

MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED IRANIAN STUDENTS IN
MALAYSIA

LATIFEHOSSADAT MADANIAN

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To my beloved husband (Ahmadreza), son (MohammadMahdi), mother and father.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop a Marital Satisfaction Instrument (MSI) among married Iranian students in Malaysia. This study also identifies the levels of marital satisfaction in terms of demographic traits. Finally, it will develop a Marital Satisfaction (MS) model for this population. So, to satisfy the purpose of this study, mixed method approach, qualitative and quantitative were employed. In the qualitative phase, 15 married Iranian students in Malaysia were interviewed. By utilising thematic analysis, 101 items were extracted from the interviews. In the quantitative phase, four pilot tests were conducted to test items and person reliability, item polarity and dimensionality based on Rasch measurement model. Findings show that MSI has an acceptable item reliability of 0.83, person reliability of 0.95 and dimensionality of 47%. MSI was able to identify that 44% or majority of the participants were in the satisfied level of MS. It was also found that there were differences between MS and demographic traits such as age, number of children and levels of finance. But, there were no significant differences between MS and gender, levels of education and length of marriage. Furthermore, MSI produced 10 most contributing dimensions of MS which include children's issues, conflict resolution, time together, financial issues, personality traits, communication, family of origin, commitment, support, and sexual relationship among this population with a total of 46 items. Thus, this study develops a MS model based on the above dimensions using Rasch analysis. In the MS model, three dimensions: children issues, support and sexual relationship did not emerge in the previous models. By recognising these factors, the administration of Malaysian universities can use the MS model of married Iranian students to accelerate their adaption. Future research can focus on other married international students at local universities. In addition, a comparative study could be conducted between married international students and other cultural contexts.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membangunkan satu Instrumen Kepuasan Perkahwinan (MSI) dikalangan para pelajar Iran yang sudah berkahwin di Malaysia. Ia juga akan mengenal pasti tahap-tahap kepuasan perkahwinan berdasarkan beberapa ciri demografi. Akhirnya, satu model Kepuasan Perkahwinan (MS) akan direka bentuk untuk populasi ini. Maka, bagi memenuhi kehendak kajian, pendekatan kaedah bercampur, kualitatif dan kuantitatif digunakan. Bagi fasa kualitatif, 15 pasang pelajar Iran di Malaysia yang sudah berkahwin telah ditemuduga. Melalui analisa berdasarkan tema, sebanyak 101 perkara telah dirumuskan daripada sesi temuduga. Bagi fasa kuantitatif, empat ujian perintis telah dibuat untuk menguji perkara-perkara kajian dan kebolehpercayaan perseorangan, perkara polarisasi dan dimensi berpandukan model pengukuran Rasch. Keputusan menunjukkan MSI telah mencapai tahap kebolehpercayaan sebanyak 0.83, tahap kebolehpercayaan perseorangan sebanyak 0.95 dan tahap dimensi sebanyak 47%. MSI telah menunjukkan bahawa 44% atau majoriti peserta berada pada tahap kepuasan MS. Terdapat juga beberapa perbezaan diantara MS dan ciri-ciri demografi seperti umur, bilangan anak dan kedudukan kewangan. Tetapi, tiada perbezaan ketara diantara MS dan jantina, tahap pendidikan serta tempoh perkahwinan. Selanjutnya, MSI menyumbang 10 dimensi MS paling utama termasuk isu-isu mengenai kanak-kanak, penyelesaian konflik, masa bersama, hal-hal kewangan, ciri-ciri personaliti, komunikasi, asal usul keluarga, komitmen, sokongan dan hubungan seksual bagi populasi ini yang kesemuanya berjumlah 46 perkara. Maka, kajian ini dapat menghasilkan satu model MS bersandarkan dimensi-dimensi tersebut mengikut analisa Rasch. Untuk model MS tiga dimensi, isu-isu berkaitan kanak-kanak, sokongan dan hubungan seksual tidak diterapkan dalam model-model terdahulu. Dengan mengenali faktor-faktor ini, pihak pentadbiran universiti-universiti di Malaysia boleh menggunakan MS pelajar-pelajar Iran yang sudah berkahwin bagi mempercepatkan adaptasi mereka. Kajian seterusnya boleh menumpukan kepada pelajar-pelajar antarabangsa lain yang telah berkahwin di universiti-universiti tempatan. Disamping itu, satu kajian perbandingan harus dijalankan diantara pelajar-pelajar antarabangsa yang sudah berkahwin dan pelbagai konteks sosial.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>MS</i>	-	Marital Satisfaction
<i>MSI</i>	-	Marital Satisfaction Instrument
<i>IRT</i>	-	Item Respond Theory
<i>SSL</i>	-	Strongly Satisfied Level
<i>SL</i>	-	Satisfied Level
<i>MSL</i>	-	Moderately satisfied Level
<i>MSL</i>	-	Moderately Dissatisfied Level
<i>DL</i>	-	Dissatisfied Level
<i>SDL</i>	-	Strongly Dissatisfied Level

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Although most of countries are moving to modernization, value of marriage continues to remain high in most adult's life (Chiung, 2004). Larson and Holman (1994) believe that marriage is the most significant and essential human connection because it offers main structure for launching a family relationship and rising the next generation. Interestingly, Coontz (2005) proposes that marriage can organize personal and social life in almost all societies. Similarly, Gottman (1994) supports the hypothesis that marriage is associated with improved mental and physical health over time, providing a sense of identity, demonstrating that people tend to be both healthier and happier when they are married. Waghei et al. (2010) and Gottman and Levenson (1992) state that marriage is canonical, sacred and legal contract between a man and a woman in order to have a peaceful, lovely and devoted life. Furthermore, Cotton (1999) states that marriage is a legal, formalize relationship that facilitates association in a network that could potentially provide social support and influences one's well-being. In this regard, Zhange and Hayward (2006) state that marriage can be portrayed as an important social foundation satisfying popular health, an enduring institution, a legally binding contract between two people, and a public statement regarding one's identity.

These functions of marriage have caused its popularity in majority of countries. A study by Nettle (2005), conducted on 24,000 people in Germany, uncovered that marriage was associated with happiness for this population. For

Americans, marriage has been represented as an essential factor of the human relationship (Rosen-Grandon, and Myers, and Hattie, 2004). According to Foster (2008), American people make assure to marry in their lifetime, and see marriage as a pleasing state in society. Surveys conducted by Brubaker and Kimberly (1993), found that 90% of individuals in United State marry in a point of time in their lives. As another instance, Egyptians believe that marriage is the basis of family life, spine of social life and apparatus that support family as a corporate unit (Atta-Alla, 2009). Also, Koreans view marriage as romantic love phenomena than commitment or loyalty to their partners (Kim, 1998). In addition, in Taiwan, marriage continues to be common (Thornton and Lin, 1994).

In Islamic societies, marriage is viewed as the foundation of society and family life. Islamic marriage is structured through legally enforceable rights and duties of both parties that provide a framework for the balance of family life and the fulfillment of both partners (Khan, 2006).

Interestingly, in the Quran, as a holy book of Muslims, marriage is described as a think of love, mercy and harmony. As Allah says:

" He created for you mates out of your own kind, so that you may incline toward them, and He engenders love and tenderness ".

(Q 20:21)

In Iran as a Islamic coutry, marriage been normalized by certain religious rules in both the Islamic and pre-Islamic period Also (Asadinike,2009).

Researchers such as Gonzaga et al. (2007), Wells and Zinn(2004), Rodriguez and Wallenstein (2005) highlight benefits of marriage such as improved finances, family structure, and emotional support family , mental and physical health longevity. Consequently, study of marriage and all procedure related to it, like marital satisfaction (MS) are interesting from an evolutionary perspective (Wendrof et al., 2011 and Lucas et al., 2008).

On the other hand, marital researchers emphasize that experience of all the benefits of marriage might not be for all married couples (William, Sassler and Nicholson, 2008; Waite and Gallaher, 2000). In this regard, Amato (2000) and Hall (2006) acknowledge, although marriage may be a relationship desirable to many, MS is not easily obtained. Additionally, maintaining a marital relationship is a difficult task for many couples in all societies (Whiteman et al., 2007 and Baker, 2009). These are indicated by increasing level of marital dissatisfaction, in particular, divorce ratios dramatically during the past 30 years in all countries (Bradbury et al., 2000; Chiung, 2004; Wilcox et al., 2009; Hughes and Fergusson, 2004).

One of the middle East countries that has encountered high divorce ratios is Iran (Azadarmaki and Bahar, 2006 and Asadinik, 2009). As Rahimi et al. (2009) documented, in 2004, there was 605467 cases of marriage and 604408 cases of divorce. These statistics show only 1161 marriage more than divorce.

Amato (2004) believes that divorce as a social phenomenon causes considerable turmoil among families and can have a devastating impact including extreme sense of loss, anger, depressive symptoms, social isolation, and loss of time at work. In addition, divorced parents can be further isolated from social networks as the demands of single parenthood require the parent to care for children at the expense of social activities.

Interestingly, Parker (2009) indicates that MS has become a significant subject that has been broadly studied over the past 20 years in order to its relationship to divorce. Similarly, Jose and Alfons (2007) state that MS has gone on to become a topic of increasing interest and significance since of its relationship to different parts of human life. Moreover, Bradbury et al. (2000) explored that since the 1990s, there has been a unique and extensive focus on the subject of marital satisfaction from researchers coming from varied settings and fields as contrasted with the academic field on the topic in earlier decades.

Studies show that spouses with high levels of MS are not likely to divorce (Gottman and Krokoff, 1989; Huston et al., 2001). It is pointed out that MS is salient

as it puts causes when factors of divorce are examined. At all, MS is an important issue to marriage longevity, positive influences on the relationship and personal behavior and offering factors for marital success (Halford et al, 2001). In addition, Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton (2001) believe that couples with high level of MS, are less involved with diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and infections. Although there are numerous studies concerning of the MS, relatively few studies have focused on Asian societies (Chiung, 2004). Furthermore, Allendford and Ghimire (2012) acknowledge that there is an increasing notice in MS in non Western contexts.

Also, Bradbury et al. (2000) by reviewing key concepts and empirical advances that have emerged since the 1990s, they suggest that there is a continued need for theoretical progress in understanding the nature and determinants of MS. Importantly, Gottman et al. (2002) even though research on marriage was broadly conducted in the 20th century, there is little marital research among international samples. Particularly, there are the challenges of operationalizing and measuring marital quality in non -Western context (Allendford and Ghimire, 2012).

Regarding to abovementioned, the purpose of this study is to develop a MS instrument in order to identify level of MS and finally develop a MS model for married Iranian students in Malaysia.

1.2 Background of the Study

Immigration is increasing due to globalization (Naghdi, 2010) .According to a UN report (2005) there are 200 million immigrants overseas. Among this group, nearly 10 million are Asian (Myers et al., 2011). A large number of these immigrants are international students.

In recent years, Malaysia has become a host country for Asian immigrants. According to Horany and Aishah (2011), number of international postgraduate students registered in Malaysian universities is rapidly increasing. For instance, number of these students in 2002 was 27,872, while this number increased in 2008 to

90,501 (Yusoff and Chelliah, 2010). These students are come from various societies mostly 40 countries especially from the Middle East and Africa (Horany and Aishah, 2011).

A large number of these international students are Iranian. According to the Iranian Embassy in Malaysia, about 14000 Iranian students were studying in Malaysia in 2011. In academic year 2010-2011, for instance, 1500 out of 2594 international students in University Technology of Malaysia (UTM) were Iranian. Majority of these international students have immigrated to Malaysia with their families (Madanian et al., 2012).

Naghdi (2010) mentions that Iranians have not immigrated to particular countries. These people reside in Japan, Malaysia, Australia, Kuwait, UAE, Norway, Ukraine, India, France, US and Middle East. One of main aims of Iranian for immigration is education. For instance, a study of Iranian immigration to Sweden indicated that the most significant reasons for their immigration between 1994-2006 were education and seeking better life conditions.

Although immigration is associated with an individual growth, it is linked with serious traumas (Shekarchizadeh, 2011; Lee, 2005). In this line, Myers et al. (2011) state that psychological and socio-cultural stresses are associated with moving to other countries and adapting to new context. These stresses are different for married and unmarried international students. As literature shows, immigrant's families experience impressions in their marital relationships such as adjusting to a new culture and way of life, spending little time with spouse and financial obligations (Ben-David and Lavee, 1994; Goff, 2004; Gold, 2006; Katz, Monnier and Libet; 2000; Kline and Liu, 2005). Similarly, Zhou (2000) highlights that when international married students encounter a new culture; their new experiences lead them to changes in their marital relationship. For instance, Da (2003) by conducting a research on married Chinese students in Australia revealed that females by moving to a new context need more support and care from their husbands. Amusingly, Goff (2004) found that not spending enough time together caused a low level of MS among married Chinese students in the US.

On the other hand, one of the significant stresses for international married students is studying in graduate level. Gold (2006) agrees that graduate study is associated with negative impacts on the marital structure. Married international students encounter new circumstances, such as spending less time together, financial stress and lack of skills of communication (Gerstein and Russell, 1990; Legako and Sorenson's, 2000; Meehan and Negy, 2003; Hagedorn, 1999).

Incredibility, one of the main concerns for Iranian immigrants is rising rate of divorce (Asadinik, 2009). According to Tohidi (1993) and Mahdi (1999), among Iranian immigrants in the US, about 66% of their marriages will end in divorce. Hojat et al. (2000) note that family conflicts arise when some members of an immigrant family or couple retain the values and customs of their homeland while the other partner or family members adopt the cultural values and norms of the new host culture. Furthermore, in Sweden, Iranians have the highest rate of divorce after Chileans. Akbari (2008) by implementing research on married Iranian immigrants in Sweden, found that the main reason for selecting divorce was that women, by improving their education, and finding profitable jobs, were becoming more independent. These findings revealed that Iranian women, by facing a new culture, change their traditional values and expectations. Married Iranian immigrants by encountering new context, experience difficulties of adjusting to new roles that increase possibility of divorce. Also employment of women causes possibility of conflicts among Iranian immigrants. The most common outcome of divorce for Iranian immigrant families are behavior and emotional disorders, economic violence of one spouse, loneliness and some negative impact on society (Aghajanian, 1986; Asadinike, 2009).

On the other hand, studies demonstrate that MS is far more informative than divorce statistics as it can provide detailed information on the causes of divorce, the progress of deteriorating marriages, factors that contribute to intact marriages, and longevity of marriages. Since low MS is correlated with divorce (Huston et al., 2001) and provides more detailed information about marriages, including what contributes to successful marriages, literature has focused on understanding factors influence MS (Mahoney et al., 2001).

There are several existing instruments for measuring level of MS and identifying factors of MS. Locke-Wallace marital adjustment test (Locke and Wallace, 1957) was one of the earliest instrument developed with fifteen items that is now somewhat in conceptualization. Although this instrument has an acceptable validity of .90, it was developed only for non Eastern couples with a range age 30. Furthermore, the Dyadic adjustment scale (Spanier, 1976) with a validity of .96 was developed for Western countries. Surprisingly this instrument with 32 items included married and divorced participants. Thus, whilst widely used suffers from the culture bias. The spouse check List (Weiss and Margolin, 1977) comprises 400 items and is therefore, tedious to complete. In addition, the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1997) is the other very long inventory, developed for US population. This inventory is consisted of 150 items with 13 dimensions. The scale used in this inventory is just false and true. This inventory is in general, makes available an outline of conflicts among spouses (Bagarozzi and Sperry, 2004). Furthermore, Kansas marital inventory developed by Schumm et al. (1986) for Korean population. However, this inventory consists only three items. ENRICH instrument is the other instrument for measuring level of MS that was developed by Olson et al. (1983). This instrument consists 165 items under 20 dimensions that was applied for United State population. However, this inventory contains a large number of extra items. Another MS instrument is Area of Change Questionnaire (ACQ) that was built up by Robert Weiss et al. (1973). This instrument is developed for non- Eastern population to evaluate the parts of vary preferred by the persons in marital 's relationships. This instrument is consisted of 34 items.

Although the scale mentioned above, receive a good validity and reliability estimation, have not generally been psychometrically constructed and consequently tend to contain a large number of unnecessary items. Importantly, most of these instruments are developed in the United State, consequently introducing a culture bias into assessment (Rust et al., 2010). As Luca et al., (2008) emphasize the decisive factors of MS may be vastly different for various cultures.

The purpose of this study is to devlope a MS instrument for married Iranian students in Malaysia in order to address shrcoming of existing MS instrumnets.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that marriage is precise to MS (Stack and Eshlemn, 1998; Waite, 2000). According to Allendorf and Ghimire (2012), quality of marriage is an important aspect of family life. In other words, it shapes people's health and well-being. There are a large body of studies related to marriage and all process within this relationship like MS. While majority of these studies exist concerning the MS, relatively few studies have focused on non- Western countries. Remarkably, Luca et al. (2008) emphasize that the indicators of MS are different based on distinctions posited by cultural and perspectives on marriage. From a cultural point, MS might increase a marriage fulfills culturally determined expectations husbands and wives. Therefore, the function of an adequate MS instrument is highlighted in order to identify which factors are most contributing across various cultures.

Since the concept of MS is different among various cultures, measuring MS encounters many challenges. For instance, the majority of existing MS instruments such as Locke- Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (1959), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), MSI-R (Snyder, 1977), Enrich (Olson et al., 1983) and KMSS (Schumm et al., 1986) are developed in Western countries, in particular, United State.

Although these instruments have an acceptable validity, they introduce culture bias within measurement (Rust et al., 2010). For instance, KMSS (Schumm et al., 1986) developed for Korean population, is the shortest inventory with only three items. Obviously, this instrument suffers culture bias. Moreover, Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) developed in American sample with 32 items, highlights aspects such as kissing which are not main indicators of MS in Asian cultures. Unsurprisingly, Iranian immigrant families with an Asian context, endure emotional and mental conflicts which are unique to their experience as immigrant. Although there are a large number of the studies in the literature regarding immigrant families over the last 20 years, there is no large research about marital life of Iranian immigrant families so far (Asadinike, 2009).

Although, the rate of married Iranian students in Malaysia has dramatically increased, there are a few studies to identify dimensions of MS among this population. In this regard, Horany and Aishah (2011) bring to light lack of research on international married students in Malaysia. Furthermore, the majority of existing MS instruments have been developed based on non- Muslim context or not for Islamic culture. Due to avoid culture biases, the development of a MS instrument based on context of married Iranian immigrants seems to be necessary. Therefore, the target of this study is to develop a MS instrument for non-Western societies. This instrument tackles with all shortcomings to identify the factors of MS based on perspective of married Iranian students in Malaysia.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To develop a valid instrument for measuring marital satisfaction among married Iranian students in Malaysia
2. To develop a high reliability marital satisfaction instrument for married Iranian students in Malaysia
3. To identify dimensionality for measuring constructs of marital satisfaction instrument among married Iranian students in Malaysia
4. To develop a suitable scale measuring for marital satisfaction instrument among married Iranian students in Malaysia
5. To identify level of marital satisfaction for married Iranian students in terms of demographic traits (gender, age, course undertaken, level of finance, number of children and length of marriage)

6. To develop a model for predicting marital satisfaction among married Iranian students in Malaysia

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions in which this study has been designed to answer are:

RQ1: What is a valid instrument for measuring marital satisfaction among married Iranian students in Malaysia?

RQ2: What is a high reliability marital satisfaction instrument for married Iranian students in Malaysia?

RQ3: What is dimensionality for measuring constructs of marital satisfaction instrument among married Iranian students in Malaysia?

RQ4: What is a suitable scale measuring for marital satisfaction instrument among married Iranian students in Malaysia?

RQ5: What are the level of marital satisfaction for married Iranian students in terms of demographic traits (gender, age, course undertaken, level of finance, number of children and length of marriage)?

RQ6: What model can best predict marital satisfaction among married Iranian students in Malaysia?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

To specify the study of marital life to one particular theory would be very confining in explaining the complexities of marital relationships. Today, marital life

and family studies encompass a variety of approaches, including the blending of theoretical frameworks when exploring marital relationships. Regarding to the target of this study, the researcher utilized a combination of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), Crisis Theory (Hill, 1949) and Item Response Theory (IRT) in order to drive the research questions. IRT is fundamental of Rasch measurement analysis for constructing MSI. By combining these theories, the researcher tried to better understand the MS among married Iranian students in Malaysia. In the following sections these theories will be discussed.

1.6.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory that is created by Bowlby (1969) disputes when infants are parted from their initial caregiver for extensive lengths of time, they experience a series of emotional responses that reveal themselves in three different ways: protest, despair, and detachment. Hence children build up working styles or schemas about the nature of close relationships including how their partners will respond to their requests and how they themselves should engage in their relationships. These working styles are considered to be guidelines for the partners to select individuals to be their couples whom considered their working styles and beliefs for their close relationships (Frazier et al., 1996).

Importantly, working styles commonly remain constant during life as first skills and knowledge that make expectations for marital relationships (Waters et al., 2000). Thus, initial relationships with caregivers in childhood are thought to be enduring vulnerabilities of spouses to bring marriage to high or low level of MS. Ainsworth et al. (1978) mentioned three types of attachment styles: secure, avoidant and anxious.

1.6.1.1 Secure Attachment

Infants, whose caregivers are warm and quick to respond to their attempts to bring out physical protection, safety, and emotional support, develop working styles of their partners as dependable, trustworthy, and supportive and styles of themselves as capable and competent individuals who have the capacity to succeed in close relationships. This type of working is commonly viewed as “secure.” couples with a secure working style thought to have been more positive attitude on themselves and the world around them, as well as a more positive lens through which they interpret spouses’ actions. Couples with secure working styles may therefore, interpret the actions and verbal cues of close friends, marital partners, and acquaintances more positively than individuals with an insecure working style (Madanian and Syed Mohamed Shafeq, 2011) . This positive attribution bias is thought to result in more positive assessments of relationships. In this proposition, positive marital attributions have been consistently linked with MS.

Furthermore, when dealing with conflict, spouses who express their relationships as highly secure are capable of displaying emotional regulation that results in more positive outcomes than couples who express their marriage as insecure (Kobak and Hazan, 1991). A study by Rholes et al. (1998) indicated that during conflict, female spouses with a secure attachment style exhibited better affect regulation and distress tolerance by displaying lower levels of anxiety and negative behaviors. Male spouses with a secure attachment style behaved toward their partners in a manner that was warmer and more supportive in contrast to men spouses with avoidant attachment styles (Simpson et al., 1992). According to previous research, couples who are securely attached are more willing to use a problem solving approach in relationships and are more willing to compromise (Corcoran and Mallinckrodt, 2000).

1.6.1.2 Avoidant Attachment

Infants whose parents are cold and rejecting their physical and emotional needs develop working styles of partners as undependable, untrustworthy, and unsupportive and develop styles of themselves as incompetent individuals who are likely to fail in their relationships. These types of working styles are generally regarded as being “insecure” or avoidant. Couples with an avoidant internal working style are thought to have a more negative outlook on themselves and the world around them, and a more pessimistic lens through which they interpret spouses’ actions. Couples who are avoidant may therefore, interpret partners’ actions more negatively. Since they are uncomfortable with closeness, become more aloof or controlling in order to maintain distance when they perceive their partner drawing closer emotionally (Babcock et al., 2000). This negative attribution bias is thought to result in more negative evaluations of close relationships.

Avoidant couples report lower levels of hurt, fear, and general distress because they have learned to focus their attention away from these events (Feeney, 2005). Of all attachment styles, these couples are most averse to feedback. They report more indifference, less positive reactions to feedback, less openness to feedback, and more estrangement from partners (Madanian and Shafeq, 2011).

Therefore, spouses with avoidant working style may evaluate their marriage more negatively, resulting in less MS. Couples with an avoidant attachment style are the least likely to compromise and withdraw from conflict resolution (Johnson, 2003). Besides, couples with avoidant attachment have more passive manner and do not exhibit a great deal of validation or support toward their partner or contribute constructively toward problem solving.

1.6.1.3 Anxious Attachment

An anxious attachment resulted from a mother who was, for a variety of reasons, many of them unintentional, inconsistent with her responses and level of

sensitivity to her infant's needs. Feeney (2005) pointed out that anxious attachment is also referred to as a preoccupied attachment. Individuals with this attachment style may be high in relationship anxiety, report more negative affect such as hurt, general distress, shame and fear. Spouses with anxious attachment are worried about love and abandonment of partners. They doubt whether they are valuable or supported by their spouses. This situation that is associated by threat and worried may result negative beliefs, furious protests and jealousy.

Additionally, couples with this style become uncomfortable when they perceive being distance from their partner and therefore, may react with angry or stubborn behavior in order to reengage them that leads to less level of MS. Also anxious attachment cause outcomes such as behavior of disorder, aggression, lack of relationship, negative picture of self and antisocial attitude. In line with this, study by Davila and Bradbury (2001) acknowledged the couples concerned with abandonment and love worthiness are more likely to remain in dissatisfy marriages. Furthermore, couples who were anxiously attached were shown to dominate the conflict resolution process and to display hostility (Corcoran and Mallinckrodt, 2000).

Moreover, Banse (2004) found that it is not attachment style of one's partner that impacts one's MS, but their own attachment style. Individual's relationship satisfaction is negatively influenced by the anxious attachment of their partner. According to above mentioned theory, this study suggests process of leading couples to MS in light of attachment theory (Figure 1).

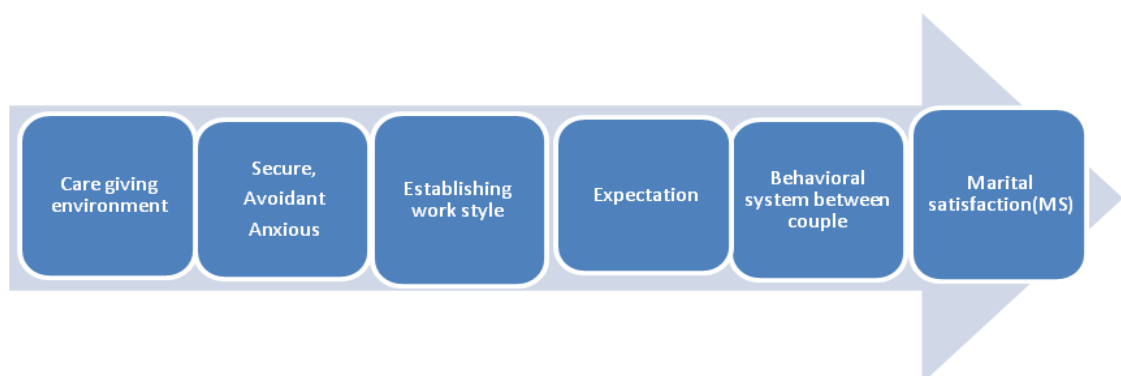


Figure 1.1 Process of Leading Couples to Marital Satisfaction in light of Attachment Theory (Madanian and Syed Mohamed Shafeq, 2011)

1.6.1.4 Islamic view and Attachment Styles

Although this basic procedure shows the process of leading couple to MS based on attachment theory, but there is a dire need to emphasize role of Islamic attitudes upon attachment styles in the process of leading couples to MS. It is obvious that first caregivers are predictors of later relationship. A research conducted by counseling centre of Tehran University (2010), suggests alternative view that children who are raised with religious parent will have secure attachment style and find initial reliance to Allah. These persons provide necessary conditions and readiness for relying to Allah even though they are in difficult situation. Consequently, low tension and high level of MS in their marital life is created. Related to important role of the first caregivers, there are many Islamic words. For example Ali, Cousin of the Prophet Mohammad says:

“Be careful with who will milk your children because your children will grow with the milk.”

(Pazhoohandeh, 2011)

This word shows vital role of mothers and first caregiver that will have a remarkable impact on behavioral and emotional system of the children. Furthermore, Sadegh as one of grandsons of Prophet Mohammad says:

“An infant who is born in the family of believers and worshipers, steps in the direction of welfare.”

(Pazhoohandeh, 2011)

Similarly, Heidari (2006) found that the mothers with high level of spirituality and Islamic beliefs enable to establish a secure environment for their infants. Interestingly, Pazhoohandeh (2011) as an Islamic counselor found that persons with secure attachment style are connected to Allah. Additionally, this researcher emphasizes that couples with secure attachment are subsequently religious

and faithful. They will be able to resolve their marital conflict by the belief to Allah. Indeed, blessing is result of the belief in Allah that manifests function of proximity-seeking in attachment.

Interestingly, Tabrizi (2008) acknowledged that ablution of mothers during breast feeding result secures feeling. Also, he pointed out that reading Quran, praying, contemplation and remembrance of Allah (Zikr) by parents besides children will be associated to personal well-being and a healthy life.

Furthermore, attachment style has impact on an individual's ability and willingness to forgive their partner. According to Kachadourian et al. (2004) an individual with a secure attachment style is more likely to forgive someone. For instance, Kane (2006) believes that secure attachment involves couples to appear more confident in relationships and show the most steadiness's in self-esteem overtime. They perceive their partners as more forgiving. In contrast, couples with anxious attachment are often seen as being less forgiving to their partners (Vuncannon, 2007). Also Pazhoohandeh (2011) mentions that in *insecure* attachment styles, mothers are lack of stability of behavior and have failure in three qualities: available, acceptor and accountable.

Based on Islamic view, generally children with insecure style are pessimistic to their creator that results lack of trust to other and feeling of aggression. Therefore, couples with anxiety attachment, have doubt to each other and high level of unresolved marital conflict that leads to decreasing level of MS (Madanian and Syed Mohamed Shafeq, 2011).

1.6.2 Crisis theory

The crisis theory is developed based on research by Hill (1949). Hill notes that stress events have impact on quality of life. These events in turn are influenced by resources of individuals and their definition from the crisis. These ideas were formulated into what Hill (1958) called the ABC-X model. The encountered event

or stressor is considered to be factor A. The events are whatever that form changes in a family such as transition to parenting, marriage, illnesses (McGoldrick and Carter, 2003). Next factor is resources of family that are known as factor B. These resources refer to personal characteristics, family of origin, adaptability, personality traits and quality of communication in the family. Factor C refers to how people describe a stressful event. The perception of people regarding a stressful event is influenced by the family's values, past experiences, customs, religion (Crosbie-Burnett, 1989). Lastly, the resulting degree of stress or crisis is described as factor X. Factor X is considered the result factor. A crisis event is the alter in a family's stability.

This study adopted this theory to explain level of MS among married Iranian students in Malaysia. This adoption proposes immigration as a factor, attachment style, family of origin and personality traits as B factor, their definition from immigration as C factor and changing level of MS as X factor.

1.6.3 Linkage between Attachment and Crisis Theory

There is a linkage between these two theories. Married Iranian students by coming to a new context, encounter new stresses that will have impact on their marital life. In this line, resources and perceptions that they have towards new stresses influence their quality of marital life. This study considers attachment styles as resources. Thus role of attachment styles will be highlighted. Couples with secure attachment have a high adaptability than couples with insecure attachment styles. Thus their marital life will be influenced. Consequently people with various attachment styles will manage stressful events in a different way. Consequently they will have different level of MS.

1.6.4 Item Response Theory

Item response theory (IRT) is a general framework for specifying mathematical functions that describe the interactions of persons and test items. It has

a long history, but its popularity is generally attributed to the work of Lord and Rasch starting in the 1950s and 1960s. IRT is a model for expressing the association between an individual's response to an item and the underlying latent variable (often called "ability" or "trait") being measured by the instrument. This theory emphasizes that the performance of person in a test can be explained by one or more features, known as trait or characteristic. IRT shows the relationship between performances on the item with the ability to assume there is a basis of test performance. This relationship is described by a function that is increasing, known as item characteristic curve (ICC). ICC requires that participants with higher ability have a higher probability to respond properly item compared to participants who have a lower capacity.

Rasch measurement model is generally the same as the measurement of a parameter in IRT or also known as Latent Trait Theory. The Rasch model is a mathematical formula that specifies the form of the relationship between persons and the items that operationalize one construct. This model is not primarily concerned about total scores and all items are not treated as equal contributors to the total score. That is, difficult items are weighted more highly than easier items when estimating levels of knowledge or ability.

In other words, Rasch model focuses on the pattern of item responses. A conceptual starting point is the assertion that some people have more of the attribute being measured than others, and some items require more of it to be completed successfully. Success on a difficult item implies a probable success on an easier item, and an even higher probability of success on a much easier item. A failure of the responses to confirm this hierarchical structure is regarded as a failure of measurement. Although estimates of person ability and item difficulty are derived from an analysis of a particular test administration, both people and items are viewed as samples drawn from a larger population: people from the population of plausible test takers, and items from the universe of items that could potentially be employed to measure that construct. Furthermore, the candidate score is independent of item difficulty (Hambleton and Swaminathan, 1991). Also the analysis does not require strict parallel tests to assess reliability.

Rasch measurement model used to analyze the data from instruments to measure the variables that cannot be measured directly, such as the characteristics of ability, attitude and personality. This measurement model is used primarily in areas related to psychometric theory and techniques of measurement in psychology. This model shows the probability of the student's ability to measure item difficulty (Wright and Masters, 1982). According to Linacre (2002), Rasch model is able to convert the qualitative data to linear measurement. It converts raw data into a ratio scale on a common interval scale.

The model assumes that respondents with high ability have the probability to answer more questions correctly than respondents with lower ability (Bond and Fox, 2001). Rasch converts raw data into logit scores. Logits, will be compared with the linear model for the probability of success. Log denotes natural log of the ratio form (Smith, 2000). As Bond and Fox (2007) stated, reliability is the consistency of person ordering if the test be repeated in another parallel test to measure same construct. The sample size in the Rasch model is smaller than the other IRT models. Wright and Stones (1979) suggested a minimum sample of items is 20 and for the candidates is 200, while the Linacre (2002) proposes 50 persons as sample are sufficient. When using this model, it is necessary to assume that all items in a test are one-dimensional. Hambleton et al. (1991) says, one-dimensional means that the existence of a dominant feature affecting the performance of the candidate in a test. Accordingly, this study is to produce empirical evidence of the validity and reliability of MS instrument (MSI) using Rasch Measurement Model. Interestingly, Rasch can effortlessly help a researcher to decide whether it is the person or item that needs to be omitted.

In the Rasch Measurement Model, the validity of an instrument can be identified by reference to the main analyzes such as item polarity, item and person map, misfit and infit items, item and person separation, dimensionality and scale calibration (Bond and Fox, 2007). These concepts will be defined in Chapter 3. Figure 1.2 illustrates theoretical framework of this study.

1.7 Significance of the Study

In general, the significance of a research study in an educational setting is to make contribution to the basic knowledge relevant to an education theory, the solution of educational problems and the development of methodology tools used in education or research. Based on similar perspective, the findings of this study are useful for researcher's own practice as well as for other researchers in the same field. This study develops a MSI, suitable for married Iranian students in Malaysia in order to measure level of MS in terms of demographic traits (age, gender, number of children, and Course undertaken, length of marriage and level of finance). In addition, this instrument can explore the most importance factors contribute to MS among this population.

In addition, this instrument can be applied for other international Muslim married students in Malaysian universities. Also this instrument may produce new and surprising finding to marriage counselors, marital therapists in international universities in Malaysia. Furthermore, findings of this study contribute to body of literature related to MS in general and particularly married Iranian immigrants.

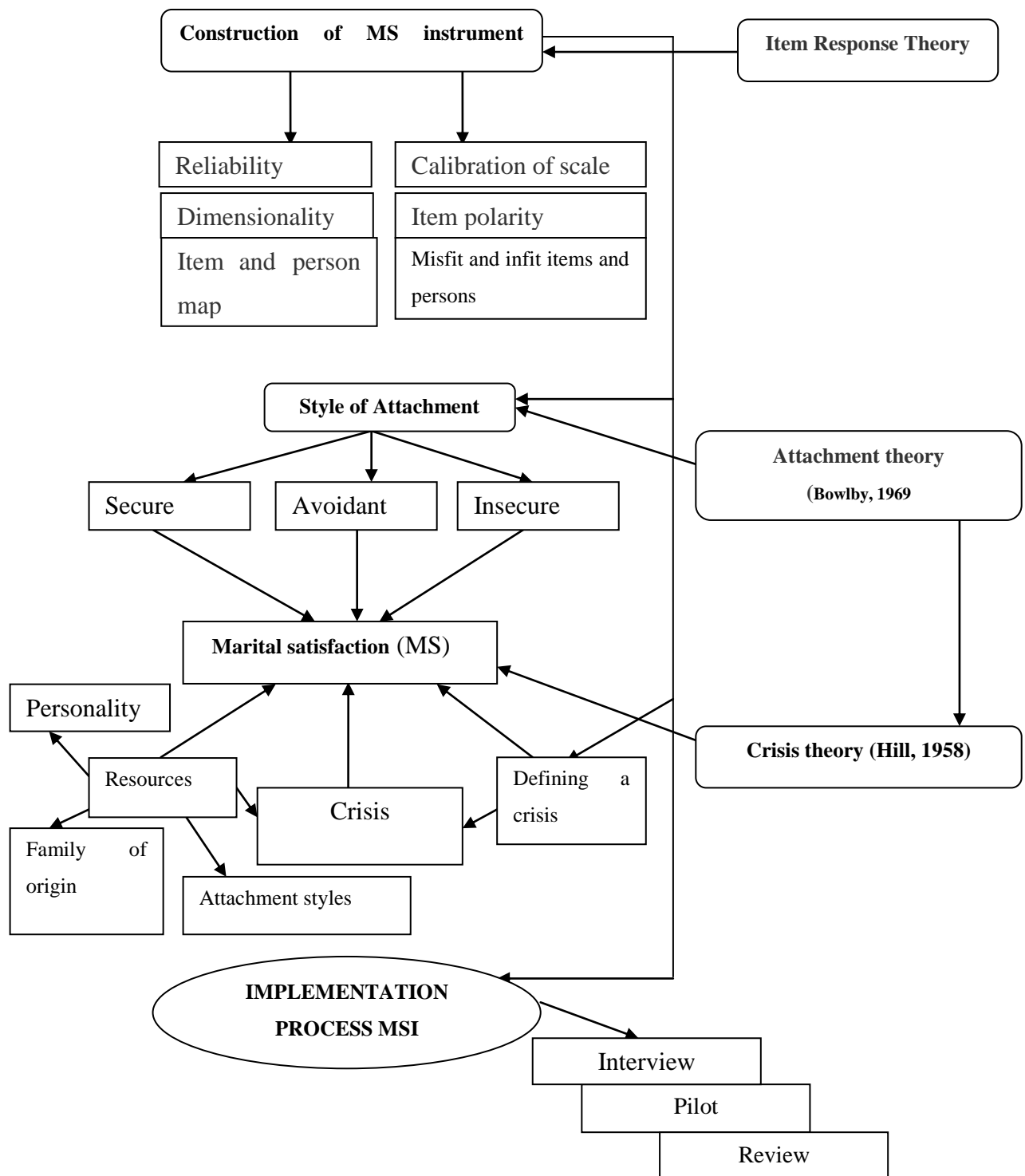


Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework of Study

1.8 Scope of the Study

This research focuses on married Muslims Iranian students in four public universities of Malaysia (UM, UPM, UTM, UKM) in academic year 2011, 2012 who were married for at least one year. This research had two stages. In first stage, qualitative data gathering was conducted by interview with 15 married Iranian students in four public Malaysian universities in order to extract main themes of MS. In second stage, an MS instrument was developed based on the themes extracted of interviews during four pilot studies in order to measure level of MS and identify most contributor factors of MS among this group. Analyzing of data was implemented by Rasch measurement model and non parametric techniques.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

While this study may be rewarding in constructing a MSI for married Iranian students in Malaysia, measuring their level of MS and identify significant factors of MS among them, it is unwise to generalize its finding and conclusions to all Iranian Muslims married students in Malaysia. The findings of this study are considered in light of several possible limitations. First, the constructed items are drawn from a comparatively small purposive criterion sample of students in qualitative stage who were specially chosen. Therefore, participants were not fully reflecting diverse characteristics of Iranian Muslims students' population. Second, the constructed instrument is just used for married Iranian students who moved to Malaysia. In other words, this instrument is not useable for other married Iranian students that immigrated to other countries. Finally, since this instrument is constructed based on Islamic context, finding could not be generalized for other married international students.

1.10 Definitions of Terms

In the context of this study, there are several distinct terms that are important. These terms are defined as follows:

Marital Satisfaction (MS)

In this research, MS is a special case of relationship satisfaction, and is the degree to which spouses in marriage assesses their approval of different aspects of their marital relationship. For measuring level of MS among sample of this study, an instrument will be developed (MSI).

Married Iranian Students

In this study married Iranian students are spouses who are consisted by below characteristics: Muslim, married for at least one year, students in one of four public universities of Malaysia, first married, legally marriage certification and studying in academic years 2011-2012.

Marital Satisfaction Instrument

This study develops a MS instrument by utilizing Rasch measurement model among married Iranian students in Malaysia for two purposes. First, identify level of MS among this population in terms of demographic traits (age, gender, course undertaken, number of children and level of finance). Second, develops a MS model in order to investigate which factors are most contributing of MS among participants of current study.

1.11 Summary

The introductory chapter of this thesis presents the background of the research on the field of study. It also outlines the problem statement, objectives of study, research questions, significant of the study and theoretical framework. In addition, it provides important definitions of key terms of the study. The next chapter will review literature and history in the field of MS. Next chapter is devoted to a critical review of MS studies. The review of the literature will starts by discussing issues related to marriage, benefits of marriage, MS, predictors of MS , and models of MS and inventories related to measuring MS. Chapter 3 will discuss an overview of the methods for the study and the research design as well as the sampling frame for the study. The chapter commences with a discussion on the research framework and research methodology. Chapter 4 will provide the findings of study. At the end of this dissertation, in Chapter 5, a discussion of the conclusions along with a discussion on the findings and contributions of this study will be presented. In addition, the direction for further research will be discussed.

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