*Full Length Research Paper*

# The accuracy of emotional intelligence and forgiveness in predicting the degree of satisfaction in marital communications

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This research investigates the accuracy of emotional intelligence and forgiveness in predicting the degree of satisfaction in marital communications between Iranian married couples. A total of 200 Iranian married couples were randomly selected for investigation. Multivariable regression and correlation coefficients were used to measure the accuracy. Results show that the correlation coefficient calculated between emotional intelligence and satisfaction in marital communications was 0.405, which was significant at 0.01 level. The correlation coefficient calculated between emotional intelligence and forgiveness did not reach a level of significance. The correlation coefficient calculated between satisfaction in marital communications and forgiveness was 0.71 for original families and 0.243 for nuclear families, which were significant at 0.05 level. An analysis of multivariable regression of female and male data showed a significant coefficient between predictions and evidence variables. The correlation coefficients calculated between satisfaction in marital communications and forgiveness were 0.71 and 0.243 for the original and nuclear families, respectively. The predictive accuracy of emotional intelligence is 0.505 for males and 0.253 for females.

**Key words:** Emotional intelligence, forgiveness, satisfaction marital communications.

## INTRODUCTION

Researchers and theorists in the family field suggested that values, social norms, and behaviors have affected the family structure. These seem to have influenced the family for more two decades. Thus, the ability of family to adapt to these changes is very necessary. Family's flexibility can be successful in this direction. This ability is dependent on communication patterns among family members (Koerner and Fitzpatric, 2002). In other words, communications lead to more intimacy among couples. Communication is a tool for making meaningful or emotionally connection with one another (Wiley, 2006). Interpersonal conflicts in marriage can lead to many problems among couples and other family members,

which if continued, could create psychological disorder. According to different studies, marital satisfaction is negatively correlated with neuroticism and anxiety. In other words, there are significant relationships between family interaction and mental health problems (Segrin and Flora, 2005). The variety studies showed that some individual abilities could increase satisfaction in marital communication (SMC). One of the factors is emotional intelligence (EI). Nowadays this factor plays an important role in determining individual's success at different areas such as family, work and social life. EI is an individual's ability to manage his relations efficiently with his environ-ment, including awareness of the emotions, judgment of the knowledge related to emotion and operating on emotional knowledge as part of problem solving (Goleman et al., 2002).

According to Petrides and Furnham (2001), EI factors include flexibility, assertiveness, awareness, expression,

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management and control of emotions, self-esteem, low impulsiveness, communication skills, self-motivation, stress management, social competence, trait empathy, trait happiness and trait optimism. It seems that all characteristics mentioned are important for making effective communication patterns. Another variable in this research is forgiveness. The growing numbers of recent studies have shown that forgiveness is increasingly being recognized as a psychological issue. According to family therapists, forgiveness can help relationship problems and marital conflicts. Researchers who investigate in the field of family communications found that forgiveness could lead to greater positive emotional and healthy relationships. In addition, it has positive correlation with mental and physical health (Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen, 2006; Gangdev, 2009). In fact, forgiveness is one of the most important personal properties that everybody potentially has. But, it should be used to build a successful relationship. Since few studies have been done on the impact of forgiveness and EI in predicting Iranian marital satisfaction and their relationship, the purpose of this research is to determine the contribution of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC in Iranian married couples. The results of this study can increase the awareness of family psychologists and counselors about family dynamics.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A few studies have examined the links between EI and relation satisfaction. Schutte et al. (2001) surveyed rate of EI and marital satisfaction among married couples. Participants with higher self-reported EI, reported significantly higher marital satisfaction than those with lower self-reported EI. Other studies pointed out that emotion perception, understanding and reasoning about emotions and control or managing emotions are important in marital relationship (Fitness, 2001). On the other hand, there is empirical evidence that couples with low scores on EI abilities have lowest scores on quality of their relationship. Besides, another research has found that couples tend to have the greater positive relationship when at least one partner has greater EI abilities (Brackett et al., 2005). Bricker (2005) found that self-reported overall EI significantly correlated with marital satisfaction relationship. The study also reported that interpersonal skills are needed to resolve conflict and more intimacy between couples. These factors could be important in determining successful marital outcome.

Chen et al. (1998) have shown that nearly 90% of success in ability of management depended on emotional intelligence (EI). In recent years, the studies about emotional relationship and gender are considered. For example, Mandell and Pherwani (2003) presented that EI scores in female managers were more than male managers. Their other findings showed that there are

differences between females and males in their ability to control their emotions and manage other people's emotions. In other words, females had more abilities than males in the aforestated factor. These findings support the results of Mayer et al. (2000), Mayer and Geher (1996) which reveal higher scores for females on different measures of EI. The concept of annoyance in interpersonal relationships is well known by psychologists, psychotherapists, counselors, teachers and ordinary people. Personal and social consequences of resentment could lead to anger, hatred and revenge. Based on some studies in the recent years, the communication structures have been changed especially in the context of family roles, friendship and breaking friends. One of the important points to continue a positive relationship with the other person is to forgive him for wrong done. Some data showed that unforgiveness leads to health problems (Kalayjian and Paloutzian, 2009).

## Statement of problem

Based on the views of psychologists, forgiveness is important for healing of offences and improving of mental health in interpersonal relationships (Ghobari, 2007). Also, various forgiveness theorists have noted the key role of emotions in the process of forgiving others (Malcolm et al., 2005). EI is one of the most important elements that explain the success of human in life and it directly affects mental health (Bar-on, 1997). Most researches support the key role of EI and forgiveness in individual and social communication. Finally, according to the role of individual's ability in effective marital communications, we would like to know if there is any effective contribution of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC.

## Objectives of research

1. To identify the relationship between EI and SMC.
2. To identify the relationship between EI and forgiveness.
3. To identify the relationship between forgiveness and SMC.
4. To determine the contribution of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC.

## Purpose of the study

In the tumultuous industrial world, people are constantly exposed to too many stresses, hence mental health specialists encourage people to use problem solution for increasing their ability to confronting with stressor factors. One mechanism created in recent decades is forgiveness by counselors and psychologists. Also, understanding and controlling of emotions is effective in advancement of

**Table 1.** Results of correlation coefficient between EI and SMC.

| Statistical measurement | Numbers | Correlation coefficient | $\alpha$ | Coefficient of determination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EI-SMC | 200 | 0.405 | 0.001 | 16.40 |

**Table 2.** Results of correlation coefficient between EI and forgiveness.

| Statistical measurements | Numbers | Correlation coefficient | $\alpha$ |
|---|---|---|---|
| EI-Original family | 200 | 0.128 | 0.071 |
| EI-Nuclear family | 200 | 0.128 | 0.071 |

interpersonal relationships and marital satisfaction. Therefore, they can be used and recommended as a behavioral-cognitive therapy for individual and families. The main purpose of this research is to evaluate the contribution of forgiveness and EI in predicting SMC. In addition, the research has a special purpose of determining the contribution of forgiveness and EI to SMC based on gender.

## Research questions

What is the relationship between EI and SMC?
What is the relationship between EI and forgiveness?
What is the relationship between forgiveness and SMC?
What is the contribution of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC?

## Hypothesis

1. There is significant relationship between EI and SMC.
2. There is significant relationship between EI and forgiveness.
3. There is significant relationship between forgiveness and SMC.
4. There is meaningful contribution of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC.

## Scope of study

The respondents in this study included all married couple students who studied in Iranian Islamic Azad university, Tehran Central branch (2009 to 2010).These groups were 200 marital couple students who were randomly selected (100 females and 100 males).The data were collected via questionnaires.

## Research instruments

In this research work, the essential instruments, used for data collections are as follows:

1. SMC questionnaire (*ENRICH*): Consists of 48 questions and measured 12 subscales.
2. Forgiveness family questionnaire (*FFS*): Consists of 40 questions and measured 2 subscales.
3. EI questionnaire (*Bar-on*): Consists of 133 questions and measured 5 general scales, and 15 subscales.

## METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The methods of data analysis are based on a multivariate correlation analysis and analysis of multivariable regression.

**Hypothesis 1:** "There are significant relations between EI and SMC".

To evaluate this hypothesis, Pearson's correlation between EI and SMC are calculated. In addition, the significant test is used for measurement of the correlation coefficients. The results are presented in Table 1. Results of Table 1 show that the correlation coefficient calculated between EI and SMC (0.405) is meaningful at 0.01.The positive relation between EI and SMC shows a direct relationship. Thus, increasing and/or decreasing of EI is directly proportional with increasing and/or decreasing SMC. Calculated coefficient of determination indicates that 16.40% of the variance of SMC can generally be explained by EI.

**Hypothesis 2:** "There are significant relations between EI and forgiveness".

To evaluate this hypothesis, Pearson correlation between EI and forgiveness is calculated. The results are presented in Table 2. Results of Table 2 show that the correlation coefficient calculated between EI and forgiveness in the original and nuclear families are not significant in 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant relation between these two variables.

**Hypothesis 3:** "There are significant relationships between forgiveness and SMC".

In this manner, Pearson correlation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction is calculated. The next significant test is used for measurement of the correlation coefficients. The results are presented in Table 3. Results of Table 3 show that the correlation coefficient calculated between SMC with forgiveness in the original (0.171) and nuclear families (0.243) is meaningful at 0.05. Therefore, the relation between forgiveness and SMC is significant. Thus, increasing of forgiveness can lead to more marital satisfaction and vice versa. Calculated coefficient of determination that indicates 2.92% (in original family) and 5.90% (in nuclear family) of the variance of SMC can generally be explained by forgiveness.

**Table 3.** Results of correlation coefficient between forgiveness and SMC.

| Statistical measure | Number | Correlation coefficient | $\alpha$ | Coefficient of determination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SMC-original family | 200 | 0.171 | 0.015 | 2.92 |
| SMC -nuclear family | 200 | 0.243 | 0.001 | 5.90 |

**Table 4.** Results of multivariable regression model.

| Gender | Model | Change source | $\sum x^2$ | | R | $R^2$ | F | A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | First step | Regression | 5786.65 | 1 | | | | |
| | | Remainder | 84445.99 | 98 | 0.253 | 0.064 | 6.41 | 0.01 |
| | | Total | 990232.64 | 99 | | | | |
| Male | First step | 1) Regression | 27116.32 | 1 | | | | |
| | | 2) Remainder | 62999.64 | 98 | 0.549 | 0.30 | 42.18 | 0.01 |
| | | 3) Total | 90115.96 | 99 | | | | |
| | Second step | 1) Regression | 31638.05 | 2 | | | | |
| | | 2) Remainder | 58477.91 | 97 | 0.593 | 0.35 | 26.24 | 0.001 |
| | | 3) Total | 90115.96 | 99 | | | | |

**Table 5.** Regression probability.

| Group | Model | Variable | B | Standard error | Beta | T | $\alpha$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | First Step | Stable | 65.49 | 17.21 | - | 3.81 | 0.001 |
| | | EI | 0.205 | 0.079 | 0.253 | 2.59 | 0.01 |
| Male | First Step | 1) Stable | 5.92 | 15.01 | - | 0.395 | 0.694 |
| | | 2) EI | 0.466 | 0.072 | 0.549 | 6.49 | 0.001 |
| | Second Step | 1) Stable | -47.59 | 24.35 | - | -1.95 | 0.05 |
| | | 2) EI | 0.429 | 0.07 | 0.505 | 6.06 | 0.001 |
| | | 3) Forgiveness | 1.18 | 0.43 | 0.228 | 2.74 | 0.007 |

**Hypothesis 4:** "There are meaningful contributions of EI and forgiveness in predicting SMC".

To evaluate this hypothesis, step-by-step multivariable regression method is used for the two groups (females and males) separately. The result is in Table 4. According to Table 4, F test for females and males is meaningful at 0.01. Thus, at least one of the variables (EI and forgiveness) has meaningful line relation with SMC in females and males. In addition, $R^2$ calculated is equal to 064, 0.35 for females and males. Therefore, EI and forgiveness variables have more effect in predicting SMC in males based on meaningful relation between predicted variables (EI and forgiveness) and evidence variables (SMC). The results of meaningful model in regression probability are in Table 5.

Based on the results in Table 5, EI can predict SMC in female group. Both EI and forgiveness can predict SMC in male groups. According to regression standard probability, contribution of EI for predicting SMC in the males (0.505) is more than its contribution in the females group (0.253).

## DISCUSSION

In the data analysis, the first hypothesis, "there is significant relationship between EI and SMC" is confirmed. The correlation coefficient calculated between EI with SMC of 0.405 was meaningful at less than 0.01. So, there has been a significant relation between SMC and EI. Thus increasing the EI can lead to more SMC, and vice versa. Calculated coefficient of determination indicates that 16.40% of the variance of SMC can generally be explained by EI. The results of researches of Schutte et al. (2001), Fitness (2001), and Bricker (2005) confirm this conclusion. Their research results showed that there are positive relationships between emotional intelligence and marital communications. Consequently, if couples increase their emotional intelligence ability such as management, control of emotions, self-esteem and awareness, then they are able to get more satisfaction in marital communication. According to the analysis of obtained data, the second hypothesis, "There are significant relation between EI and forgiveness" is not confirmed. Some researchers reported that forgiveness has been related to emotional control and empathic ability (Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000; Fincham, 2007;

Baucom, 1998; Wayne, 2001).

Therefore, the finding of this research is against previous researches. Here, the difference may be because of different cultures or limitations of this study. According to the analysis of obtained data, the third hypothesis "There is significant relation between forgiveness and SMC" is confirmed. The calculated correlation coefficient between marital satisfaction with forgiveness in the original families (0.171) and in nuclear families (0.243) was meaningful at the level of less than 0.05. Therefore, there has been a significant relationship between forgiveness and SMC. This result showed that increasing SMC can lead to increase in forgiveness, and vice versa. Calculated coefficient of determination indicated that forgiveness in the original family (2.92%) and in the nuclear family (5.90%) of the variance of SMC can generally be explained.

In confirmation of this conclusion, one can mention research results of Orathinkal and Vansteenwegan (2006), Fincham et al. (2007), Gordon and Baucom (1998). According to these studies, forgiveness can improve interpersonal relationship. In addition, there is positive correlation between forgiveness and life adjustment. Finally, the results of regression analysis showed F test' for females and males was meaningful at level of less than 0.01. Therefore, at least one of the variables (EI and forgiveness) has meaningful line relation with SMC in females and males. Also, according to meaningful relation between predicted variables (EI and forgiveness) and evidence variable (SMC), both EI and forgiveness could be predicted SMC in male group. In addition, contribution of EI for predicting SMC in the males (0.505) is more than the contribution in the females (0.253). This result is same with the results of some other researchers, such as Joshi and Thingujam (2009), Orathinkal and Vansteenwegan (2006), Fincham (2000), Fincham et al. (2007), Gordon and Baucom (1998), and Denmark et al. (2002). According to their studies, couples with higher scores of emotional intelligence and forgiveness have higher marital satisfaction. Thus, management and control of emotion and awareness of emotions in self and spouse can increase marital satisfaction at the end.

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