

## A social work study for the effects of different factors on compatible and discordant couples

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, we perform an empirical investigation to examine the impact different factors on compatible and discordant couples. The survey is performed in one of western regions of Iran near the city of Esfahan. In our study, we choose two groups of people from the population with no family dispute and from the people who have requested divorce. They are asked to fill in a questionnaire and the results are analyzed. We used Chi-square tests to verify any meaningful difference between compatible and discordant couples on different issues. The survey concludes that compatible and discordant couples were different in their motivation, marital satisfaction, continued incentive generation, finding better position among relatives and accomplishing their religious duties to get married.

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## 1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most important events of people's lives. There are many evidences, which indicate that compatible couples contribute more on society in different forms. Land and Felson (1977) presented a dynamic macro social indicator model of changes in marriage, family, and population in the United States from 1947 to 1974. Borges (2003) studied network migration, marriage patterns, and adaptation in rural Portugal and among Portuguese immigrants in Argentina from 1870 to 1980. Story and Bradbury (2004) explained the impact of marriage on stress.

Bertoni and Bodenmann (2010) studied marital functioning of satisfied and dissatisfied couples by comparing these two groups. Measures analyzed different items such as positive and negative dimensions of marital functioning, conflict styles including compromise, violence, avoidance, and offence and the quality of the relationship with family of origin. They reported that in comparison to dissatisfied couples, satisfied couples had more positive and less negative dimensions, a higher ratio

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between positivity and negativity, more appropriate conflict styles, as well as a better relationship with their family of origin.

Lichter and Carmalt (2009) investigated the relationship between religion and marital quality among low-income couples. They studied whether religiosity was a positive force for marital quality among low-income couples, and that a practicing faith could buffer the negative effects of economic stress on marital quality. The results showed that most low-income couples had high scores on the various dimensions of marital quality such as commitment, emotional support, etc. The results of their survey also indicated that the stress-buffering hypothesis received less support in the analysis. Guzzo (2006) studied how marriage market conditions affect entrance into cohabitation compared with marriage.

There are several evidence to show that any drug addiction could badly impact marital satisfaction. Homish et al. (2007) investigated whether discrepancies between husbands' and wives' past-year heavy drinking predicted could impact marital satisfaction over time. Participants (N = 634) were recruited at the time they applied for their marriage licenses. Couples completed questionnaires about their alcohol use and marital satisfaction at the time of marriage and again at their 1st and 2nd anniversaries. Their analyses disclosed that discrepancies in husbands' and wives' heavy drinking predicted decreased marital satisfaction while controlling for heavy drinking and these couples could be at greater risk for decreased marital functioning, which may lead to relationship dissolution.

Homish et al. (2008), in other work, presented the effects of illicit drug use and marital satisfaction. They reported that at the transition to marriage, both husbands and wives who had discrepant drug use behaviors demonstrated lower levels of marital satisfaction compared with other couples. Over the first four years of marriage, couples in each group reported significant declines in marital satisfaction.

Whisman et al. (2008) examined the structure of marital discord using 4 product indicators in a representative sample of community couples (N = 1,020). Results from 3 taxometric procedures recommended that marital discord was taxonic, with an estimated base rate of .31. They also reported that the marital discord taxon classification demonstrated good (a) 6-week test–retest reliability, (b) criterion validity and (c) construct validity. Elliot et al. (2011) studied the impact of marriage and social support on persons with active epilepsy and reported that marriage and social support buffered the negative impact of chronic illness. They also reported that socially isolated people with active seizures report poorer life satisfaction.

The proposed study of this paper investigates the effects of social activities on successful marriage. The survey designs a questionnaire and distributes between two groups of compatible and discordant couples and the results are analyzed using different statistical tests.

## **2. The proposed study**

The proposed study of this paper considers eight different hypotheses to study the effects of different parameters on compatible couple. In this paper, a compatible couple is associated with those couples who believe they have reached prosperity and success by their marriage. They are completely satisfied in terms of their feelings and they believe they can complete the other partners' needs. They provide mutual support and respect for each other and there is no threat on behalf of any one. A

marriage could end to a possible divorce for several reasons such as early age marriage, contagious disease, extreme difference between ages, drug addiction, different beliefs, etc. The following are statements of all hypotheses for having meaningful difference between compatible groups and discordant groups.

1. There is a meaningful relationship for people's motivation between two groups
2. There is a meaningful relationship for decision making on family affairs between two groups
3. There is a meaningful relationship for family financial affairs between two groups.
4. There is a meaningful relationship for marital relationship between two groups.
5. There is a meaningful relationship for leisure between two groups.
6. There is a meaningful relationship for couple's continued incentive generation between two groups.
7. There is a meaningful relationship for accomplishing religious duties between two groups.

In our study, there are four types of marriage. The first group is associated with the number of wives; the second group considers whether marriage occurs inside a community or outside a community. The third group is related to husband and wife's relationship and the duration and finally, the last group considers whether this is the first time marriage or not.

We have chosen two groups of people for our survey, the first group are people who are compatible couple and the second groups are chosen from discordant couple and these are the people who have gone to court for possible divorce. Both samples are chosen from a particular region of the city of Esfahan, located in west part of Iran. The questions of the survey are arranged based on Likert scale from very low(0) to very high(4). The average age of men and women for compatible couple are 36 and 32, respectively. These numbers for men and women discordant couples are 34 and 30, respectively. The average distance between marriage for compatible and discordant couples are 78 and 210, respectively. We have also asked the samples on their educational background and the compatible groups include 2% with no educational skills, 12% elementary background, 22% with incomplete high school and the remaining people hold at least 12 years of educations. In terms of the educational background for discordant couples, there are 9% with no educational background, 24% with elementary education, 32% incomplete high school and 29% of the remaining people either finish high school or they maintain two years college educational background.

In terms of job among compatible couples, 50% of the women are home keeper, 40% hold governmental jobs and 10% working for non-governmental organizations. In addition, 84% compatible couples hold governmental jobs and 16% are working for non-governmental jobs.

In terms of job among discordant couples, 82% of the women are home keeper, 14% work for governmental organizations and only 4% work for non-governmental organizations. In addition, 50% of the men in discordant couples work for non-governmental organization, 40% are involved with governmental jobs and only 10% are unemployed.

While 69% of the compatible couples live in their house, 28% lease a property and only 3% live with their family, these numbers are 54%, 36% and 10% among discordant couples, respectively. In addition, while 43% of the compatible couples have first nominated their partners and then they consulted with their family, 44% of the compatible couples married on the basis of arrangement. The numbers are different among discordant couples since 33% chose their partners by their own with no consultation with their family and 16% chose their partners with family consultation, 36% married with arrangement and consultation and 15% married with only a simple arrangement.

### 3. Results

The first question of our survey was associated with couples' motivation to find partner. Table 1 shows details of our survey.

**Table 1**  
The frequency of responses for couples' motivation

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	74	44	44	80	158
	Percentage	18.5	11	11	20	39.5
Compatible	Frequency	37	29	28	45	61
	Percentage	18.5	14.5	14	22.5	30.5
Discordant	Frequency	37	22	22	40	79
	Percentage	18.5	11	11	20	39.5

As we can observe from the results of Table 1, compatible and discordant couples mostly believe that motivation plays an important role on choosing their partners.

**Table 2**  
Couples' motivation on marriage

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	29	28	45	61	163
	Expected	22	22	40	79	
Discordant couple	Observed	15	16	35	79	163
	Expected	22	22	40	79	
Total		44	44	80	158	326

The null hypothesis is that there is no motivation for choosing a partner and  $\chi^2 = 17.11$  with  $df=3$ , which means there is a meaningful difference between two groups' motivation on marriage and we can reject the null hypothesis with 95% confidence level. The second question of our survey was associated with couples' motivation on marital satisfaction. Table 3 shows details of our survey.

**Table 3**  
The frequency of responses for couples' marital satisfaction as an important reason for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	106	49	11	83	61
	Percentage	26.5	12.3	25.5	20.8	15.3
Compatible	Frequency	35	32	39	56	38
	Percentage	18.5	16	19.5	28.5	19
Discordant	Frequency	71	17	62	27	23
	Percentage	25.5	8.5	31	23.5	11.5

Based on the results of Table 3, it seems that marital satisfaction does not play an important role for having a partner.

**Table 4**  
Couples' motivation on marriage based on marital satisfaction

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	32	39	56	38	165
	Expected	27.5	56.5	26.5	34.5	
Discordant couple	Observed	17	62	27	23	129
	Expected	13	48	21	18	
Total		49	101	83	61	294

The null hypothesis is that there is no motivation for choosing a partner and  $\chi^2 = 19.54$  with  $df=3$ , which means marital satisfaction is played differently between two groups and we can reject the null hypothesis with 95% confidence level. The third question of our survey was associated with an importance of financial support for marriage. Table 5 shows details of our survey.

**Table 5**  
The frequency of responses for couples' financial matters as an important reason for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	104	59	105	77	55
	Percentage	26	14.8	26.3	19.3	23
Compatible	Frequency	39	28	56	44	23
	Percentage	19.5	19	28	22	18.5
Discordant	Frequency	66	21	48	33	32
	Percentage	33	10.5	24	16.5	16

Based on the information of Table 5, we cannot strongly claim that financial affairs play an important role on couple's personal decisions. Next, we are interested in finding whether financial is more important between each group of compatible and discordant. Table 6 shows the results of Chi-square test.

**Table 6**  
Couples' motivation on marriage based on financial affairs

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	38	56	44	23	161
	Expected	32.2	56.8	42	30	
Discordant couple	Observed	21	48	33	32	134
	Expected	26.8	47.2	35	25	
Total		59	104	77	55	295

Based on the results of Chi-square,  $\chi^2 = 6.14$  with  $df=3$ , we cannot claim there was any difference between two groups. The fourth question of our survey was associated with an importance of leisure for marriage. Table 7 shows details of our survey.

**Table 7**  
The frequency of responses on leisure as an important factor for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	65	60	57	74	144
	Percentage	16.3	15	14.3	18.5	36
Compatible	Frequency	35	14	32	36	83
	Percentage	17.5	7	16	18	41.5
Discordant	Frequency	35	46	25	38	61
	Percentage	17.5	23	12.5	19	30.5

The results of Table 7 shows that compatible people are mostly looking for peaceful life but the numbers are not that impressive among discordant couples. We use Chi-Square test to find out whether there is a meaningful different between two groups and the results are given in Table 8.

**Table 8**

Couples' motivation on marriage based on leisure

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	14	32	36	83	165
	Expected	29.6	28.1	36.4	70.9	
Discordant couple	Observed	46	25	38	61	170
	Expected	30.4	28.9	38	73.1	
Total		60	57	74	144	335

Based on the results of Chi-square,  $\chi^2 = 2.27$  with  $df=3$ , we cannot claim there was any different between two groups. The fifth question of our survey was whether marriage could improve relationship among relatives. Table 9 shows details of our survey.

**Table 9**

The responses on improving relationship among relatives as an important factor for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	102	43	88	87	80
	Percentage	25.5	10.8	2	21.8	20
Compatible	Frequency	51	20	43	49	37
	Percentage	25.5	10	21.5	24.5	18.5
Discordant	Frequency	51	23	45	38	43
	Percentage	25.5	11.5	22.5	19	21.5

It is clear from the results of Table 9 that compatible people are mostly looking to improve their relationship with their relatives. We use Chi-Square test to find out whether there is meaningful different between two groups on this subject and the results are summarized in Table 10.

**Table 10**

Couples' motivation on marriage to improve relative relationships

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	20	43	49	37	149
	Expected	21.5	44	43.5	40	
Discordant couple	Observed	23	45	38	43	149
	Expected	21.5	44	43.5	14.4	
Total		43	88	87	80	298

Based on the results of Chi-square,  $\chi^2 = 2.09$  with  $df=3$ , we cannot claim there was any different between two groups. The sixth question of our survey was whether continued incentive generation is a good reason to marry. Table 11 shows details of our survey.

**Table 11**

The responses on continued incentive generation as an important factor for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	83	53	95	77	92
	Percentage	20.8	13.3	23.8	19.3	22
Compatible	Frequency	35	35	46	35	35
	Percentage	17.5	17.5	22.5	22	17.5
Discordant	Frequency	48	18	49	32	53
	Percentage	24	9	24.5	16	26.5

It is not clear whether compatible and discordant couples were mostly agree or disagree on this issue since the responses were scattered in different regions. However, we are interested in examining whether two groups are thinking differently or not. Table 12 shows details of our Chi-square test.

**Table 12**  
Couples' motivation on marriage for continued incentive generation

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	35	46	45	39	165
	Expected	27.6	49.4	40.1	47.9	
Discordant couple	Observed	18	49	32	53	152
	Expected	45.6	28.9	36.9	44.1	
Total		53	95	77	92	317

Based on the results of Chi-square,  $\chi^2 = 19.54$  with  $df=3$ , we can claim that there was meaningful difference between two groups on this problem. The seventh question of our survey was whether religious belief is a good reason to marry. Table 13 shows details of our survey.

**Table 13**  
The responses on accomplishing religious duties as an important factor for marriage

Couples		None	Low	Average	High	Very high
All	Frequency	75	58	39	72	11.3
	Percentage	18.8	14.5	9.8	18	43.3
Compatible	Frequency	33	28	10	37	87
	Percentage	16.5	14	5	18.5	43.5
Discordant	Frequency	42	28	29	35	86
	Percentage	21	14	14.5	17.5	43

Based on the results of Table 13 we can clearly say that both compatible and discordant couples mostly agree that religion was the most important factor for marriage. We are also interested in examining whether two groups are thinking differently or not on this issue. Table 14 shows details of our Chi-square test.

**Table 14**  
Couples' motivation on marriage because of religious belief

		Low	Average	High	Very high	Total
Compatible couple	Observed	10	38	37	87	172
	Expected	19.4	28.8	35.8	86	
Discordant couple	Observed	29	22	35	86	172
	Expected	19.6	29.2	36.2	87	
Total		39	60	72	173	344

Based on the results of Chi-square,  $\chi^2 = 12.68$  with  $df=3$ , we can claim that there was meaningful difference between two groups on this problem. In summary, we can conclude that compatible and discordant couples are different in their motivation, marital satisfaction, continued incentive generation, finding better position among relatives and accomplishing their religious duties to get married.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented an empirical study to investigate the impact different factors on compatible and discordant couples. The survey was performed in one of western regions of Iran near

the city of Esfahan. In our study, we have chosen two groups of people from the population with no family dispute and from the people who have requested divorce. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire and the results were analyzed. The survey concluded that compatible and discordant couples were different in their motivation, marital satisfaction, continued incentive generation, finding better position among relatives and accomplishing their religious duties to get married.

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