



## PERSONALITY AND MARITAL SATISFACTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### **Abstract**

*Recently, the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction has been in limelight and grown substantially by researchers and psychologists. Personality variables have been a major focus of research studying couple's relationship to explain and predict relationship quality and stability. Global assessments of personality have shown that the personality characteristics found among satisfied couples are different from those found among dissatisfied couples. Scholars have used a variety of paradigms to investigate the relationship between the Big Five dimensions and satisfaction in an intimate relationship. It was found that personality dispositions such as emotional instability or neuroticism created 'enduring vulnerabilities' that affected how couples adapted to stressful experiences and that this adaptation impacted general satisfaction in the relationship.*

**Key Words:** *Personality, Marital Satisfaction, Neuroticism.*

### **Introduction**

Personality is defined as an enduring emotional, interpersonal, experiential, attitudinal and motivational style that explains individual's behavior in different situations (McCrae & Costa, 1989). Many contemporary relationship models reserve a special place for how individual differences might affect both daily relationship function and long-term relationship quality (Karney & Bradbury, 1995, Ozer and Benet-Martinez, 2006). Throughout the 20th century, personality psychology has tried to identify and understand how basic, cross-culturally robust personality dimensions influence individual's thoughts, feelings, and behavior in important life contexts.

As early researchers began to study differences between happy and unhappy marriages, their work was deeply influenced by personality theory, and generally addressed the question "are some personality traits more ideally suited to successful marriage?" (Gottman & Notarius, 2002). However, there is current resurgence of interest in the influence of more stable intrapersonal factors on marital satisfaction, in part because of the difficulty in predicting marital satisfaction from couple conflict alone and a growing recognition that interpersonal processes may be influenced by underlying personality traits (Gattis et al. 2004, Karney & Bradbury, 1997).

Personality variables have been a major focus of research studying couple's relationship to explain and predict relationship quality and stability. It is therefore possible that the strength of the relationships between different personality traits and marital satisfaction that have been reported in previous researches may not accurately reflect the unique impact that each of these traits exert when they are examined in combination. In 1997, Botwin and his colleagues noted this limitation by commenting that the literature lacked studies in which an array of personality factors were used to predict marital satisfaction, and that research based on the five-factor model might be one step towards obtaining a broader view of the relationship between personality and marital satisfaction.

Various psychologists have explained how the basic foundation of personality is laid and may influence later marital relationships.

### **Psychoanalytic Theory**

Psychoanalysis is a general theory of individual human behavior and experience. Neither intimacy nor individual development can exist alone. According to Freud (1949) the first five years of a child lay a base for the personality. A human being's first intimate relationship is the mother-child relationship; it initiates a human being into a life-long process of mutual adaptation between the child, his or her intimate relationship partners and the broader social environment.

### **Jung Theory of Personality**

Jung considered marriage as a conscious psychological relationship and a highly complex structure made up of objective and subjective factors mostly of heterogeneous nature. Jung's theory (1923/1971) suggested that a person is born with a certain temperamental disposition and with perhaps a greater natural ability in some areas of personality than in others. As one grows up, one chooses (whether consciously or unconsciously) to develop some attributes and neglect or repress others. In either case, as time goes on, one's true personality emerges (usually by early adulthood) in terms of attitudes towards the world and functional preferences about how to perceive the world. Jung always maintained that personality does not remain the same but it changes according to situation.



### **Psychosocial Theory**

Erikson (1950) describes personality development as a hierarchically ordered sequence of stages which progress from initial narcissistic involvement with oneself, through stages of identification and socialization, to increasing individuation and establishment of an individual identity. He accounted for the social and environmental influences on personality and argued that the young adult needed not only gratification but also psychological intimacy in order to form the long-lasting bonds needed for the establishment of marital life.

### **Loevinger Theory of Ego Development**

Loevinger (1976) has conceptualized ego development as a staged organization of experience. She argues that each of the nine stages involves a basic structural change, a fundamental shift in the way the individual experiences and understands his relationships and his world. Ego development begins in infancy with understanding that you are an individual separate from your mother. She describes full ego development as having an autonomous self, a complex concept that includes being a self-reliant person who accepts oneself and others as multifaceted and unique. She suggests that few adults never achieve full ego development, but strive towards that goal for life time. Thus, Loevinger echoes Erikson's Theory that individuals require a clear sense of themselves before they can form truly intimate relationship with others.

However, Loevinger concluded from her research that because most people spend a lifetime developing this ability, the progress from one stage to the next is determined by an individual's psychological clock, not by chronological age or the social environment. Loevinger does not assume that all adults move through the sequence of stages she describes. What she proposes is that if an individual's personality changes, it will change in a particular sequence, moving from dominance by social roles and conventionality to increasing individuality and autonomy and then towards increasing awareness of inner complexities.

### **George Valliant (1977) Theory of Defense Mechanisms**

He proposed a theory of adult development based on the maturation of defenses. He opined that there is a shift between early and middle adulthood toward the greater use of "mature" defense mechanisms. This shift is another facet of increased openness to self, since more mature defense mechanism generally involve less self-deception, more conscious awareness of one's anxieties and fears. Costa & McCrae (1994) found that college students when compared with those in their 30's or older were higher in impulsiveness, vulnerability, anxiety, depression and lower in discipline & trust. Thus, with increasing age, people use more mature defense mechanism than immature defenses.

**Roger Gould (1978)** sees adult personality as progressing through a series of transformation in which self-concepts are reformulated and conflicts resolved as the adult gives up various illusions and myths held over from childhood. Gould sees this process as freeing oneself from childhood restraints and establishing a sense of personal identity.

Apart from these, personality psychology has three overarching goals: (a) to identify the basic dimensions (the "building blocks") of personality, (b) to understand their structure, and (c) to document the ways in which they systematically affect how individuals think, feel, and behave in important social contexts (Clark & Watson, 1999). Most of the above mentioned theorists opined that an individual's personality goes through various stages during the course of its development while few other psychologists have viewed personality by the following approaches:

1. Affective disposition approach
2. Motivational systems approach
3. Contextual approach
4. Trait adjective approach

### **Affective Disposition Approach**

The *affective disposition approach* has identified two emotionality based dimensions that are conceptually and empirically related to extraversion and neuroticism (Tellegen, 1985). It holds that individual differences in affectivity (emotionality) form three basic dimensions, which he labeled positive emotionality, negative emotionality, and constraint. Watson & Clark (1993) referred to these three dimensions as positive temperament, negative temperament, and disinhibition. People who score high on positive emotionality experience greater positive affect and approach life in a more positive, optimistic manner. Those who score high on negative emotionality experience more negative emotions and approach life in a more guarded, cautious manner. Thus people with positive emotionality would tend to have better relationships.

### **Motivational System Approach**

The *motivational system approach*, has identified two conceptually similar dimensions- one that facilitates behavior and produces positive affect (approach motivation), and another that inhibits behavior and generates negative affect (Panksepp,



1998). Indeed, Gray (1970, 1990) claimed that basic individual differences exist within two separate biologically based systems, one that promotes behavior and positive affect (Behavior activation system or BAS); and one that inhibits behavior and generates negative affect (Behavioral inhibition system or BIS); it reflects general anxiety (avoiding possible punishments). Measures of emotional positivity are located closer to the extraversion axis, whereas measures of emotional negativity fall nearer to the neuroticism axis (Watson et al. 1999). Hence individuals in the former category are more predisposed to have better relations.

### **Contextual Approach**

A fairly recent addition to the personality literature is the contextual approach, which considers socio-cultural and environmental influences that may affect how personality develops across the life span. Social roles, life-events and social environments change during the life-contexts, and such factors have been suggested as important influences on basic personality traits (Hogan, 1996). Individuals are seen as active agents who play an important role in selecting and shaping their environments, and these environments, in turn affect their personalities. Individuals develop in a dynamic, continuous and reciprocal process of interaction, or transaction with their environment (Caspi, 1998). It is suggested that both personality and the environment are subject to change over longer periods, such as months or years (Asendorpf and Wilpers, 1998). These changes are influenced by both the individual's own personality and the social relations in which they are involved. For example, a dyadic relationship between spouses can be seen as a transactional or dynamic interactional relationship. The quality of the marital relationship can influence and be influenced by the personalities of both spouses. For example, Robins, Caspi and Moffitt, (2002) found that not only did antecedent personality characteristics predict social relations, but social relations also predicted changes in personality overtime. When individuals were involved in romantic relationships that were maladaptive, their negative emotionality increased overtime.

Social relations can also influence personality change in middle adulthood, it was assumed that personality was essentially fixed and unchanging by age thirty (plaster hypothesis; Costa and McCrae, 1994). Recent empirical evidence suggests that personality does reliably change in middle adulthood (Van Aken, et al. 2006). For example, marital tensions and divorce predict changes in dominance and masculinity/femininity in women during early and middle adulthood (Roberts, Helson, and Klohnen, 2002). Although there appear to be personality-relationship transactions, Asendorpf and Van Aken (2003) found that surface characteristics (e.g. loneliness, self-concept) are more likely to be influenced by social relations than are more core personality characteristics (e.g., Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness).

Another approach to understanding how social relations may influence personality change in adulthood is the Social Investment Theory, which attempts to understand that individuals make commitments to important social institutions or roles such as work or marriage. Successful fulfillment of these roles often demands certain behaviors and characteristics, e.g. increased emotional stability, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Thus, as role quality increases, individuals should exhibit increases in the corresponding traits that the role promotes (Wood and Roberts, 2006).

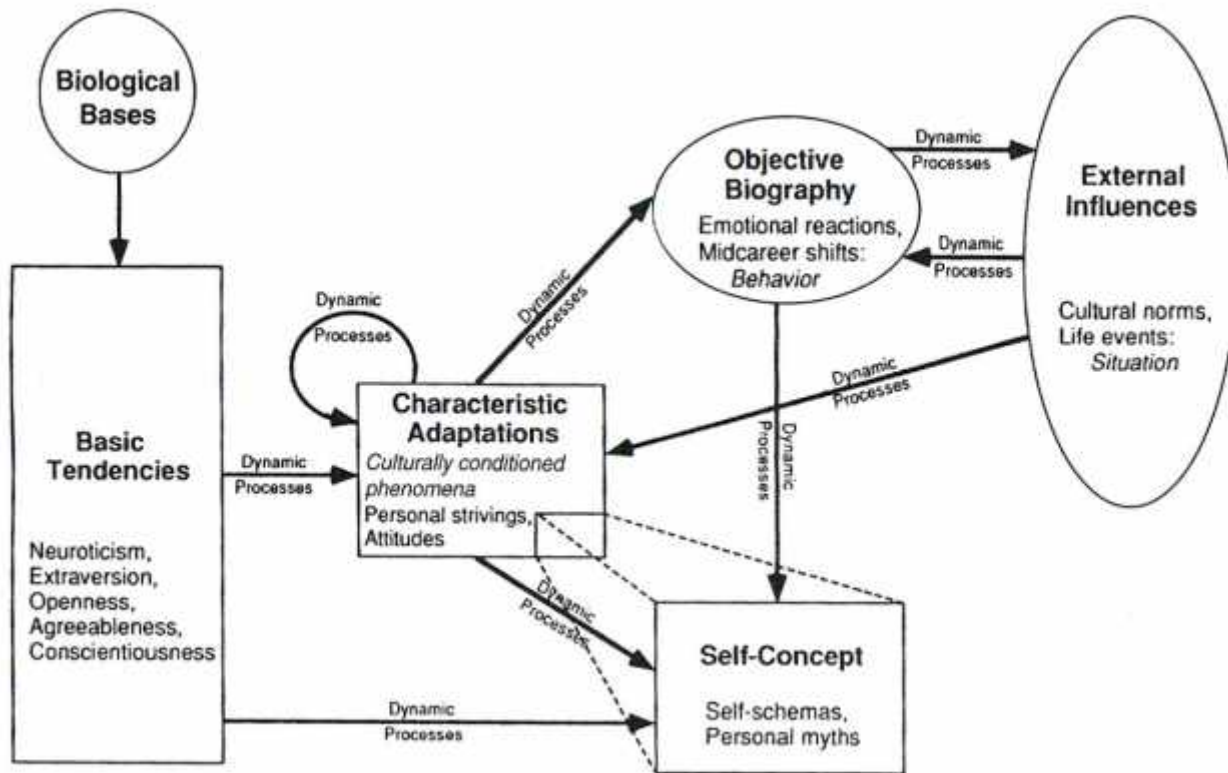
Aside from these normative social role changes, other theories suggest possible changes in personality traits after age 30. People get better at emotion regulation as they grow older and thus tend to have fewer negative emotional experiences; this means persistently declining levels of neuroticism with age. Socio emotional selectivity theory (Cartensen, Issacowitz & Charles, 1999) predicts that as adult progress into middle and later adulthood they are less and less interested in gathering new information and in meeting new people, implying declining openness and extraversion and more interested in relationship with close others, implying increasing agreeableness.

### **Trait Adjective Approach**

Common to most personality psychologists is the view that individuals possess underlying structures (or traits) that result in a tendency to respond to the environment in predictable ways (Sullivan, 1997). This approach has produced an important model of personality: The Big Five traits according to the five-factor theory, (McCrae & Costa, 1990) which proposed five major dimensions of personality dispositions that are universal among individuals. It represents the human core of personality along the dimensions of Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to experience and every person can be rated as to the extent to which he/she is affected by each dimension. Each personality has all the dimensions, but some personalities rate high in a given dimension while others rate low or medium. Five-Factor theory of personality asserts that these personality traits are insulated from the direct effects of the environment and are exclusively biological in origin. The core components of personality system, indicated in rectangles in Figure 1, are designated as Basic Tendencies, Characteristics Adaptations and the Self-Concept is actually a subcomponent of characteristic adaptations.



Figure 1: Components of the Personality System According to Five Factor Theory Adapted from McCrae and Costa (1996).



Basic Tendencies are the abstract capacities and tendencies of the individual; it also includes cognitive abilities, artistic talents, sexual orientation and the whole psychological machinery underlying learning, perception, and other psychological functions. For example, the capacity to learn language is a basic tendency that all human infants possess whereas characteristic adaptations are concrete acquired structures that develop as the individual interacts with the environment. For example, knowledge of French or German is not a basic tendency, even in those born in that culture; it is a characteristic adaptation. All learned skills are characteristic adaptations, as are habits, interests, attitudes, beliefs, and the internalized, psychological aspects of roles and relationships. Thus basic tendencies can be stable, while characteristic adaptations change. The interactionists claim that behaviors result from the interaction of characteristics adaptations and external influences;  $B = f(CA, EI)$ . They are called characteristic adaptations because they reflect the operation of enduring personality traits, and they are adaptations because they are shaped in response to the demands and opportunities offered by the environment. Costa & McCrae (1994) propose that traits are regarded as basic tendencies, which together with external influence; determine an individual's characteristics adaptations, which in turn influence the person's objective biography and self-concept. Traits develop through childhood and reach mature form in adulthood; thereafter they are stable in cognitively intact individuals. More specifically, traits are said to reach maturity by age 30 (McCrae et al. 2000).

Brief descriptions of the Big five factors are as follows:

**a. Extraversion**

People who are high in extraversion are generally sociable, assertive, active, bold, energetic, adventuresome, and expressive. They are self-confident, talkative, gregarious and spontaneous. Also, they enjoy interacting with others and, as such, might have more opportunities to seek out and receive social support from others than introverts. In contrast, those who are low in extraversion (highly introverted people) are timid, submissive, silent and inhibited. (McCrae and Costa 1986).

**b. Neuroticism**

Neurotic individuals tend to be self-conscious and self-monitors. The general tendency to experience negative affect such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt and disgust is the core of neuroticism domain. They tend to be



anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, worried and insecure. Such individuals are also prone to have irrational ideas, are less able to control their impulses, and cope poorly with stress (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Emotional stability is the opposite pole of neuroticism. People who are high on emotional stability are generally calm and even tempered in coping with daily life.

**c. Agreeableness**

It is denoted by individual characteristics such as being helpful, generous, and courteous which are primary dimensions of interpersonal tendencies. Agreeable individuals are warm, likeable, emotionally supportive and nurturing. In contrast, those who were low on agreeableness (disagreeable) are generally cold, oppositional, hostile and/or antagonistic in their behaviors towards others (Digman, 1990).

**d. Conscientiousness**

Conscientiousness is denoted by individual attributes such as being neat, punctual, careful, self-disciplined and reliable. Individuals scoring high on conscientiousness are efficient, organized and industrious and also tend to be achievement-oriented, self-motivated and task-oriented. They are likely to be more committed to the task and be trusted by others. Individuals who are low on this dimension are generally lazy, disorganised, lack systematic methods of accomplishing tasks (inefficient) and are not self-disciplined (Asendorpf and Van Aken, 2003; Dehle and Landers, 2005).

**e. Openness to Experience**

The final dimension, openness, is also called intellect or culture. This dimension is characterized by curiosity and the need or willingness to discover. Open individuals are insightful, like to think and are explorative. They appreciate the "deeper" things in life and are intelligent. Some traits in this dimension are artistic, creative, imaginative, insightful, curious, inventive, sophisticated and foresighted. Goldberg (1992) indicated that individuals low on openness is unreflective and imperceptive, cautious and more conservative in their thinking.

Much research has been conducted on the Big Five which has resulted in both criticism and support for the model. Critics argue that there are limitations to the scope of Big Five as an explanatory or predictive theory. It is argued that the Big Five does not explain whole of human personality. Some psychologists have dissented the model precisely because they feel it neglects other domains of personality, such as Religiosity, Manipulativeness/Machiavellianism, Masculinity/Femininity, Honesty, Self-Awareness, Conservativeness, Thriftiness, Critical Judgement, Snobbishness, Sense of humour, Identity, Self-concept, and Motivation. The methodology used to identify the dimensional structure of personality traits was factor analysis which has been challenged for not having a universally-recognized basis. Also, many other critics opine that the Big Five is not theory-driven. It is merely a data-driven investigation of certain descriptors that tend to cluster together under factor analysis.

Many researchers have also studied the relationships of Five Factor Theory with relationship quality, stability and satisfaction. The Big Five traits have consistently been linked to marital satisfaction and are possibly the most frequently studied personality dimensions of recent decades (Goldberg, 1992; McCrae and Costa, 1985).

Besides the Big five, some other traits may also influence marital satisfaction. Scholars from the 1930's (Terman, et al. 1938) found associations between personality and marital satisfaction i.e. trait anxiety, neuroticism, emotional stability and negative affectivity received more attention in research on marriage than any other trait. Certain dispositional qualities which reflect proneness to negative moods and emotional lability (i.e., nervous, tension, temper, and shifts) have been consistently linked to relatively dissatisfying and unstable marriages.

**Need Similarity and Complementarity in Personality**

Some theories of marital choice have generally looked for a basis for marital satisfaction in either similarity or complementarity. They opine that individuals feel most attracted to potential partners, who, in important domains, are similar to themselves. Spousal similarity receiving attention assumes that people prefer to have interactions with others who are like themselves. Spouses select each other on the basis of similar personality characteristics which may be affected at three stages in the marital career: before the actual relationship, when selecting a spouse; during the relationship, when living together with the spouse; and when the relationship ends (Amodio & Carolin, 2005). The first mechanism that affects spousal similarity with regard to personality is the "propinquity effect." i.e. lives within driving distance. Second stage comprises social groups that determine the acceptability of potential spouse i.e. social status and religious affiliation. Third mechanism is during the relationship i.e. as the time passes, their personalities tend to be more or less similar. It leads to convergence rather than divergence.

Similar individuals are assumed to be attractive because they validate our beliefs about the world and ourselves and reduce the risk of conflicts. There is good evidence that people get married because of similar social, ethnic, and religious



backgrounds which contributes to relationship satisfaction (Lutz-Zois et al. 2006) and such a happy, long-lasting intimate relationship leads to both psychological and physical health, Similarity between partners increases their own and offspring's chances of survival by helping maintain the pair bond.

In contrast, Winch's theory of need complementary (1958) stated that people who fall in love tend to be alike in social characteristic but different in psychological needs whose personality traits are opposite to their own. Individuals feel most attracted to potential partners who complement them, an assumption that reflects the saying that "opposites attract" (Antill, 1983). Complementary individuals are assumed to be so attractive because they enhance the likelihood that one's needs will be gratified. In addition, from an evolutionary perspective, one might argue that seeking a complementary mate, rather than a similar one, may help prevent inbreeding.

Buss and Barnes (1986) studied some of the issues by looking at mate preferences. Individuals seek spouses with different characteristics: kindness, intelligence, attractiveness, wealth and so on. For example, kind and considerate spouses were preferred by men high in extraversion and by women high in neuroticism. Preferences, in turn, were related to the actual personalities of spouses. Women who preferred kind husbands tended to marry men who scored high on measures of Agreeableness. Thus, it appears that personality is related to marital choice but not in a straightforward fashion.

### **Indian Concept of Triguna Theory**

Many of the Western psychological concepts and methods lack relevance to different cultural systems hence some indigenous psychologists focused on the structure, nature and evolution of human personality with special reference to the concept of Triguna mentioned in Atharveda which is a part of Samkhya system. It postulates two interdependent, simultaneously existing realities: purusha (Consciousness) and prakrti (nature or matter). The purusha forms the inner core of the personality, while everything in the universe, physical and psychological, including the mind, are regarded as originated from prakrti, which is constituted of three gunas viz. sattva, rajas and tamas. These gunas never exist in isolation and interact and compete with each other resulting in the preponderance of one over the others. The degree of predominance of one guna determines the individual's personality type. Based on the above understanding, personalities are categorized into three viz. sattvic, rajasic and tamasic types (Paranjpe, 1998b; Rao, 1966).

### **Description of Triguna**

- The word Sattva is derived from 'sat' which is real and is potential consciousness. Sattva is that element of prakrti which is of the nature of pleasure, such as satisfaction, happiness, bliss, contentment etc and is buoyant of light (laghu), and bright or illuminating (prakasaka). Sattva is binded by attachment to happiness and knowledge.
- Rajas literally mean foulness is the principle of activity in things. It always moves and makes other things move. It comprises passions i.e. urges, desires, emotions and feelings and is the source of thirst and attachment. Human personality thrives for the satisfaction of every desire and once the desire is fulfilled, a sense of attachment comes like vicious passions to smooth peace and joy of the mind. Thus the characteristics that indicate the predominance of rajas are described as greed, activity, undertaking of actions, & restlessness.
- Tamas literally means darkness, the principle of passivity and negativity in things. Tamasic attributes are sluggish and obscuring. It resists activity and produces the state of apathy or indifference leading to ignorance and sloth. It is the tendency of tamas to escape all responsibilities, or undertake any endeavor and lack the enthusiasm to strive for or achieve anything in the world. Error, misunderstanding, negligence and inaction are the characteristic marks which indicate that tamas is predominant.

Thus, it is the extent to which the qualities of mind vary i.e. sattva called as stability; rajas as activation and tamas as inertia help differentiate an individual's mind from the others. A person may be satvika, rajasika or tamasika according to the predominance of the corresponding quality in his nature. Satvik individuals are well-adjusted and have better marital relations as compared to rajasic or tamasic. However, one may also go beyond all the three qualities by unflinching effort, through a sort of gradual internal elevation and finally attain a state of perfect liberation.

Thus, marital satisfaction is an ongoing process yet, there are certain potential traits such as positive affect, environmental influences, extraversion, agreeableness that may positively contribute to marital satisfaction. Apart from this, some psychologists proposed that similarities make the marriages run smooth while others opined that it may be complementary personalities. Indian psychologists viewed that satvik type of personality may have more positive contribution in marriage rather than rajas and tamasic.

Researchers have also long been interested in the effects to personality on relationships as they have longstanding effects on our love life, affecting choices, compatibility and level of romantic attachment. Reviewers have noted that "attraction of a



suitable partner, propensity to establish a relationship intended to be permanent, and maintenance of that relationship may have related aetiologies which have their roots in personality". Many researchers in this area (Cooper & Sheldon, 2002; Karney & Bradbury, 1995) have demonstrated that certain stable personality factors are associated with relationship quality. These studies support the view that the absence and/or presence of positive/negative personality characteristics facilitate the acquisition, development and maintenance of not only satisfying personal relationships but also stability and satisfaction outcomes in *marriage*. It has been argued that "satisfying close relationships constitute the very best thing in life". Researchers Todosijevic et al. (2003); Watson et al. (2000; 2004) also found that sincerity, faithfulness and tenderness as the three most valued traits in romantic relationship while the three least valued traits were insecurity, selfishness and conceitedness. People who are more agreeable, less neurotic and more open to experience are preferred by most people (Watson et al. 2000). While, people who are disagreeable, neurotic, and low in conscientiousness are at elevated risk of divorce presumably because these individuals often create hostile, dissatisfying relationships (Watson et al. 2004).

Other personality traits such as positive emotionality, agreeableness and constraint have been linked to facilitate romantic relationship as individuals relatively high in these traits readily experience positive emotions such as joy & are drawn into interpersonal relationships (Donnellan et al. 2004; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Robins et al. 2000, 2002). Consistent with this speculation, Robins et al. (2002) found that positive emotionality at age 18 predicted relationship quality at age 26. Constraint may also facilitate relationships because individuals high in self-control may engage in less objectionable behavior, thereby reducing the sheer amount of conflict in their relationships. Constraint may also reduce the possibility that trivial disagreements will escalate into major arguments. People who have such positive traits and are in relationships tend to be satisfied couples, high on self-confidence and assertiveness, and low in partner dominance and avoidance as compared to dissatisfied couples (Olson & Olson, 1999).

In relationships low negative emotionality was the strongest and most consistent predictor of quality and satisfaction. Both men and women are happy in a relationship when neither partner tends to experience and express negative emotions. These effects are consistent with a recent review of marital quality and stability, which concluded that negative emotionality, or Neuroticism, shows stronger effects on marital outcomes than other personality factors (Buss, 1991). Individuals high on negative emotionality are prone to express four behaviors that Gottman (1994) identified as detrimental to relationships; criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Such individuals may also be more physiologically reactive and more likely to escalate negative affect during conflict with their partners, thereby lowering both couple member's satisfaction (e.g., Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). They react to and interpret the behaviors of their partners in a negative light, and thus are primed to perceive and magnify relationship difficulties.

Robins, Caspi and Moffitt (2002) found that a personality profile of low negative emotionality, high positive emotionality and high constraint can predispose a person to become involved in relatively happy, non-abusive relationships. More specifically, negative emotionality at the age of eighteen predicted higher levels of conflict and abuse and lower levels of quality in romantic relationships three and eight years later. In addition, they also found that in romantic relationships the influence of negative emotionality never changes i.e. quite stable.

There has been growing recognition that ideals are powerful psychological forces in relationships because they provide an evaluative and interpretative context for our views of the self and of our intimates (Fletcher, et al. 1999). Although, Klohnen and Mendelsohn (1998) anticipated that people with a high self-ideal-self congruence would tend to be mated with partners similar to their personality. Conversely, people with low self-ideal-self congruence would tend to be mated with partners who are dissimilar to their personality. Researchers (Fletcher et al. 1999; 2000) demonstrated that large discrepancies between partner ideals and partner perceptions are associated with dissatisfaction with the current relationship or partner. Conversely, congruence between partner ideals and perceptions were found to be associated with relationship satisfaction.

Atari Yousef et al. (2006) investigated the simple and multiple relationships of personality characteristics (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness) and family- personal factors (education, marriage age, the period of being married, number of children, type of marriage, age difference, and economic status) to marital satisfaction in administrative office personnel in Ahvaz. It was found that neuroticism showed a negative correlation with marital satisfaction while Extraversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness indicated a high positive relationship with marital satisfaction. In regard to family- personal factors (education, marriage age, marriage type, and age differences) there was no significant relationship with marital satisfaction.

Rajabi & Nabgani (2008) investigated a simple and multiple relationships between personality characteristics (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) and love (intimacy, passion, and commitment) with marital satisfaction. Results revealed a negative correlation between neuroticism and marital satisfaction. But there was a positive



correlation between certain personality characteristics (extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) and marital satisfaction. Also there was a positive correlation between love (intimacy, passion, and commitment) and marital satisfaction. The results of multiple regression showed significant correlation between personality characteristics and love with marital satisfaction.

Jahromi et al. (2010) evaluated and compared the relationship between marital satisfaction and personality traits among employed women. More specifically, the relationship between irritability, extraversion, openness, agreeability, conscientiousness and marital satisfaction was explored. Regression analysis, correlation and ANOVA were used to analyze the data. The correlations between irritability and marital satisfaction and that of openness, agreeability, conscientiousness and marital satisfaction were statistically significant. The former showed a negative while the latter was positively correlated. The overall picture showed that personality traits have the potential of predicting marital satisfaction.

Few investigators even are of the view that **conscientiousness** may be a positive predictor of marital satisfaction. Individual's high on this tend to strive for achievement, and are dutiful, self-disciplined hard-working and reliable (Costa & McCrae, 1992). These individuals are motivated to get along with others, which contributes to better interpersonal relationships and performance outputs. Amongst adults, Conscientiousness has been associated with mate desirability, relationship quality and marriage stability (Gattis, et al. 2004; Roberts and Bogg, 2004; Robins, Caspi and Moffitt, 2000). Though, romantic partners high in conscientiousness tend to be more faithful (Orzeck & Lung, 2005) and more satisfied (McCrae et al. 1998), while openness positively predicts relational conflict (Bono et al. 2002) and infidelity (Orzeck & Lung, 2005).

Abbasi et al. (2009) analyzed the important personality factors effective in couple marital satisfaction. Findings emphasized that conscientiousness and neuroticism are the important predictors which cause variance in marital satisfaction.

Some investigators have particularly focused on the role of **extraversion** in marital satisfaction. According to them, extraverted individuals tend to be warm, outgoing, positive, and sociable and with a high energy level; thus they tend to be comfortable interacting with others (McCrae & Costa, 1999). Such individuals can handle social situations well hence foster close relationships. Though not always extraversion has been found to be positively correlated with marital satisfaction. Karney and Bradbury (1995); Orzeck & Lung, (2005) too reported that extraversion was associated with more marital instability. Perhaps, partners who are high on extraversion tend to commit infidelity but Kosek (1996) later found that both the men and women's satisfaction was positively related to their spouses' score on extraversion. It is possible that one's partner's extraversion only becomes problematic at very high levels, i.e., when it leads the partner to spend too much time with other people.

Further, **agreeableness** has also been found to be the most important predictor in marital satisfaction. Such individuals are warm, likeable, emotionally supportive, nurturing which are primary dimensions of interpersonal tendencies. Perhaps the reasons they experience less conflict and thus tend to be satisfied with relationships (Bono et al. 2002).

White et al. (2004) explored the associations between personality variables of the five-factor model and close relationship variables (love styles, relationship satisfaction, and intimacy). Correlation and regression analyses revealed that agreeableness was positively associated with relationship satisfaction and intimacy, especially for males.

Pernovic, (2007) examined the association between agreeableness and interpersonal trust on 245 students who were in a dating relationship. Results indicated that agreeable people have better relationships than antagonistic people because they are more trusting hence less prone to seeing signs of rejection. In addition, Berry, et al. (2000) indicates that Agreeableness and Conscientiousness are negatively related to a friend's annoyance and with the number of conflicts in the adult friendships.

Amongst all the big five traits, the majority of the work has been done on **neuroticism** and its role in marital relationship quality. Individuals, who are more neurotic, tend to have large mood swings, poor emotional control, and experience negative affect, stress and anxiety. Such individuals tend to have less intimate and satisfying relationships mainly because of their negative behavior (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). Social Learning theorists explain this effect by suggesting that negativity and marital dissatisfaction form a circular causal system: Negativity decreases spouse's level of satisfaction which, in turn, increases the extent to which spouses behave negatively towards each other.

Ebrahimi Mohammadzadeh, (2008) investigated the effects of personality dimensions i.e. similarities and complementaries in marital satisfaction. Results showed a negative relationship between neuroticism, as a complementary factor, with marital satisfaction and a positive relationship between extraversion and agreeableness with marital satisfaction.





Some investigators found that if the partners before they enter a relationship or at the time of marriage show higher levels of neuroticism and openness and lower levels of agreeableness as well as dissimilar personalities, they are more likely to be dissatisfied or end up in divorce (Bouchard & Arseneault, 2005).

Hence, the above studies indicate that individuals who are more agreeable, extraverted, conscientious tend to have stable marriages while high levels of neuroticism places individuals at a risk of unstable or dissatisfying marital relations often ending in breakups.

On the basis of four meta-analyses conducted to examine **gender differences** in personality in the literature it was found that males were more assertive and had slightly higher self-esteem than females. Females were higher than males in extraversion, anxiety, trust, and, especially, tender-mindedness (e.g., nurturance). There were no noteworthy sex differences on social anxiety, impulsiveness, activity, ideas (e.g., reflectiveness), locus of control, and orderliness. Gender differences in personality traits were generally constant across ages, educational levels, and nations (Feingold, 1994).

Some studies in the previous literature have also tried to identify gender differences and certain personality traits and their relationship with marital quality. For both men and women, having a partner who is high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, but low on neuroticism predicted high satisfaction for both sexes (Botwin, et al. 1997).

In the meta analysis by Karney & Bradbury (1995), analyzing 115 longitudinal studies of marital outcomes (stability & marital satisfaction), they found that several personality characteristics predicted marital stability i.e. agreeableness and conscientiousness of both genders were positively associated with stability. The case of extraversion and openness is mitigated: few studies found a relationship between these traits and marital stability but results were inconsistent among them (Watson, et al. 2000). Neuroticism in both genders was negatively associated with stability. Remarkably, neuroticism was the single variable most negatively related to marital stability for women.

Secondary analyses of Revised NEO Personality inventory data, Costa et al. (2001) from 26 cultures (N =23,031) suggest that gender differences are small relative to individual variation within genders; differences are replicated across cultures for both college-age and adult samples, and differences are broadly consistent with gender stereotypes: Women reported themselves to be higher in Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Warmth, and Openness to Feelings, whereas men were higher in Assertiveness and Openness to Ideas. Similar findings were also reported by Schmitt, (2008) who found that women reported higher levels of neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness than men.

Gerris et al. (2010) investigated the effects of husband's and wife's Big-Five personality characteristics on their own (i.e., actor effects) as well as on their partner's (i.e., partner effects) degree of trust in one another. Data was collected from 288 couples with at least two adolescent children. Both self-reported and partner-reported personality characteristics were analyzed using two complementary approaches: hierarchical regression analyses and Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) analyses. Results were dependent on the type of personality rating used. Actor effects and partner effects were inflated when using self-reports and partner-reports, respectively. Findings suggest that trust should be conceived as a property of the dyad, rather than as an individual characteristic of the dyad members. Conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness emerged as the most important predictors of dyadic trust. Husbands' and wives' personality characteristics contributed equally strongly to dyadic trust.

Over all these findings suggest that there are gender differences on certain personality traits such as men being higher on self-esteem, assertiveness, and when low on agreeableness they tended to be self-centered, condescending and even aggressive while women generally showed tendencies towards more conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness and also higher on neuroticism than males.

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