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## Prediction of marital instability: Couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy

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### Abstract

The aim of present study was to Prediction of marital instability based on couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy in married men and women. This research is a descriptive- correlation. 170 married education teachers in gonbad kavous (70 men and 100women) were selected by stratified random sampling method and completed Marital Instability Index, intimacy scale and Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure. Data analysis was performed through Pearson correlative coefficient and multiple regressions. The results showed that there is a significant negative relationship between couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy with marital instability and couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy can predict marital instability. According to these finding, it can be concluded that couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy have an effective role in marital instability.

**Keywords:** Marital instability, couple intimacy, relational maintenance strategy

### Extended Abstract

#### Introduction

Marriage instability is associated with the concepts such as marital disintegration, the interruption of marital relations, divorce, and low quality of marital relations (Brown, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2006). It results from a number of interpersonal and intrapersonal factors. Some examples of the effective interpersonal factors are couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy.

Intimacy is defined as one's ability of establishing close relations with other people while preserving his/her personality (Nabawi Hasar, Arefi, & Yousefi, 2014). Dandurand and Lafontaine (2013) describe it as affinity, openness and warm relations. The results of various research show that intimacy among newly-wed couples is one of the most important factors in having a stable marriage and avoidance of having cordial relationships is considered as the main cause of the failure in one's family life (Sharp, & Ganong, 2000).

The relational maintenance strategies have also an effective role in keeping a marriage stable. They contain activities which one use to maintain his / her relation (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000). Based on the studies conducted by Canary and Stafford (1991), the couples use assurance, openness, positivity, social network, and share task to preserve their relationships. Stafford, Dainton and Haas, (2000) also introduce two other strategies: advice and conflict management. Badr, and Taylor (2008) show that the couple who use such strategies experience high satisfaction and marital long life. Also, Stafford and Canary'(2006) research results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between maintenance behaviors and factors like commitment, love, trust, interest and satisfaction. Ramirez (2008) research results show there is a relationship between maintenance behaviors and marital commitment.

Today, a various number of marriages either lead to divorce or lack the necessary stability and assurance. Therefore the aim of present study was to Prediction of marital instability based on couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy in married men and women.

### **Method**

This research is a descriptive\_ correlation. The research population consists of 420 married male and female teachers instructing at high school level in Gonbad Qabous in 2017. Among them, 200 teachers were selected by stratified random sampling method. Then they completed three questionair:

**Marital Instability Index:** This index was made by Edwards, Johnson, & Booth (1987) and has 14 items for measuring marriage instability.questions of this index are arranged in twofold spectrum (Yes or No). Asghari, Sadeghi, Khakdoost, and Entezari (2015) 0.87 reported Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient this index.

**Intimacy scale.** This scale was made by Walker & Thompson (1983) and has 17 items for measuring intimacy. Each accompanied by a seven point likert- type scale. Rajabi, Hayatbakhsh, and Taghipour (2016) reported 0.96 Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient this scale 0.96 reported.

**Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure.** the questionnaire was made by Stafford, Dainton and Haas (2000) and has 31 items, each item by a seven point likert- type scale. That high score means person's using more from relationship maintenance behaviors. The scale includes seven maintenance bahaviore: Assurance (8 items), openness (7 items), cinflict management (5 items), share task (5 item), positivity (2 items), advice (2 items), and social network (2 items). Canary, Stafford, Semic (2002) a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient subscales this questionnaire between 0.71 to 0.92 reported.

### **Finding**

The mean and standard deviation of the women age were 36.03 and 7.39, and the mean and standard deviation of the men age 40.25 and 6.52.were respectively (40.25 and 6.52).

Table 1  
Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient between variables

variable	1	2	3
1.couple intimacy	-		
2. relational maintenance strategy	**0.55	-	
3. marital instability	** -0.47	** -0.51	-
mean	77.08	124.61	7.36
standard Deviation	18.18	39.66	4.75

\*p < 0.01

The results table 1 indicate that the mean and standard deviation couple intimacy respectively (77.08 and 18.18), the mean and standard deviation Relational maintenance strategy respectively (124.61 and 39.66), the mean and standard deviation marital instability respectively (7.36 and 4.75). Also the results table 1 indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between couple intimacy [p 0.001, r=-0.47] and relational maintenance strategy [p 0.001, r=-0.51] with marital instability.

Table 2  
Results of multiple regression analysis of marital instability as a (Entry method)

criteria variable	predictor variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	t	p
marital instability	couple intimacy			- 0.27	- 3.50	0.001
	relational maintenance strategy	0.56	0.30	- 0.36	38.68	- 4.74 0.001

\*p < 0.001

The results table 2 indicate that couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy can predict marital instability [p 0.001, R = 0.56, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.30, F = 38.68]. According to these findings, it can be concluded that couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy predictions variables have an effective role in marital instability.

### Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of present study was to Prediction of marital instability based on couple intimacy and relational maintenance strategy in married men and women. The results of the study are in consistence with the findings of the research carried out by Kato's (2016), Mohammad, Heydarnia, and Abbasi (2016), De Baca et al. (2017), Ramirez (2008), and Canary, Stafford, and semic (2002).

In order to elaborate the relation between relational maintenance strategies and marital stability, it should be said that it is a type of reciprocal relationship. Feeney, Noller, and Callan (1994) showed that behaviors that make the relations between couples to be preserved are considered as the main mechanism of satisfaction in marital life. Ramirez (2008) also

demonstrated that a feeling of contentment from marital status, love and marriage stability are of the results of relational maintenance strategies, leading to relational maintenance behaviors. In addition, Lorentz (2008) and Neff, and Karney (2003) illustrated that relational maintenance strategies have direct and positive effect on the happiness and stability of families. Those couples who are of marital commitment enjoy more relational maintenance strategies and mutual dialogue and comprehension (Stanley, 2005).

As to correlation among couple intimacy, marital stability, and prediction; it includes the content of intimacy, the level of having a close personal relationship among couples, the sharing of values, ideas, common activities, and knowing each other and emotional behaviors such as caressing. An individual who experiences more intimacy is able to reveal his/her feelings and relations more efficiently. Such a person can also express his/her needs to the partner easily without fear of judgment. In fact, couples should achieve to a degree of personal consciousness and development so that they can have a lasting relation with others. The more intimate they are, the more capable they can solve the challenges related to marital relations they face in their lives ahead. As a result, they would experience high satisfaction and durability of their common lives (Patrick et al. 2007).

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#### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors declared no conflicts of interest