



Success Factors for Marital Satisfaction of Women in South Korea: Focusing on Interaction Factors

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행복한 결혼생활을 위한 성공요인 : 상호작용요인을 중심으로

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Abstract

This study investigated the association of marital satisfaction with spouse interaction factors as well as affecting factors among married women in South Korea. A survey of 209 married women was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The findings showed that women's marital satisfaction was higher when basic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, were met. Marital satisfaction was also higher when respondents felt that they had good communication with their spouses and when they spent an average of 30 minutes to 1 hour per day in conversation with their spouses. In addition, marital satisfaction was higher when women's economic status was higher and when they had an androgynous sex role identity. Based on the results of this study, a marriage adaptation program suitable for Korean culture should be developed so that spouse interaction factors experienced by married women can positively affect their marital satisfaction.

Key words : Marital satisfaction, Interaction factor, Women

I . Introduction

Marriage refers to the process of building a community of family in which individuals with potentially different values, needs, and characters agree to live together (Roh & Lee, 2013). Psychological support from spouses helps to enhance health, such as physical and psychological well-being and improved responsiveness to acute and chronic life stresses (Ross et al., 1990). In addition, marriage has advantages in that the social network expanded through marriage reduces

individual isolation (McPherson et al., 2006).

In contrast, an unhappy marriage has negative effects on physiological, relational, economic, and other aspects of life. Regarding the physiological aspect, an aggressive spousal interaction process aggravates the health of individuals by repeatedly activating their physiological stress system, including the pituitary adrenal axis, an endocrine system (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). This type of stress is the most severe experienced by adults (Ditzen et al., 2011) and is related to increased cortisol levels (Saxbe et al., 2008) and weakened

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immune responses (Glaser & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2005). As to the relational aspect, marital conflict can have a negative influence on the emotional development of children in the long term (Hahlweg & Richter, 2010). With respect to the economic aspect, divorce or even the increased stress that can result from low marital satisfaction can increase personal expenditures as well as societal costs. For all these reasons, effective strategies are needed to address issues affecting marital satisfaction.

Data released by Statistics Korea in April 2015 showed that the divorce rate in Korea has continued to increase. Specifically, the divorce rate increased 0.9% from the year before, while the marriage rate decreased 1.3%. According to the data, the average duration of marriage was 14.1 years, and the divorce rate was higher when the average duration of marriage was longer. According to Statistics Korea, the data indicate that spouses postponed divorce because of either their children's admission to college or marriage, even if the spouses had experienced marital conflicts or had been dissatisfied with their marriage for a long time. Decreases in marital satisfaction have been found to be more prominent in the later stage of marriage than in the earlier stage (Yoo, 1993) and more pronounced in women than men (Oh et al., 2008). In a meta-analysis of studies of gender differences in marital satisfaction from 1970 to 2009, Jackson et al. (2014) reported that marital satisfaction of wives was significantly lower than that of husbands, that marital satisfaction varied depending on culture, and that marital satisfaction in Asian culture in particular was lower than that in other cultures. The latter finding is consistent with study results showing that the marital satisfaction score of American married couples averaged 5.43 out of 7 (Nelson et al., 2013), while

that of Korean married couples was considerably lower at 3.91 out of 5 in men and 3.52 out of 5 in women (Oshio et al., 2013).

The evolving characteristics of marriage in Korean society can be divided into four categories reflecting the changing roles and characteristics of married women (Lee & Lim, 2013). First, married couples in Korea are in a transitional period in which the family is changing from a patriarchal to an egalitarian structure, creating different expectations between spouses and thus causing conflicts. Second, the tendency of male heads of families to involve themselves excessively in work widens the communication gap between spouses. Third, although the Korean family is becoming a nuclear family, spouses cannot be separated from their families of origin, leading to conflicts. Fourth and finally, although the functional characteristics of women are becoming more important as they increasingly enter and impact society, husbands are still the predominant decision makers in the family. Husbands' retention of decision making power is an important issue because the resulting communication breakdown with wives can be severe and can continue on a long-term basis. Any of these characteristics can be the cause of decreasing marital satisfaction among wives, as they can place more burdens on women than on men.

In the intimate relationship of married couples, it is difficult to clearly differentiate the variables that affect marital satisfaction, but the variables can be generally divided into individual internal factors and interaction factors (Lee & Yun, 2007). Individual internal factors include one's character, values, self-esteem, and internal control, while interaction factors include one's communication methods, conflict resolution methods, and stress coping strategies as well as the sex role attitudes of

couples and the mutual role expectations between couples. Marital satisfaction is better explored by focusing on interaction factors in particular, given that the individual communication methods of couples constitute an important factor in explaining marital satisfaction (Williamson et al., 2013). The vulnerability-stress-adaptation (VAS) model (Karney & Bradbury, 1995) indicates that when conflicts and stresses increase in the relationship of interacting spouses, it is likely that their problem solving ability decreases and their depression and/or hostility increase.

Based on the VAS model, this study aims to investigate the relationship of marital satisfaction to interaction factors, including communication with the spouse, basic psychological needs for a marital relationship, sex role attitude, sex role conflict, and others, that potentially affect the marital satisfaction of married women. The ultimate goal is to generate basic data for developing a program to increase marital satisfaction.

II . Methods

1. Design

This study is intended to identify communication with spouse, basic psychological needs for marital relationship, sex role attitude, and sex role conflict and investigate the related factors with a structured questionnaire.

2. Participants and data collection

The participants of this study were married women aged 35-55 years who had spouses and participated in social and religious activities, such as homemaker classes and church volunteering activities in 3 cities of the Yeongnam region. For

data collection, the author visited related organizations and explained the purpose of and reason for the study to the participants, and took written consents from the participants.

The number of subjects for correlation analysis and regression analysis was set at 230 by considering the dropout rate, under the conditions of two-tailed test, 0.05 significance level, medium effect size of 0.3 and explanatory power of 0.8, using G*power program. Excluding 21 respondents with incomplete responses, 209 participants were considered to be sufficient for this study.

3. Ethical considerations

The study obtained an approval from the IRB of P University. All participants were fully explained that they could withdraw if they didn't want to participate in the questionnaire and that the result of the study would be used only for research purposes. Written consents were obtained from the participants and the questionnaires were distributed.

4. Instruments

1) Sex role conflict

An instrument consisting of 29 items from the Gender Role Conflict Scale developed by O'Neil et al. (1986) and translated by Kim et al. (2003) was used. The instrument consists of 13 items on success, power and competition (SPC), 10 items on restrictive emotionality (RE) and 6 items on conflict between work and family relation (CBWF). With a 5-point Likert scale, a higher score means an elevated level of sex role conflict. As for the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α was .85 in Kim et al. (2003) and .84 in this study.

2) Sex role attitude

An instrument with 17 items that Moon (1989) has modified from the Sex Role Attitude Scale of Osmond & Martin (1975) was used. Each item consists of a 5-point Likert scale from 'Strongly agree' (1 point) to 'Strongly disagree' (5 points), and negative items were reverse-scored. The scores range from 17 points to 85 points. Based on 3 points, lower scores indicate traditional sex role attitude while higher scores indicate modern sex role attitude. For the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α was .82 in Moon (1989) and .83 in this study.

3) Sex role identity

The Korean Sex Role Inventory of Chung (1990) consisting of 40 items, 20 items for masculinity and 20 items for femininity, was employed. Masculinity scores and femininity scores were categorized into femininity, masculinity, androgyny and undifferentiation according to the median-split-method. As for the reliability of the instrument by sub-category, Cronbach's α was .91 for masculinity and .84 for femininity in the study by Chung, while .91 for masculinity and .84 for femininity in this study.

4) Communication with spouse

The communication scale of ENRICH (Evaluating & Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness) Inventory developed by Olson et al. (1983) and translated by Lim (1992) was used. Each item consists of a single factor that measures the perception of respondents as to whether they share beliefs and important feelings each other, perception of information exchange method with spouses, and how much they communicate with their spouses. For example, it includes 'I easily express my true feelings to my spouse' and 'My spouse listen to what I talk about.' When aggregate

scores are lower, respondents are dissatisfied with communication with their spouses; while aggregate scores are higher they have a good communication each other. It consists of a 5-point Likert scale with 10 items, and items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9 are reverse-scored items. For the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α was .88 in Lim (1992) and .84 in this study.

5) Basic psychological needs

The Basic Psychological Needs Importance Scale for Couples (BPNIS-Couple) developed by Han & Shin (2006) was modified for this study. Respondents answered on a 7-point Likert scale with 18 items from "Not at all" to "Very often." This study measured satisfaction with relatedness, autonomy and competence, the three factors of basic psychological needs. The items for satisfying relatedness includes 'I feel close and intimate when I am with my spouse.' The item for satisfying autonomy includes 'I feel I am not controlled and pressed in any way when I am with my spouse.' The item for satisfying competence includes 'I feel I am a competent person when I am with my spouse.' Higher aggregate score indicate that psychological needs are well satisfied. As for the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α was .88 in Han et al. (2006) and .96 in this study.

6) Marital satisfaction

The Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) developed by Roach et al. (1981) and modified by Kook (2008) was used. The instrument consists of a total of 22 items: 7 items for positive marriage, 9 items for affectionate marital relationship, and 6 items for adaptation for marriage. A 5-point Likert scale was used with higher scores indicating higher marital satisfaction. For the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α was .89 in Kook (2008) and .88 in this study.

5. Data analysis

For data analysis, the following statistical analyses were used with SPSS/Win 18.0.

Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for the general characteristics of participants and marital satisfaction. ANOVA was employed for the difference in marital satisfaction by the general characteristics of participants. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for correlation between marital satisfaction of participants and the variables. Stepwise regression was performed to analyze the factors that affect marital satisfaction of participants.

III. Results

1. General characteristics of the subjects

Frequency analysis was conducted to examine the demographic characteristics of respondents. The results showed that the most common age group was 40-44 years (32.1%), followed by 39 years or younger (23.9%), 45-49 years (23.4%), 50-54 years (13.4%), 55-59 years (5.7%) and 60 years and older (1.4%). The most common duration of marriage was 15-19 years (27.3%), followed by 20-24 years (22.0%), 10-14 years (17.2%), 5-9 years (11.0%), 4 years or less (8.6%), 30 years and more (7.2%) and 25-29 years (6.2%). As for marriage type, the most common marriage type was love marriage (69.9%), followed by arranged marriage (7.2%) and mixed type marriage (1.4%). As for the highest level of education, the most prevalent education level was university (48.3%), followed by junior college (31.1%), high school (13.4%) and graduate school and above (7.2%). As for the economic status, the most common response

was medium (85.6%), followed by low (12.4%) and high (1.9%). The most common type of family structure was nuclear family (87.6%), followed by extended family (10.5%) and others(1.9%). The most common number of children was 2 (60.3%), followed by 1 (23.9%) and more than 3 (11.5%); and 4.3% answered they don't have children. The most common conversation time was 30 minutes~1 hour (41.1%), followed by less than 30 minutes (28.7%), 1~2 hours (22.5%) and more than 2 hours (7.7%) (<Table 1>).

2. Marital satisfaction difference depending on general characteristics

An ANOVA analysis was conducted to examine the difference in marital satisfaction by demographic characteristics. The results showed that the differences in marital satisfaction by age ($F=4.06$, $p<.002$), economic status ($F=6.25$, $p=.002$), average daily conversation time with spouse ($F=11.22$, $p<.001$) and sex role identity ($F=6.87$, $p<.001$) were statistically significant. It was found that the differences in marital satisfaction by the duration of marriage, relationship length before marriage, age difference with spouse and marriage type were not statistically significant ($p>.05$) (<Table 2>).

3. Averages of main variables

A descriptive statistical analysis was performed to investigate the characteristics of responses to each scale. The results showed that the average age was 43.76 (± 7.04), average sex role conflict was 3.20 ($\pm .52$), average sex role attitude was 3.54 ($\pm .49$) and communication with spouse was 34.19 (± 5.31). The average of all the categories in basic psychological needs was 35.60 (± 6.72), while the average marital satisfaction was 3.04 ($\pm .33$) (<Table 3>).

<Table 1> General Characteristics of the Subjects

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Age	< 39	50	23.9
	40~44	67	32.1
	45~49	49	23.4
	50~54	28	13.4
	55~59	12	5.7
	> 60	3	1.4
Duration of Marriage	< 4 years	18	8.6
	5~9 years	23	11.0
	10~14 years	36	17.2
	15~19 years	57	27.3
	20~24 years	46	22.0
	25~29 years	13	6.2
	> 30 years	15	7.2
Marriage type	Arranged marriage	15	7.2
	Love marriage	146	69.9
	Mixed(arranged+love) marriage	3	1.4
Level of education	High school	28	13.4
	College	65	31.1
	University	101	48.3
	Graduate or higher	15	7.2
Economic status	High	4	1.9
	Middle	179	85.6
	Low	26	12.4
Family structure	Nuclear	183	87.6
	Expanded	22	10.5
	Others	4	1.9
Number of children	0	9	4.3
	1	50	23.9
	2	126	60.3
	3 or more	24	11.5
Conversation time with spouses	< 30 min.	60	28.7
	30 min. ~ 1 hr	86	41.1
	1 ~ 2 hr	47	22.5
	> 2 hours	16	7.7

<Table 2> Marital Satisfaction Difference Depending on General Characteristics

Variables	Category	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Age	< 39	50	3.04	0.29	4.06	.002
	40~44 age	67	3.07	0.34		
	45~49 age	49	2.97	0.33		
	50~54 age	27	3.14	0.27		
	55~59 age	12	3.09	0.23		
	> 60	3	2.36	0.45		
Duration of Marriage	< 4 years	18	2.98	0.40	0.86	.527
	5~9 years	23	3.01	0.28		
	10~14 years	36	3.10	0.27		
	15~19 years	57	3.00	0.36		
	20~24 years	45	3.05	0.30		
	25~29 years	13	3.16	0.24		
	> 30 years	15	2.98	0.44		
Marriage form	Arranged marriage	15	3.08	0.25	0.30	.744
	Love marriage	146	3.04	0.32		
	Mixed(arranged+love)	47	3.01	0.36		
Level of education	High school	28	3.07	0.38	1.07	.362
	College	64	3.07	0.31		
	University	101	3.02	0.33		
	Graduate or higher	15	2.92	0.27		
Economic status	High	4	3.47	0.34	6.25	.002
	Middle	178	3.05	0.28		
	Low	26	2.90	0.50		
Family type	Nuclear	182	3.04	0.32	1.52	.222
	Expanded	22	3.06	0.30		
	Others	4	2.76	0.52		
The number of children	0	9	3.12	0.25	0.48	.698
	1	50	3.00	0.32		
	2	125	3.05	0.34		
	more than 3	24	3.06	0.32		
Conversation time with spouses	< 30 minutes	60	2.85	0.35	11.22	P<.001
	30 min~1 hr	85	3.08	0.26		
	1~2 hr	47	3.14	0.34		
	> 2 hours	16	3.20	0.22		
Sex role identity	Masculinity	25	2.91	0.37	6.87	P<.001
	Feminity	34	3.04	0.30		
	Androgyny	70	3.17	0.31		
	Undifferentiated	78	2.97	0.30		

<Table 3> Averages of Main Variables

Variables	Categories	Min	Max	Average	SD
Age		27	62	43.76	7.04
Sex role conflict	Success, Power, Competition	1.54	4.77	3.19	0.58
	Emotional expression, Affectionate behavior	1.20	5.00	3.16	0.66
	Work, Family conflict	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.81
	Total	1.69	4.86	3.20	0.52
Sender role attitude	Gender competence awareness	1.25	5.00	3.60	0.51
	Gender role awareness	1.00	5.00	3.40	0.58
	Total	1.18	5.00	3.54	0.49
Communication time with spouse		22.00	50.00	34.19	5.31
Basic psychological needs	Relation	7.00	49.00	35.43	7.85
	Autonomy	7.00	49.00	35.57	8.08
	Competence	7.00	49.00	35.81	7.17
	Total	7.00	49.00	35.60	6.72
Marital satisfaction	Affectionate marital relationship	1.00	4.89	3.30	0.69
	Adaptation to marriage life	1.00	5.00	3.30	0.72
	Dissatisfaction with marital life	1.00	4.57	2.48	0.69
	Total	2.00	3.82	3.04	0.33

4. Correlation among variables

A correlation analysis between marital satisfaction and related variables showed that marital satisfaction had a significant correlation with

communication with spouse ($r=.47$, $p<.001$) and basic psychological needs ($r=.52$, $p<.001$)(<Table 4>).

<Table 4> Correlation among the Variables

	Age	Sex role conflict	Sex role attitude	Communication time with spouse	Basic psychological needs	Marital satisfaction
Age	1					
Sex role conflict	-.034	1				
Sex role attitude	-.251**	-.123	1			
Communication time with spouse	-.028	-.203**	.131	1		
Basic psychological needs	.012	-.084	.185**	.606**	1	
Marital satisfaction	-.045	-.055	-.090	.472**	.526**	1

5. Influence of each variable on marital satisfaction

In order to analyze the influential factors affecting marital satisfaction, basic psychological needs, communication with spouse, conversation time, economic status and sex role identify, which showed a significant difference or significant correlation, were used as independent variables. To examine the effect of the independent variables on marital satisfaction, a dummy regression analysis was performed by treating conversation time and economic status as dummy variables. The result of checking whether the regression model meets the test criteria is as follows. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.90 indicates that autocorrelation was not present among independent variables. Tolerance limits were .60-.98, all above 0.1 and VIF values were 1.01-1.69, lower than 10, indicating that there was no problem with multicollinearity. From the analysis of residuals, linearity was confirmed on the normal P-P plot of standardized residuals in the recent psychological state, and the conditions of normality and homoscedasticity of the residuals were verified as the residuals were evenly

distributed around 0. Therefore, this model meets the criteria for regression analysis.

The results of the regression analysis showed that basic psychological needs, communication with spouse, conversation time, economic status and sex role identity had a significant effect on marital satisfaction with the power of test at 37% ($F=18.31, p<.001$). More specifically, marital satisfaction was higher when basic psychological needs were higher ($B=.02, P<.001$) and communication with spouse was more frequent($B=.01, p<.001$).

Marital satisfaction was higher when conversation time was 30 minutes-1 hour ($B=.17, p<.001$), 1-2 hours ($B=.15, p=.007$) and 2 hours or more ($B=.15, p=.047$), compared to 30 minutes or less. As for economic status, marital satisfaction was lower in low economic status than in high economic status($B=-.11, p=.044$) and no significant difference was found between medium and high economic statuses. It was found that marital satisfaction was higher in androgyny than masculinity($B=.08, p=.040$) and no significant difference was found among masculinity, femininity and undifferentiation type(<Table 5>).

<Table 5> Influence of Each Variable on Marital Satisfaction

Variable	B	β	t	p	Cum R2	Adjusted R2	F	p
Basic psychological needs	0.02	0.34	4.83	p<.001	0.28	0.27	18.31	<.001
Communication time with spouse	0.01	0.17	2.36	0.019	0.31	0.31		
Conversation time (30 min.~1 hr)	0.17	0.25	3.70	p<.001	0.34	0.33		
Economic status (Low)	-0.11	-0.11	-2.03	0.044	0.35	0.34		
Gender role identity (androgyny)	0.08	0.12	2.06	0.040	0.36	0.35		
Conversation time (1~2 hrs)	0.15	0.19	2.71	0.007	0.38	0.36		
Conversation time (> 2hours)	0.15	0.13	2.00	0.047	0.39	0.37		

IV. Discussion

This study was conducted to identify factors affecting marital satisfaction of Korean married women based on the VAS model of Karney & Bradbury (1995), with the goal of generating basic data for development of an effective intervention program to enhance the health and quality of life of married women. The study results showed that interaction factors, including basic psychological needs, communication with the spouse, conversation time, economic status, and sex role identity, were significant predictors of women's marital satisfaction.

First, it was found that women's marital satisfaction increased when the satisfaction scores for basic psychological needs were higher. In other words, when autonomy, competence, and relatedness were satisfied in marriage, women felt more satisfaction. This result is consistent with studies suggesting that married couples are more satisfied and devoted when their basic psychological needs are met (Patrick et al., 2007) and that unmet basic psychological needs can result in serious marital conflicts (Kim & Jeong, 2007). Meeting of basic psychological needs, also referred to as psychosocial prosperity (Diener et al., 2010), seems to be essential for the happiness and wellness of married women because it is related to psychological experiences such as intimacy with others and self-efficacy (Tay & Diener, 2011). Therefore, for an interaction relationship such as marriage to be sound, it is necessary for married women to feel that they have (a) autonomy in that they do not have unwanted pressure or distracting factors, (b) competence in that they believe they have sufficient resources to achieve their goals, and (c) relatedness

in that they believe they have well-established social networks of friends or neighbors who can help them when necessary (Molix & Nichols, 2013).

Second, marital satisfaction increased when respondents felt that they had smooth communication with their spouses and when their daily conversation time was 30 minutes or more as opposed to 30 minutes or less. That is, perceiving that they shared important feelings or information properly with their spouses and had adequate communication with each other strengthened their intimacy, increasing their marital satisfaction. One study reported that the marital satisfaction of married women in the Asian region is 1.6 times lower than that in Western countries (Jackson et al., 2014), and this finding is consistent with the view that at least 30 minutes of daily conversation is needed between married couples in Asian cultures such as Korea's and that lack of adequate conversation time diminishes marital satisfaction. In addition, our findings are consistent with reports that married couples who have more negative communications or who express negative emotions during communications are more likely to divorce (Lavner & Bradbury, 2012) and that couples who have similar personalities express a higher level of marital satisfaction because they can communicate smoothly (Hofstee, 1994). However, these findings need to be interpreted with caution because Costa and McCrae (1992) suggested that when couples have neurotic personalities, marital dissatisfaction can occur even though they have similar personalities. Being understanding of the opinions and emotional condition of their spouses and being able to empathize with their thoughts and feelings can be effective in maintaining a positive relationship between married couples (Jung & Kim,

2010; Loscocco & Walzer, 2013). For example, one study suggested that a high level of empathic ability in married women increased marital satisfaction by raising their level of forgiveness for their husbands (Kim & Ahn, 2011). Given all these findings, we conclude that a communication intervention for married women that incorporates empathy training could be helpful in improving and increasing satisfaction with marital relationships.

Third, marital satisfaction was higher when respondents' economic status was higher. That is, satisfaction was higher when respondents ranked their economic status as "high" rather than "low." This finding is consistent with a study suggesting that marital satisfaction is higher when, among the factors affecting marital satisfaction of women, monthly family income is high and career women have professional jobs (Son & You, 2008). Our finding is also consistent with a report that being in a marriage with financial difficulties has a negative effect on the health of women and that divorced women with low income showed reduced stress due to the termination of a stressful marriage, resulting in higher survival rates (Choi & Marks, 2014). These results seem to be due to the fact that low monthly family income can result in more marital conflict due to financial difficulties, thus resulting in low marital satisfaction (Barnett & Gareis, 2002) as well as a negative effect on health among women.

Fourth, marital satisfaction was higher when respondents had an androgynous sex role identity. In other words, married women who assumed the sex roles of both sexes were more able to smoothly cope with situations and remain psychologically healthy, resulting in higher marital satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the results of studies suggesting that married couples

with a greater feeling of happiness and longer relationships were more likely to have androgynous sex role identities (Antill, 1983) and that married couples with such sex role identities were less likely to experience psychological pain (Peterson et al., 1989). The authors of these studies concluded that increased marital satisfaction was due to spouses' enhanced understanding of each other as a result of sharing their lives, jointly performing household routines, and parenting with greater respect for each other's perspectives rather than maintaining traditional sex role divisions.

Regarding the relationship between marital satisfaction and potential divorce, Previti and Amato (2003) suggested that couples with low marital satisfaction were more likely to consider the possibility of divorce. In their study, the mean score for marital satisfaction of married women was 3.04 out of 5, while in Kong's study (2008), this score was 30.33 out of 60.00. Although an accurate comparison of these studies' results is not possible due to the difference in measurement tools used, the participants in Previti and Amato's study (2003) were ordinary married women, while those in Kong's study (2008) were visiting couples' counseling clinics and thus were more likely to have marital problems.

Considering that interaction factors of married women were found to be significant predicting variables for marital satisfaction in this study, we believe that the health of married women in clinical or community settings should also assess the interaction factors potentially negatively affecting the women's marital satisfaction. This is necessary because women who experience low marital satisfaction are at increased risk of health problems.

Interventions intended to improve marital satisfaction in Korean married women should

address their daily conversation time with spouses, sex role identities, and emotional status. Regarding the effects of marriage duration on marital satisfaction, future studies should employ a longitudinal design to measure long-term changes in satisfaction variables because marital relationships tend to extend over long periods and to exhibit recurring problems. In addition, given the evidence that interventions intended to improve marital satisfaction should address both genders' perspectives (Jung & Kim, 2010), future studies should examine the two-way interaction effect on marital satisfaction by employing married couples as subjects. As one focus for such studies, it would be helpful to develop an empathic ability program and apply it to married couples, as a couple's level of mutual empathic ability regarding emotional states can predict the stability and adaptability of their marriage; therefore, improving a couple's empathic ability can provide the basis for a more positive attitude toward each other. In addition, self-differentiation, itself an emotional characteristic, is an ability to differentiate reason from emotion as well as to differentiate oneself from others (Bowen, 1978). Because those who have a high level of self-differentiation can not only build intimate relationships with others but also live a self-directed life based on reasonable principles, it is advantageous to increase the level of self-differentiation in women even in the pre-marriage stage to help avoid the deterioration of marital relationships and family instability (Cho & Chung, 2008). Therefore, it is worthwhile to provide pre-marriage education that identifies and improves the self-differentiation level of women who are soon to be married.

V. Conclusion

Our descriptive research effort examined the association between interaction factors in married women, focusing on the communication with spouses, basic psychological needs of a marital relationship, sex role attitude, sex role conflict, and marital satisfaction. This study was conducted to provide the basic data needed to develop an effective program for improving marital relationships.

The results of this study show that several interaction factors, including communication with spouses, conversation time, economic status, basic psychological needs, and sex role identity, had a significant effect on women's marital satisfaction. Therefore, to improve marital satisfaction among women, it would be beneficial to develop an intervention program focused on increasing married couples' interaction factors, particularly their mutual communication and understanding.

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