, while scores from 1–3 and 8–10 indicate the extremes of each trait dimension, representing approximately 16% of the population at each end of the normal curve. As with any standardized test, confidence intervals and standard measurement errors must be considered, and minor differences in sten scores should not be overinterpreted. Although the 16 PF was designed to measure normal personality traits, it is sensitive to psychopathology, particularly when certain patterns of scale elevations are observed.

The primary scales include Factor A: Warmth (Outgoing vs. Reserved), Factor B: Abstract Reasoning (Abstract vs. Concrete Thinking), Factor C: Emotional Stability (Stable vs. Reactive), Factor E: Dominance (Dominant vs. Submissive), Factor F: Liveliness (Lively vs. Serious), Factor G: Rule-Consciousness (Conscientious vs. Expedient), Factor H: Social Boldness (Bold vs. Shy), Factor I: Sensitivity (Sensitive vs. Tough-Minded), Factor L: Vigilance (Suspicious vs. Trusting), Factor M: Abstractedness (Imaginative vs. Practical), Factor N: Privateness (Private vs. Forthright), Factor O: Apprehension (Apprehensive vs. Self-Assured), Factor Q1: Openness to Change (Open vs. Conservative), Factor Q2: Self-Reliance (Self-Reliant vs. Group-Oriented), Factor Q3: Perfectionism (Perfectionistic vs. Tolerant of Disorder), and Factor Q4: Tension (Tense vs. Relaxed).

These primary factors cluster into five global dimensions: Extraversion/Introversion, Anxiety/Low Anxiety, Tough-Mindedness/Receptivity, Independence/Accommodation, and Self-Control/Unrestrained.

The Persian version of the 16 PF was validated by Barzegar (1996) on high school students. The average reliability coefficients obtained through short-term test–retest were .65, long-term test–retest were .52, and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .54. The construct validity of each factor was assessed through correlations between the factors of this questionnaire and those of the original 16 PF, with an average validity coefficient of .76, indicating acceptable reliability and validity.

2.3. Data Analysis

For descriptive data analysis, statistical indices of mean and standard deviation were used, and for inferential analysis, Pearson correlation and stepwise multiple regression analysis were applied. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 23.

3. Findings and Results

Demographic information showed that the mean age of women participating in the study was 34.85 with a standard deviation of 7.04, the mean age at marriage was 23.2 with a standard deviation of 4.56, and the educational level was 12.5% diploma, 14.8% associate degree, 39.1% bachelor's degree, 27.3% master's degree, and 6.3% doctoral degree. Descriptive indices of the research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive findings related to the second-order factors of Cattell's personality traits and marital satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Extraversion/Introversion (Extraversion)	5.73	2.61	1	10
High/Low Anxiety (Anxiety)	5.7	1.4	2	9
Tough-Mindedness/Receptivity (Flexibility)	4.1	1.61	1	8
Independence/Dependence (Independence)	4.58	2.21	1	9
Self-Control/Low Control (Self-Control)	4.35	1.83	1	9
Marital Satisfaction	271.23	66.65	170	395

To test the normality of the variables, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used, and the results showed that the significance level of most research variables was greater than $\alpha = 0.05$, indicating that the variables had a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were used to examine the hypotheses.

Table 2

Pearson correlation coefficients between second-order factors of Cattell's personality traits and marital satisfaction

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Significance	Coefficient of Determination	Type of Relationship
Extraversion	0.202	0.022+	7.24	Direct
Anxiety	−0.165	0.062	–	No relationship
Flexibility	−0.005	0.959	–	No relationship
Independence	0.138	0.120	–	No relationship
Self-Control	−0.371	0.001++	13.76	Inverse

The results of Table 2 show that the significance of Pearson correlation coefficients between personality factors of extraversion and self-control with marital satisfaction was less than 0.05. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between extraverted and self-controlled personalities with women's marital satisfaction. The correlation coefficient between extraversion and marital satisfaction was positive, indicating that the more extraverted women are, the greater their marital satisfaction. The correlation coefficient between self-control and marital satisfaction was negative (inverse), indicating that the more self-controlled women are, the lower their marital satisfaction.

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis (multiple correlation)

Multiple Correlation	R^2	Standard Error of Estimate	Significance	Durbin-Watson
0.449	0.201	60.77	0.001	1.633

The correlation between women's marital satisfaction and the five second-order factors of Cattell's personality traits (extraversion, anxiety, tough-mindedness, independence, and self-control) was R = 0.449. This correlation is called multiple correlation and refers to the correlation between several independent variables and one dependent variable. The coefficient of determination was 0.201, indicating that 20.1% of the variance or individual differences in marital satisfaction were explained by individual differences in the five personality traits. This correlation was statistically significant (p = 0.001). Therefore, the tenth hypothesis was confirmed at the 0.01 significance level. The results of multiple regression ANOVA for predicting marital satisfaction are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Multiple regression ANOVA results for predicting women's marital satisfaction

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Regression	113556.646	5	22711.329	6.149	0.001
Residual	450610.323	122	3693.527	–	–
Total	564166.969	127	–	–	–

The results of the post hoc test show that at the posttest and follow-up stages, there were significant differences in the means of parenting adaptability and parenting orientation between the experimental and control groups. This indicates that the brain-based parenting training method was effective in improving both parenting adaptability and parenting orientation.

The results of Table 4 show that the regression ANOVA validated the regression analysis for predicting women's marital satisfaction using the research variables (F = 6.149, p < 0.001).

Table 5

Stepwise multiple regression analysis

Model	Multiple Correlation	R²	Significance
1. Self-Control	0.371	0.138	0.001
2. Anxiety	0.430	0.185	0.008

The results of Table 5 show that among the research variables, self-control entered the equation in the first step and anxiety in the second step, while extraversion, flexibility, and independence were excluded. The significance of regression coefficients shows that self-control significantly predicted marital satisfaction. When self-control entered the equation, the coefficient of determination was 0.138, meaning that 13.8% of the variance in marital satisfaction was explained by self-control. With the addition of anxiety, the predictive power increased to 18.5%.

Table 6

Unstandardized and standardized coefficients of Cattell's second-order personality traits with women's marital satisfaction in multiple regression analysis

Model	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	394.135	27.543	–	14.310	0.001	–	–
Self-Control	–14.571	2.962	–0.401	–4.919	0.001	0.981	1.019
Anxiety	–10.432	3.866	–0.220	–2.698	0.008	0.981	1.019

According to the results in Table 6, since the Durbin-Watson statistic was within the range of 1.5 to 2.5, it can be concluded that the errors were independent. The results also showed that the "Tolerance" values were greater than 0.10 and the "Variance Inflation Factor" (VIF) values were close to 1 and less than 10. Therefore, multicollinearity between the predictor variables was not present, and the assumption of independence of errors was confirmed. Thus, the assumptions of normality, no multicollinearity, and error independence were met, and linear regression could be used to test the hypothesis. Overall, according to the information in Table 6 and the standardized beta coefficients, it was observed that self-control (β = –0.401) and anxiety (β = –0.220) had the most significant effects in explaining changes and predicting women's marital satisfaction.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide clear evidence that personality macro-factors, particularly extraversion, self-control, and anxiety, play a significant role in predicting marital satisfaction among married women. Correlational analysis showed that extraversion was positively associated with marital satisfaction, indicating that women who are more outgoing, sociable, and expressive report higher

satisfaction in their marital relationships. In contrast, self-control demonstrated a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction, suggesting that excessive restraint or overregulation of emotional and interpersonal behaviors may undermine relational fulfillment. Regression analysis further highlighted that self-control and anxiety emerged as the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction, jointly accounting for almost 19% of the variance. These findings underscore the central role of dispositional traits in shaping relational outcomes and lend empirical support to trait-based approaches in premarital and marital counseling.

The positive link between extraversion and marital satisfaction aligns with a growing body of research highlighting the benefits of sociability and positive affectivity in intimate relationships. Extraverts tend to engage more actively in social interactions, display higher levels of positive emotion, and foster warmth and intimacy within relationships, which can contribute to overall marital stability (Huang et al., 2021; Orayzi et al., 2016). Longitudinal evidence further suggests that extraversion, along with agreeableness, facilitates constructive conflict resolution and enhances perceptions of partner responsiveness (Bach et al., 2025; Lavner et al., 2018). Moreover, extraverts may be better equipped to navigate modern relational contexts, including technology-mediated communication, which has become an increasingly important aspect of marital interaction (Huang et al., 2021). The current findings reinforce these perspectives and highlight extraversion as a protective factor in sustaining marital satisfaction across cultural settings.

Conversely, the negative association between self-control and marital satisfaction warrants careful interpretation. While self-control is generally regarded as a positive attribute in regulating impulses and maintaining discipline, excessive or rigid self-control may lead to suppression of emotional expression, decreased intimacy, and relational rigidity (Brudek et al., 2018). Such dynamics may undermine spontaneous affection and reduce opportunities for shared vulnerability, both of which are central to marital satisfaction. Previous research has documented similar trends, showing that overly controlled individuals may struggle with emotional openness and authentic communication, factors that are critical for maintaining intimacy (Busch et al., 2016; Girard et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies conducted in Iranian contexts have shown that high levels of conscientiousness and control are not always beneficial for marital outcomes, particularly when they conflict with culturally embedded expectations of

emotional expression and mutual support (Moradi et al., 2018; Tahmasbi & Khoramabadi, 2024). The present findings thus suggest that moderation in self-regulation may be key, where balanced control fosters stability without suppressing relational vitality.

The role of anxiety as a negative predictor of marital satisfaction is consistent with well-established evidence linking neuroticism and affective instability to relationship difficulties (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Sayehmiri et al., 2020). Anxiety-prone individuals often experience heightened reactivity to stress, misinterpret partner behaviors, and exhibit patterns of worry and rumination that erode relationship quality (Hemming et al., 2019; Lynch et al., 2004). For example, studies among postpartum women demonstrated that anxiety and depression significantly undermine marital satisfaction, particularly in contexts where social support is limited (Öcalan et al., 2024; Odinka et al., 2018). Similar findings have been observed in studies of couples experiencing sexual dysfunction or high-risk pregnancies, where anxiety negatively impacts both relational satisfaction and sexual functioning (Öcalan et al., 2024; Tahan et al., 2020). The predictive role of anxiety in this study corroborates these observations and highlights the need for targeted interventions that address anxiety management within premarital and marital counseling frameworks.

The overall regression model accounted for approximately one-fifth of the variance in marital satisfaction, which is both statistically meaningful and theoretically consistent with multifactorial models of marriage. Previous studies have shown that personality traits explain a substantial portion of variance in marital satisfaction, though contextual and relational variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, cultural expectations, communication skills) also play critical roles (Czechowska-Bieluga & Lewicka-Zelent, 2021; Moradi et al., 2018). The modest proportion of explained variance in the current study underscores the importance of integrating trait-based assessments with other domains, such as relational skills training, lifestyle factors, and family-of-origin influences, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of marital outcomes.

These findings also resonate with the literature on premarital counseling and relationship education, which emphasizes the importance of addressing personality dispositions in preparing couples for marriage (Hawkins et al., 2008; Saulter-Carney, 2024). Personality-informed premarital programs can help couples anticipate potential

areas of friction, enhance mutual understanding, and cultivate adaptive strategies for navigating differences (Elijah, 2024). In addition, the evidence that self-control and anxiety significantly predict marital satisfaction suggests that screening for these traits prior to marriage may provide useful indicators for counseling focus. For instance, couples where one or both partners display high anxiety could benefit from interventions aimed at enhancing stress management and emotional regulation. Similarly, individuals with high self-control tendencies may require guidance on balancing regulation with emotional openness and intimacy.

The present findings also support the broader theoretical proposition that personality and relational processes are intertwined across the lifespan. Longitudinal studies have shown that personality not only predicts marital satisfaction but also changes in response to marital dynamics (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Lavner et al., 2018). In newlyweds, for instance, traits such as agreeableness and conscientiousness may increase over time as partners adapt to relational demands, while neuroticism may decline in the context of supportive marriages (Lavner et al., 2018). Conversely, distressed marriages may exacerbate maladaptive trait expressions, such as heightened anxiety or rigid self-control. The current findings, therefore, contribute to an ongoing conversation about the bidirectional influences between personality and marriage, highlighting the potential for premarital counseling to shape developmental trajectories.

Furthermore, the cultural context provides a critical lens for interpreting these results. Research in Iranian populations indicates that cultural norms regarding gender roles, emotional expression, and family obligations shape the meaning and impact of personality traits on marital satisfaction (Heidarinajad et al., 2018; Kiani Chalmerdi et al., 2021; Sadeghi et al., 2015). For example, extraversion may be especially valued in women's roles related to socialization and kinship networks, thereby amplifying its positive association with satisfaction. Conversely, self-control may reflect not only individual regulation but also conformity to restrictive cultural expectations, which could diminish its benefits in fostering intimacy. Cross-cultural studies confirm that while the Big Five dimensions are broadly applicable, their relational consequences are often mediated by cultural scripts and contextual pressures (Günaydin, 2022; Tolan & Kiliç, 2020). This suggests that premarital counseling protocols must integrate cultural sensitivity when interpreting personality assessments and tailoring interventions.

The integration of clinical perspectives further enriches the discussion. Psychodynamic approaches emphasize the role of unconscious relational patterns, attachment histories, and affective regulation in shaping marital satisfaction (Busch et al., 2016). Personality traits such as anxiety and self-control may be manifestations of deeper intrapsychic and interpersonal processes, including defense mechanisms and internalized relational schemas (Girard et al., 2017). From this perspective, premarital counseling that incorporates both personality assessment and exploration of underlying dynamics may offer a more holistic approach. Moreover, evidence from therapeutic interventions demonstrates that addressing sexual function, communication, and conflict resolution within couples can significantly enhance marital satisfaction, especially in those struggling with anxiety and relational rigidity (Ojo Adeshina Akinwumi, 2017; Tahan et al., 2020).

Overall, this study strengthens the empirical case for integrating personality assessment into premarital counseling and marital education. By identifying extraversion as a positive factor and self-control and anxiety as risk factors, the findings provide actionable insights for tailoring counseling protocols. These results are consistent with both international research and Iranian studies, affirming the universality of certain personality–marriage linkages while also underscoring the importance of cultural nuance.

5.   Suggestions and Limitations

Despite its contributions, the present study is not without limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences; while personality traits were found to predict marital satisfaction, it is equally plausible that marital experiences influence trait expression over time, as suggested by longitudinal evidence (Bach et al., 2025; Lavner et al., 2018). Second, the reliance on self-report measures raises concerns about social desirability and response biases, particularly in cultural contexts where marital issues may be stigmatized. Third, the study's sample was limited to married female students in a specific geographic and institutional context, which restricts generalizability to broader populations, including men, older couples, or non-student samples. Fourth, while the regression model explained nearly one-fifth of the variance in marital satisfaction, this indicates that a large proportion of variance remains unexplained, pointing to the need to incorporate additional factors such as socioeconomic

stressors, family-of-origin influences, and relational skills. Finally, the use of the 16PF and Enrich scales, while psychometrically supported, may not fully capture culturally specific dimensions of personality and marital satisfaction, suggesting the need for contextually adapted instruments.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to capture the bidirectional influences between personality and marital satisfaction over time. Such studies could elucidate how personality traits evolve in response to relational dynamics and whether early interventions during premarital counseling can moderate maladaptive trajectories. Expanding samples to include men, couples at different life stages, and diverse cultural contexts would enhance the external validity of findings. Incorporating mixed-methods approaches, such as qualitative interviews, could provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of couples and the nuanced ways in which personality traits manifest in relational contexts. Moreover, future studies should explore the moderating roles of cultural norms, socioeconomic conditions, and technological influences on the personality–marital satisfaction link. Finally, intervention-based research testing the efficacy of personality-informed premarital counseling protocols would be invaluable in translating empirical findings into practice.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that premarital counseling programs should incorporate personality assessments to identify potential risk and protective factors for marital satisfaction. Counselors can use trait information to tailor interventions: for example, providing communication and intimacy-building strategies for individuals high in self-control, or offering stress management and cognitive-behavioral techniques for those with elevated anxiety. Extraverted individuals may benefit from reinforcement of their social strengths while learning to balance external engagement with focused attention on the marital relationship. Incorporating psychoeducation on personality differences can help couples develop empathy and realistic expectations, reducing the likelihood of conflict arising from mismatched dispositions. Moreover, integrating cultural and contextual considerations into counseling practices will ensure that interventions are both evidence-based and culturally responsive.

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. This study was extracted from a doctoral dissertation in counseling at the Islamic Azad University, Khomeini Shahr Branch, and received ethical approval with the code IR.IAU.KHSH.REC.1402.018. Ethical principles, including confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for participants' privacy, were observed, and participation in the study posed no potential harm to the participants.

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