



## **Personality Correlates of Marital Satisfaction: A Cross-Sectional Observational Study**

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**Abstract**

*The Big Five personality traits—conscientiousness, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism constitutes a comprehensive framework used to understand individual differences. In the context of marital satisfaction, the big five personality traits could play a significant role in influencing different aspects of marital life. The aim of the study was to understand the relationship between the Big Five Personality factors and marital satisfaction. The study also explored the differences between men and women in these variables. A total of 140 participants, including 70 married males and 70 married females aged 25 to 40, were selected for the study. Personality traits were assessed using the Big Five Inventory (BFI), and marital satisfaction was assessed using the Couple Satisfaction Inventory (CSI-32). Pearson's correlation method was used to analyze the relationships between personality traits and marital satisfaction. t-test test was used to analyze gender differences in personality traits and marital satisfaction. Conscientiousness and extraversion showed positive correlations with marital satisfaction, suggesting that individuals with these traits can experience higher levels of contentment in their marriages. However, neuroticism exhibited a significant negative correlation, suggesting that emotional instability may contribute to lower marital satisfaction. Further analysis of gender differences showed a significant difference between men and women in the variable agreeableness. There were no substantial variations in any other personality traits or marital satisfaction between men and women.*

**Keywords:** *Marital Satisfaction, Big Five Personality Traits, Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism.*

**Introduction**

Marital satisfaction refers to how content and fulfilled married couple-s feel considering different parts of their relationship. Li and Fung (2011) stress that marriage is a voluntary commitment based on love-, which serves as an important foundation for family ties and critical for raising the- next generation. Soleimanian (1984)

introduced the Dynamic Goal Theory, suggesting marital satisfaction results from how current and expected situations align, with personal goals, companionship goals, and instrumental goals as core parts. Making attributions by connecting negative behaviors to a partner's personality rather than circumstances can contribute to lower marital satisfaction.

Social support plays a crucial role, with partners providing positive support enhancing satisfaction. Physical violence is closely linked to marital dissatisfaction. Patterns of interaction, especially demand and withdrawal, are associated with dissatisfaction. Family background factors, including socioeconomic status and relationships with parents/siblings, can influence marital satisfaction. Family discord, economic problems, work-related issues, etc., can contribute to decreased satisfaction. The presence of available alternative partners increases the likelihood of divorce, indirectly impacting satisfaction. Arnett's (2015) psychological investigations rerecognize monetary strain, persistent stress, and influential communication as chief contributors to marital dissatisfaction and divorce.

Personality refers to the enduring characteristics and behavior that comprise a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns. (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2018). The word personality originates from the Latin *persona*, which means "mask." Personality further extends to the consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, social adjustments, and behaviors exhibited over time, significantly influencing one's expectations, self-perceptions, values, and attitudes. Moreover, personality plays a pivotal role in predicting human reactions to interpersonal relationships.

Different historical approaches have attempted to explain the concept of personality. The psychoanalytic theory, pioneered by Sigmund Freud, explores the impact of unconscious processes, instinctual drives, and early childhood experiences on personality development. Emphasizing innate desires and conflict resolution between societal norms and personal wishes, this theory introduces psycho-sexual stages as key developmental milestones.

The trait approach posits that behavior is influenced by relatively stable traits that are quantifiable through psychometric tests. Eysenck's personality theory, grounded in biological factors, introduces the dimensions of Introversion/Extroversion and Neuroticism/Stability, each linked to specific biological causes. Cattell's 16PF Trait Theory challenges the notion of a limited set of dimensions, identifying 16 personality factors and distinguishing between surface and source traits. Allport's trait theory, formulated by Gordon Allport, underscores the uniqueness of individuals and the biologically determined nature of personality, shaped by environmental experiences.

The Big Five personality traits, also known as the Five-Factor Model (FFM), is a comprehensive framework explaining Personality. Openness to experience is about how open someone is to new ideas and experiences. Conscientiousness looks at how organized and responsible a person tends to be. Extraversion measures how sociable and assertive someone is in social situations. Agreeableness examines qualities like warmth, cooperation, and empathy in relationships. Neuroticism focuses on emotional stability and how well someone copes with stress.

Despite widespread aspirations for successful marriages, high divorce rates highlight the challenge of achieving marital satisfaction. Personality's practical implications for predicting marital success or failure have been emphasized by scholars like Gottman (1993) and Karney and Bradbury (1997). This study aims to explore specific personality factors contributing to marital satisfaction in both men and women, expanding our understanding of these correlates and aiding couples in addressing and resolving marital issues.

## Methodology

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the Big Five personality characteristics and marital satisfaction, with a specific focus on potential gender differences in these variables. A total of 140 participants, comprising 70 married males and 70 married females, were included in the study. The selected individuals fell within the age range of 25 to 40 years and had been in marital relationships for a minimum of one year. Participants were recruited through a simple sampling technique from diverse districts in Kerala, namely Ernakulum, Thrissur, Kollam, and Alappuzha. The inclusion of both working and non-working individuals ensured a comprehensive and varied sample. The research methodology involved the utilization of statistical tools to examine the identified hypotheses. Gender differences related to the variables under investigation were explored using T-tests. Additionally, Pearson's product-moment correlation method was employed to analyze relationships between various variables.

Personality traits were assessed using the Big Five Inventory developed by John and Srivastava (1999), which comprised 44 statements measuring the five personality factors. The test demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with a mean of 0.78 across the five factors and a test-retest reliability ranging from 0.79 to 0.88.

Couple satisfaction was measured using the CSI-32, developed by Funk, J.L., & Rogge, R.D. (2007), consisting of 32 items assessing relationship satisfaction. The scale exhibited robust reliability, with a split-half coefficient of 0.922. Additionally, the CSI-32 displayed strong convergent validity, aligning with existing measures of relationship satisfaction, with correlations ranging from 0.87 to 0.96.

## Results

### a) Relationship of Big Five Personality Traits and Marital satisfaction

The relationship among Big Five Personality Traits and marital satisfaction was tested using Pearson's correlation method. The results of the study revealed significant correlations between certain personality factors and marital satisfaction. Specifically, there was a positive correlation between conscientiousness and marital satisfaction, as well as between extraversion and marital satisfaction. A significant negative correlation was found between neuroticism and marital satisfaction. The results obtained are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 : Relationship between different dimensions of Big Five Personality Traits and Marital satisfaction

Variables		Marital Satisfaction	Openness to experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
Openness to experience	r	0.012					
Conscientiousness	r	0.233**	0.289**				
Extraversion	r	0.199**	0.299**	0.287**			
Agreeableness	r	0.092	0.158*	0.369**	0.203**		
Neuroticism	r	-0.239**	-0.229**	-0.254**	-0.240**	-0.213**	
Marital satisfaction	r	1	0.012	0.233**	0.199**	0.092	-0.239**

\*\*Significance at 0.01 level,\*Significance at 0.05 level

### b) Difference on the basis of gender with respect to extraversion.

The difference in Extraversion based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated that there was no significant gender difference between men and women with respect to the variable extraversion. The results obtained are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to the variable extraversion.

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Extraversion	Men	70	29.0270	5.15771	-0.560	0.576
	Women	70	29.4875	5.03656		

**c) Difference on the basis of gender with respect to agreeableness.**

The difference in agreeableness based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated a significant difference between men and women with respect to the variable agreeableness. Women (mean=36.0375) were found to be more agreeable than men (mean=34.1351) with respect to agreeableness, which was statistically significant. The results obtained are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to the variable agreeableness

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Agreeableness	Men	70	34.1351	5.56487	-2.462	0.015
	Women	70	36.0375	3.94405		

**d) Difference on the basis of gender with respect to conscientiousness**

The difference in Conscientiousness based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated that there was no significant gender difference with respect to the variable conscientiousness.. The results obtained are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to the variable conscientiousness

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
conscientiousness	Men	70	32.1622	5.16847	-	0.460
	Women	70	32.8500	6.24621		

**e) Difference on the basis of gender with respect to neuroticism.**

The difference in Neuroticism based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated that there was no significant gender difference between men and women with respect to the variable neuroticism. The results obtained are illustrated in table 5

Table 5: *Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to the variable neuroticism*

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Neuroticism	Men	70	22.6081	5.92607	-1.045	0.298
	Women	70	23.6000	5.85176		

**f)Difference on the basis of gender with respect to openness to experience**

The difference in openness to experience based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated that there was no significant gender difference between men and women with respect to the variable openness to experience. The results obtained are illustrated in table 6.

Table 6: *Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to the variable openness to experience*

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Openness to experience	Men	70	33.2838	4.74997	0.974	0.331
	Women	70	32.5375	4.74660		

**g)Difference on the basis of gender with respect to marital satisfaction.**

The difference in marital satisfaction based on gender was analyzed using the t-test method. The results obtained by the t-test indicated that there was no significant gender difference with respect to marital satisfaction. The results obtained are illustrated in the table 7.

Table 7: *Results obtained by t test analysis with respect to marital satisfaction*

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Marital satisfaction	Men	70	128.62	27.79657	-0.729	0.467
	Women	70	131.66	23.96302		

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## Discussion

The analysis revealed substantial relationships between the Big Five personality factors and marital satisfaction. Significant positive correlations were found between conscientiousness and marital satisfaction, as well as between extraversion and marital satisfaction. Conversely, a significant negative correlation is manifested between neuroticism and marital satisfaction.

Extraversion, marked by a preference for social interaction over solitude, exhibited a positive relationship with marital satisfaction. Various factors, including an individual's lifestyle, income, economic status, educational level, and additional personality traits, may have contributed to this positive association. Consistent with this, studies by Botwin (1997) and Rourke (2011).

Conscientiousness, reflecting carefulness and a strong sense of duty, displays a positive influence on marital satisfaction. Conscientious individuals recognized for their efficiency, organization, and disciplined behaviour. These characteristics may have contributed significantly to the stability of a marriage. This aligned with research findings by Watson (2006), Jarvis (2006), and Rumaya (2014).

Conversely, neuroticism, indicative of emotional instability, revealed a negative correlation with marital satisfaction. The predominant characteristics of moodiness and the experience of various negative emotions in people with high neuroticism led to challenges in controlling impulses. This may result in frequent disputes and conflicts within the marriage. Studies by Gholam and Rogayeh (2013) presented contradictory results regarding the impact of neuroticism on marital satisfaction.

The t-test results indicated that there was no significant gender difference in extraversion and conscientiousness. However, a notable gender difference was observed in agreeableness with higher agreeableness in women than in men. No significant gender differences were found in conscientiousness, neuroticism openness to experience, extraversion, and marital satisfaction. This gender difference in Agreeableness could be associated with motivational and behavioral differences, such as women getting more interconnected social groups. Consequently, women may have been more motivated than men to maintain social and emotional bonds by expressing more agreeable traits. Consistent results supporting this notion were found in studies by John (2010) and Cross and Madson (1997).

The absence of a gender difference in conscientiousness between men and women aligned with cross-cultural studies, including those conducted by Costa et al. (2001). However, a study by Feingold (1994) presented contradictory results. Regarding the variable neuroticism, the notion of no significant gender



difference was contradicted by studies conducted by Sumantr (2016) and Hirsh (2011). No significant gender difference was observed concerning the variable openness to experience. This finding was consistent with studies by Ismattulina and Voronin (2016) and Weisberg (2011). Similarly, in Extraversion, no significant gender difference was observed. Opposing results were found by Chapman (2007), Robbins et al. (1997), and Jung (1995).

No significant gender difference was found in terms of the variable marital satisfaction. In past decades, marital dissatisfaction has been linked to women's limited education and their role as stay-at-home housewives (Bernard, 1972). However, contemporary changes in societal roles have resulted in educated and employed women who no longer adhere to traditional home maker roles. Present-day challenges in meeting both family and work demands were shared by partners, contributing to a counterbalance of marital difficulties and ultimately enhancing marital satisfaction (Amato et al., 2007).

## Summary and Conclusion

The study investigated the interaction between Big Five personality factors and marital satisfaction with a specific focus on gender differences. Using Pearson's correlation method, the analysis uncovered meaningful relationships between certain personality traits and marital well-being. Notably, conscientiousness and extraversion demonstrated positive correlations with marital satisfaction, while neuroticism exhibited a noteworthy negative correlation. These findings are mostly consistent with existing research, highlighting how personality traits influence the dynamics of marital relationships. Regarding gender differences, the study identified no significant distinctions in conscientiousness, openness to experience, neuroticism, extraversion, or marital satisfaction between men and women. However, the study found significant gender difference in terms of Agreeableness.

In conclusion, the study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between personality traits and marital satisfaction. However, it is imperative to interpret these findings within the context of their limitations.

## Limitations

Despite efforts to minimize errors, there are certain limitations to this study. Firstly, despite conscientious efforts to minimize errors, the exclusive focus on personality factors may have resulted in overlooking other

potential variables that contribute to marital satisfaction.

Secondly, the study did not include LGBTQI+ couples, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to a more diverse population. Marital dynamics within LGBTQI+ relationships may differ significantly from heterosexual relationships, and the omission of this demographic group restricts the applicability of the study's conclusions.

Furthermore, the participants were limited to a specific age range (25 to 40 years) and limited geographic locations in Kerala. This restriction may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population

Acknowledging these limitations sets the stage for future research endeavors.

### **Suggestions**

Future research on marital satisfaction could benefit from several improvements to enhance our understanding.

Expanding the study's scope beyond personality factors to include variables such as love, commitment, communication styles, and financial dynamics would acknowledge the potential influence of a broader array of emotional and practical aspects on marital satisfaction.

Additionally, it is crucial to include LGBTQI+ couples in the study to ensure a more diverse representation of relationships and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting marital satisfaction across different demographic groups.

A longitudinal study design may be beneficial to capture the dynamic nature of relationships and track changes in marital satisfaction over time. Incorporating qualitative research methods, such as interviews or focus groups, alongside quantitative data collection can provide deeper insights into participants' experiences and perceptions.

Broadening the study's scope to involve participants from various geographic locations and different age groups, both within and outside Kerala, is important. This could enhance the study's generalizability and allow for a more detailed analysis of cultural and regional influences.

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