



## **Analysis of Women's Empathetic Agreement-Making Skill by their Husbands: a Sample of Grounded Theory**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background and Aim:** Today, maintaining a family not only requires knowledge but also requires its own skills. One of the skills can be empathetic agreement that it can be reached by men. The goal of present study was to analysis of empathetic agreement-making skills among married women by their husbands. **Methods:** This study was conducted using the social structuralism perspective method developed by Charms (2014). The study population included all married men who had succeeded in having happy and stable families and the sample consisted of 10 of these men who were purposefully selected from a homogeneous type based on entry and exit criteria. The research tool was a semi-structured interview. The duration of each interview was between 60 and 120 minutes. The data collected by Charms (2014) method were analyzed in three stages of initial coding, axial coding and final classification. **Results:** The findings revealed three dimensions to the grounded theory: (1) what empathetic agreement- making is, (2) why empathetic agreement-making, and (3) how empathetic agreement-making. **Conclusion:** This grounded theory can be effective in facilitating family education for the success of men in married life, studies related to empathetic agreement-making and facilitating empathetic agreement-making in the field of family counseling and treatment, and divorce prevention.



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### Introduction

The irreplaceable importance of the institution of the family and its role in the preservation and survival of human peace and the growth and education of humans and its impressive effect on the development of society are not hidden from anyone. However, the delay in marriage on the one hand and the increase in the number of divorces after marriage and at the same time the concern of young families about having children all indicate that it is necessary to pay attention to ways of improving and relaxing the family day by day and not to neglect it. In this regard, the issue of power and maintaining it, and on the other hand, the conflict over it, is still alive and creates various dynamics in the family atmosphere. In addition, the need for authority in men and how men exercise it is a topic that has been shown in various studies. It has been found that negative ways of exercising power in the family can increase the desire for divorce among married women (Dehghani & Yousefi, 2019); Also, during a qualitative study, it was found that in the conditions of increasing stressful experiences inside and outside the family, men with poverty in coping resources use authoritarian, coercive and violent measures to take care of their male position and maintain it in the context of intra-family interactions. (Shokri, Khodayi, and Moazaldini, 2021).

Anyway, due to the main trends of change in the family structure due to the industrialization of women's employment and the reduction of childbearing, the boundaries of power in the family have shifted. It has caused the old methods of family management, such as dictatorial styles, unilateral power-seeking, or annoying methods of family management, to lose their effectiveness. Men who continue to use harsh methods of family management cannot bring their wives with them, and more than they lead to the stability of the family, they cause the formation of stubbornness in their wives and lead the family to collapse. At the same time, in today's society, there are men who have become more aware of the important role of women in the peace of the family and value peace-seeking methods based on peace, friendship, and understanding more than bullying-based methods to control the family. In this way, they bring their spouses with them in such a way that the emotional needs of their spouses, such as the need for security, approval, and trust, are

satisfied and intimacy is maintained in the family (Ahmadimehr, Yousefi, and Golparvar, 2020).

Until now, various researches have focused on family studies, in which the role of elements related to power structures in the family has been considered. For example, Mahmoudzadeh, Yousefi, and Golparvar (2019) have studied the factors affecting family stability and have introduced the role of empathy in family stability (Mahmoodzadeh, Yousefi, and Golparvar, 2019). Also, Hashemian et al. (2018) studied the lived experiences of men in the field of violence against their wives as a way to gain power. They realized that not satisfying the emotional needs of the couple, not meeting the sexual needs of the spouse, and establishing unfriendly interactions brought up domestic violence (Hashmian et al., 2018); In a study, Malmir and Ebrahimi (2020) showed that in recent years, the tendency and orientation of the family has moved towards new and civil methods in decision-making, decision-making and problem solving between members (Malmir & Ebrahimi, 2020); Zarei Topkhaneh, Jan Bozorgi, and Ahmadi (2015) also showed that the greater authority of the man in the family causes homogeneity of the family structure and reduces marital conflicts and strengthens the family's performance (Zarei Topkhaneh, Jan Bozorgi, and Ahmadi, 2015). ; Mohed, Enayat and Mardani (2012) women who have a university education are more approved by their husbands than other women; Qosal (2019) showed in a study that the support and guidance of men is necessary for the personal and social development of women (Qosal, 2019); Martinez, Cayombra, Sa, and Olivera (2019) showed in a study that in intimate relationships, men may use violence to exercise power (Martinez et al., 2019); However, the review of studies showed that although the subject of power and the exercise of power have been considered in some men. However, domestic published literature has not addressed the issue of how married men involve their wives in joint or individual decision-making with the help of calm and peaceful methods, which can be called empathic agreement seeking.

There are various methods of exercising power in the family, which have been divided into two categories of negative and positive or compatible and incompatible management methods during past researches. During it, couples try to bring their spouses with them or control their behavior

(Ahmadimehr, Yousefi, and Golparvar, 2020). Undoubtedly, seeking an empathic agreement in men, who are expected to be able to easily manage the affairs of the family, is a consistent and positive method, it can help the stability of the family and be effective in the formation of happiness in the family. Considering the importance of this feature in maintaining a happy, stable and intimate family in the family on the one hand and the lack of a theory about this important structure, this research aimed to study and analyze this family structure through a qualitative study using the method of Charms (2014). The results of this research can effectively enrich family therapy texts, family enrichment and empowerment trainings, and develop educational packages for divorce prevention. In addition, the results of this research document the rich experiences of successful men in intimate marriage and bring them closer to being applied by therapists. Therefore, the present research was intended to answer this question: What are the components of the underlying theory of empathic consensus seeking?

### Method

The aim of the present study was to investigate the empathetic negotiation skills of women by their husbands. This study focused on the experiences of successful married men in obtaining empathic agreement according to the perspective of social constructionism. The exploratory nature of the research focused on the perception of the participants (married men) and on the experiences that led to accompanying their wives in decision-making and daily decision-making. Therefore, it was assumed that the married world of these men is influenced by a set of multiple realities that are influenced by family, social, economic and other beliefs that can reduce their conflicts to a minimum due to this skill in men. This study hoped to find the underlying mechanisms of this skill by carefully examining these experiences. In order to achieve the aforementioned goal, the structuralist grounded theory method invented by Charms (2014) was used. The main core of this model is accepting the subjectivity and acknowledging the active participation of the researcher in constructing and interpreting the data in a serious process with the participants and with the data. In other words, the researcher is not an objective and independent observer, but a part of the reality created in the research process. It should be noted that the married men who participated in this research were the key participants in this research who allowed their experiences in attracting the companionship of their wives to be extracted through interviews.

The researcher made a purposeful selection of the homogeneous type. In this way, the researcher, based on the entry criteria, searched for men who were known to be compassionate, kind and resourceful in managing the family. The entry criteria were: at least five years have passed since the beginning of life, having a child, confirming their husband as a kind, caring and resourceful man in married life, willing to conduct an interview, answering questions in detail. The exclusion criteria were: not having children, having a history of divorce or separation.

### Materials

**1. Semi-structured interview:** To collect data, semi-structured interview and open-ended questions with follow-up questions were used to encourage the participants to provide in-depth experiences. To formulate the interview questions, the research literature was reviewed and the questions were designed in a coherent format with the consultation of the professors. The interview started with general and open questions with the theme of married life narrative. During the research, exploratory questions were used to obtain more useful information, such as: Can you explain more about this? Can you explain what you mean more clearly? The duration of the interview in this research lasted between 60-90 minutes, and the time and place of the interview was determined in advance by the researcher with the agreement of the participant. After obtaining informed consent from the participants and explaining the objectives of the research, the researcher assured them that the information provided by them and their identity will remain completely confidential and confidentiality will be respected in the interview text. They were assured that the recorded conversation would be deleted after the analysis was completed.

### Results

In terms of demographic findings, 6 participants (60%) were housewives and 4 participants (40%) were employees. Also, 4 people (40%) of the participants had one child, 5 people (50%) had 2 children, and 1 person (10%) had 3 children.

The findings in general answered this question: What are the components of the basic theory of empathic consensus seeking? The results of the analysis of the grounded theory according to the method of Charms (2014) showed that this theory explains the three dimensions of empathic agreement-seeking.

First, the interviews were read line by line and coded line by line. At this stage, an attempt was made to produce codes that are short, close to the data, and more abstract than the data itself. The second stage of coding was central. In this stage, the primary codes in each interview were categorized and then those with high analytical value were identified. In this stage, the codes that

were repeated more and were more related to the research questions were taken into consideration. The purpose of this stage was to achieve directions for the creation and development of theoretical classes through the combination and analysis of larger data units in a more conceptual format. The factor of induction, which is in the essence of the method of grounded theory of constructionism, appeared at this stage, and at the same time, with the continuous comparative analysis between one interview or various interviews, the opportunity to compare and confirm the generated data was provided. While combining multiple layers of meaning and action, the core codes that seemed to have high value in conceptualization received the title of classes. With the formation of the classes, the analysis moved towards the concept according to Charms (2014) in this stage the researcher works with common themes and related patterns. At the end of this stage, the classes had been extracted. After analyzing the data and completing the conceptual classes, the researcher conducted a second literature review that enabled him to develop his theory based on the results and existing theories.

The three dimensions of this contextual theory are: (1) What is the nature of empathetic agreement-seeking involving classes: Attention to similarities (similarity in values and similarity in marriage criteria); Management of differences (with the core codes of tolerance, forgiveness, problem solving, and setting up arbitrary matters to the satisfaction of the parties); Management of family situations with key codes of attention to the future; Being a role model for children; performing men's duties on time; Dialogue after the crisis subsides; Asking the wife when angry; Forgetting painful events; Being committed to the original promise and appointment; Using affection to control; Paying attention to women's needs (with the central codes of need for attention and need for security); (2) Why seek empathetic agreement with classes of beliefs with core codes: Belief in romantic relationship before sex, romantic relationship, belief in the importance of sex, belief in the role of God's grace, belief in the importance of love in life, belief in respecting women's rights; Priorities (with the key codes of giving importance to giving gifts, giving importance to occasions and giving importance to one's wife over others); Male ideals (with the central codes of not being

selfish, not being strict, being loved by a woman, being loved in the family). (3) How to find an empathetic agreement with the classes of women's characteristics with the core codes: being a good listener; loving the wife; financial companionship with a man; quick return of the woman to the initial state; No excuses; to be happy soon; lack of rumination on topics; low expectations; performing life duties efficiently; emotional expression; Expressing need, not need; lack of microvision; borderline between work and family; being tactile; secure attachment; be honest; Male traits (with core codes of being simple, honest, respecting women, being active, decisive, trying, being persuasive, being a good listener, conscientiousness, secure attachment, having the ability to exceed a woman's needs); Ways of dealing with life's problems (with the core codes of problem solving, consulting and dialogue); Communication (with the core codes of appropriate communication with the spouse's family, resolving disputes with the spouse's family through dialogue and forgiveness, helping the spouse's family, maintaining privacy with other women and giving importance to communication in the form of entertainment and entertainment).

### Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to analyze the skill of empathetic agreement-seeking among married men, with the help of this skill, they can bring their wives with them and instead of creating stubbornness and resistance in them, they can increase softness and companionship among them. The results of the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews with the help of the analysis of the contextual theory of Charms (2014) with married men who had happy and stable families showed that this theory has three dimensions.

The first dimension revealed the meaning of empathetic agreement-seeking. It showed that this group of men can meet the needs of women in the field of attention and security by choosing a wife who was similar in basic criteria and some important social and personality characteristics. They can manage existing differences that can trigger conflicts and marital disputes in other families with the help of tolerance, forgiveness, problem solving and patient methods of the

parties. Finally, during their daily life, they are able to solve various situations and move the family forward. In this regard, one of the participants says: "...my wife's companionship with me is the result of my correct choice. I chose someone who was similar to us, that is, we were similar in the important issues of life, and this meant that the source of disagreements would be few. Anyway, we still had differences, for example, I hate long picnics, but my wife likes them, so sometimes I prepare a long picnic and sometimes a long one. This is a way to satisfy our partner. However, the fact is that a man must be able to carry on his daily life and work on the ground, for example, for herds, herds, and fights. This part of the results with Gantt's findings (2006) which showed the importance of similarities in marital satisfaction; It was consistent with the findings of Naemi (2018) and Rovani, Compton and Rast (1995), who showed that satisfaction of needs has a significant relationship with marital satisfaction. In addition, it was consistent with the results of Baskin et al. (2011) and Tavakoli et al. (2017) who showed that managing differences with the help of forgiveness and tolerance can increase marital satisfaction. Finally, it is consistent with the results of Choi and Kim (2009) who showed that determining the rituals and methods of the parties to resolve disputes can increase marital satisfaction.

This theory explained why the skill of empathic agreement in these men. It showed that the beliefs of these men, their priorities and their ideals are such that the comfort of their wives and families is a part of their beliefs, priorities and ideals. Therefore, the world governing their mentality is such that romantic relationship is more important than: Satisfying sexual needs, believing in the grace of God, believing in the importance of love in life and believing in respecting women's rights. They all help to make the difficulties of married life easy for them. In addition, their priorities were such that women probably did not see them as conflicting with their families and themselves. For example, they gave priority to giving gifts, to occasions and giving importance to the wife over others. On the other hand, their ideals were not selfishness and

strictness, instead they wanted to be loved by women and popular in the family. In this regard, one of the participants says: "...my father was a violent man, when he comes home everyone was afraid, instead I try to make everyone happy when I come home, give them peace that I am at home. I am happy if my wife is happy. I care a lot about respecting women's rights. I give my wife money in her pocket every month, so that she is comfortable. First, my love is important to me, then sex, that's why I never force myself into sex..." These results were consistent with the results of Carnes (2017) who showed that non-family priorities can be related to marital dissatisfaction. In addition, it was in line with the findings of Azadi Fard and Amani (2020) who showed that logical beliefs help to resolve marital conflicts. Finally, it is consistent with the findings of Janjani, et al. (2017) who showed that there is a relationship between irrational beliefs and marital dissatisfaction.

Another dimension of the resulting theory was how to find an empathic agreement. It showed how empathic agreement-seeking occurs. This theory revealed that empathic agreement-seeking is a two-way street. That is, women also have characteristics that agree with their husbands and do not frustrate their husbands' efforts, including being good listeners, loving their spouses, and characteristics that can be classified as emotional stability. Delineation between career and family included touchiness, secure and honest attachment, which made these women empathic, companionable and predictable. Some of the characteristics of these women, such as being touchy, also made them seek hugs from men, which could give comfort to both them and their husbands; The mentioned traits of men, such as being simple, honest, respecting women, etc., which can be placed in the structure of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and extroversion, were effective in the occurrence of empathic agreeableness. These men's ways of dealing with life's problems such as problem solving, consultation and dialogue were also significant, which could help to make life peaceful. At the same time, the manner of their communication also plays an important role in the occurrence of empathic agreement. Their

communication showed that they have a good ability to manage relations with their spouse's family and can resolve their differences with their spouse's family with the help of dialogue and forgiveness. They had the spirit of helping their spouse's family and could well be like a bridge between their family and their spouse. On the other hand, in maintaining privacy with other women, they respected the boundaries well and did not disturb the security of their spouses, and they gave importance to communication in the form of recreation and entertainment. In the same way, one of the participants said: "...My wife has really good manners, she doesn't expect much and is happy quickly. She really listens to my problems... I also listen to her, I appreciate her, I don't lie and I respect her sensitivity and I trust her completely. Anyway, everyone may have problems with their spouse's family sometimes, so do I. These findings are consistent with the findings of Sayehmiri, Karim, Abdi, Dalvand, and Qashlaq (2020), Burdak and Kalta (2021), Burdak, Staden, and Jesik (2018), who showed that personality traits have a significant relationship with marital satisfaction. In addition, it is in line with the findings of Naderi and Khalatbari (2018) and Zhou (2017) that show the importance of coping methods in marital satisfaction and conflict resolution. Finally, it is consistent with the findings of Alipour et al. (2020) and Harris and Kamour (2018) who showed that communication skills can reduce marital conflicts.

According to these results, it can be said that the skill of empathic agreement in men is an important skill that plays a significant role in maintaining and surviving a healthy, happy and stable family. Paying attention to how this skill occurs shows that choosing women with characteristics that provide the texture of empathetic agreement-seeking may be the first step in the formation of this skill. It seems that men should choose women who value this skill and have traits and characteristics that provide the context for the emergence of this skill for men, otherwise, seeking an empathetic agreement will be very difficult and sometimes even disappointing. In order to develop this skill among men, they should be aware of what they

are, create the means (why) in themselves, and be familiar with the ways of its emergence. Finally, they should be aware of this important issue that the context of the emergence of this skill is established before marriage.

This research, like other studies, has limitations, such as the fact that the results were confirmed by their wives, but they were not given the opportunity to interview them. At the same time, the evolutionary course of this skill among these men was not investigated, which both limitations can be an opportunity for other studies.

### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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