

## THE IMPACT OF GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES ON MARITAL SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN AND MEN IN THE CITY OF SARI (NORTHERN IRAN)

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**Abstract:** The present research aims to identify the level of marital satisfaction among employed women and men and examine the impact of factors affecting their marital satisfaction, such as gender attitudes, in Sari city, Iran. To this end, a number of participants were randomly selected to take part in a survey. After collecting the required data, it was analyzed, and the results were presented. According to the findings of the present study, it was shown that women have more modern attitudes toward gender roles than men, and that men report a higher traditional attitude toward women, which is consistent with many studies. Additionally, men reported higher marital satisfaction than women. The study also found that the most influential independent variables affecting the level of marital satisfaction of the respondents were the respondent's gender, the acceptance rate of traditional gender role attitudes, and the extent of division of gender-specific tasks. Moreover, the results revealed that the more traditional the participants, the more satisfied they were with their marriages. Furthermore, as the perceived fairness of the division of household labor increased, the level of participation of family members in this division also rose. It was also found that an increase in the division of household labor between couples led to greater marital satisfaction. Lastly, this research suggests that the acceptance of traditional gender roles among couples, as an important aspect of their beliefs about marriage and family responsibilities, plays a significant role in the division of household labor and is closely linked to marital satisfaction. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of considering the role of gender attitudes and their impact on marital satisfaction, and suggests that further research should consider other factors, such as women's employment and men's participation in household labor, in order to obtain more reliable results.

**Keywords:** *marital satisfaction, gender role attitudes, division of household labor, perceived fairness of the division of household labor, employed women, Iran.*

### Introduction

The most significant feature of Iranian society in the last hundred years is its transition. It is an undeniable fact that Iran has undergone changes as it transitions from a



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traditional to a modern or non-traditional society, facing challenges related to the conflict between weakened traditional values and the emerging but not yet fully popular modern values. In this regard, Iran, like other developing countries, is experiencing particular issues during this transition from "tradition" to "modernity" (Akbari, 2020; Jamshidiha et al., 2013; Shiri, 2019). Social changes caused by modernity and industrialization have had significant effects on family structures and the status of family members. The evolution of urban lifestyles and women's contributions to society have altered individuals' attitudes toward role distribution and, accordingly, power distribution within the family (Sarukhani & Dodman, 2010). Giddens (2003) believes that family roles and the roles of its members are fundamentally changing, and these changes are particularly evident in terms of individual and social identity. He argues that in the past generation, the relationship between men and women was based on fixed roles, especially in traditional marriages. Women knew what to expect from their marital lives - they were housewives and mothers. However, in the next generation, everything has changed. A woman's role is no longer fixed, and being a woman is no longer a constant or clear concept in terms of tasks and identity. The most important shift is that women no longer live based on cultural or traditional expectations; instead, they create their own identities. According to Giddens, they construct their identities through their social roles. In this context, their self-knowledge has become a "reflexive" project in which they constantly reflect on who they are, how they appear, and what they want to become. Additionally, gender refers to the cultural, social, and knowledge-based differences between men and women. Gender roles are broad concepts upon which many responsibilities and tasks within families are based. One aspect of gender roles is the acceptance of gender-based stereotypes, which refers to the orientation toward either accepting or rejecting these stereotypes for men and women (Riahi, 2007).

In Iranian society, the issue of identity is of particular importance and complexity, especially with regard to women's identities. Women in patriarchal families strongly resist gender stereotypes through the development of their reflexive identities (Abdollahi et al., 2014). Nowadays, many men and women question their traditional gender roles and seek to change their attitudes. Traditional attitudes toward gender roles are evolving, and women are demanding equal gender roles with men. These changes have affected individuals' social identities within families (Riahi, 2007; Beheshti et al., 2021). The Iranian family, too, has undergone major transformations as a result of modernity, and its structure has evolved. Women's awareness of their status and their place in society has increased to the point where they now believe in gender equality. This development reflects an increased awareness of gender identity among women (Dehnavi et al., 2005; Abdollahi et al., 2014).

In the present era, women and girls worldwide are questioning their traditional identities and seeking roles beyond the domestic sphere. Attitudes and definitions related to women and their roles in society have been reconsidered and their legitimacy questioned (Beheshti et al., 2021). Some studies suggest that a significant factor motivating women to delay or avoid marriage is the loss of legitimacy and desirability of the roles that confine women to being solely mothers and wives (Ghanbari Barzian et al., 2023).

In a developing society like Iran, on one hand, there is an emphasis on the contribution of both men and women to development, while on the other hand, the culture and rules remain largely traditional. As a result, a conflict arises between traditional and modern roles, especially for women, and the contrast between traditional and modern structures in society contributes to increasing rates of divorce and marital conflict (Ghasemi & Sarokhany, 2013). In dual-earner marriages, women's employment has not only altered traditional gender role attitudes toward more egalitarian views but has also impacted the division of household labor (Mickelson et al., 2006).

### **These factors are effective in marital satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction refers to the degree of contentment couples feel in their relationship. This means the extent to which they are satisfied with their marriage. Nowadays, due to new values and changes in societies, cultures, women's situations, and women's education, women's expectations toward marital relationships have also changed (Kaplan & Maddux, 2002). Winch (1974) proposes that couple satisfaction results from the adaptation between the present situation and the one expected; that is, the adaptation between the expectations individuals have of marital life and what they actually experience. Therefore, identifying the factors that have the greatest impact on marital satisfaction is essential for improving marital relationships. Low marital satisfaction is associated with divorce, and since, according to Pourshahbaz et al. (2020), Iran has the highest divorce rate among Islamic countries and the Middle East, and is also the fourth country in the world in terms of increasing divorce rates (Ghanbari Barzian et al., 2023; Askari-Nodoushan et al., 2019), examining factors related to marital dissatisfaction is crucial. Several studies in Iran have shown a strong relationship between marital satisfaction and divorce (Tavakol et al., 2017; Pourshahbaz et al., 2020). The relationship between wife and husband marital satisfaction is considered the most important factor and quality determinant index of marriage. A satisfied couple's relationship significantly affects their psychological health and personal growth. Thus, identifying the variables involved in couple satisfaction is highly important when planning for its improvement, and one of the influential variables is gender and gender roles.

Despite significant changes in gender roles in the last half-century, there is limited research on the type of gender attitudes, marital roles, and marital satisfaction. It seems that gender as a variable, along with the type of gender attitude, can affect couples' satisfaction. One aspect of a couple's life that has been shown to be linked to marital satisfaction is the division of household labor, including childcare. The division of household labor between spouses is one of the most contentious issues in contemporary marriages. Employed couples, especially employed women, frequently encounter conflicts between family and work life. This situation can affect the satisfaction of individuals, families, and even their jobs (Li et al., 2020). For example, research comparing the relationship between marital satisfaction and the division of labor between husband and wife in three Asian countries showed that all wives were less satisfied with their marriages than husbands, primarily because wives did disproportionately more household labor than husbands (Fuwa, 2015; Oshio, 2013).

Women around the world still disproportionately carry out household and childcare duties, facing a “double burden” both at home as unpaid work and outside the home as paid work (Bianchi et al., 2000). Scholars have suggested that the division of household activities reflects the power relations between husband and wife in modern family systems (Kiani et al., 2010). Studies in Iranian society about the relationship between family power structure and marital conflicts suggest that there is an association between the family power structure and marital conflicts (Pourshahbaz et al., 2020). Additionally, the family power structure can influence women’s marital contentment, with differences observed between families where both husband and wife work and those where the wife is a housewife (Zolfaqarpour et al., 2004). Therefore, this study proposes that gender and the type of gender attitude, as independent variables in this research, may affect marital satisfaction directly and indirectly through the degree of division of household labor and the perceived fairness of the distribution of household labor.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Contrary to the emphasis of some cultural and religious values on the importance of marriage in the Iranian family, significant changes have occurred in the social beliefs of Iranians regarding the family system, especially with respect to divorce. In contemporary Iranian society, the difference between the attitudes of men and women is a fundamental issue in marital conflict, which is correlated with lower marital satisfaction (Pourshahbaz et al., 2020; Akbari, 2020). In Iran, the divorce rate has rapidly increased compared to two decades ago (Askari-Nodoushan et al., 2019).

According to Akbari (2020), in 2019, 174,831 divorces were reported out of 530,225 marriages registered in the country, which indicates that one divorce occurred for every two marriages. In addition to formal divorce, recent reports and statistics show that emotional divorce is now more common than formal divorce (Arbabzadeh et al., 2022). Therefore, in a society experiencing a high rate of marital dissatisfaction, where half of Iranian couples are dissatisfied with their lives (Eslami et al., 2020), the importance of studying the factors that affect marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction is both a priority and a necessity. Couples with higher marital satisfaction report better individual health (Tavakol, 2017).

Based on existing studies, marital conflict, dissatisfaction, gender attitudes, and traditional values are among the issues in Iranian society that contribute to the rising divorce rate (Arbabzadeh et al., 2022; Akbari, 2020; Pourshahbaz, 2020; Shiri, 2019). On the other hand, the developments of modernity and the resulting attitudes have had a significant impact on the structure of the Iranian family. The institution of the family, like many other institutions, has been exposed to cultural and value changes. One notable effect of macro-social transformations is the change in the role of gender, and consequently, the role of the wife, which, in this context, has undergone a far more significant transformation than the role of men. The transformation of attitudes, values, relationships, and roles is ongoing (Jamshidiha et al., 2013).

Among the important issues in this regard is the relationship between the sexes in the family and society, and the classification of gender equality (Adhami & Roganian, 2010). Inequality in family matters is one of the most significant factors influencing women’s marital satisfaction in Iranian society (Edalati & Redzuan, 2010).

Husbands and wives typically bring a mixture of gender-related attitudes and beliefs to their marriage, which, in turn, affect behavioral patterns within that marriage (Huston & Geis, 1993). Additionally, a woman's gender ideology determines how much power she wants to have in the marriage and in which sphere (home or work) she wants to define her identity (Hochschild, 2003). Therefore, while gender is known as an important indicator of the difference in satisfaction between men and women, it only reveals part of the reality. To better understand couples' satisfaction, their gender attitudes must also be considered (Fruton & Shojaei, 2020). This is because gender roles, such as perceptions of equality and fairness in the division of household labor, are often filtered through gender ideology, which can affect marital relationships. Since gender ideologies vary from person to person, attitudes about appropriate gender roles will also differ (Greenstein, 1996; Bianchi, 2000; Qian et al., 2016).

One of the main reasons for marital dissatisfaction, particularly in relation to gender attitudes, can be attributed to the division of household labor. This issue is particularly contentious for employed married women (Razeghi Nasrabad et al., 2021; Tabatabaei et al., 2019). Feminists, when analyzing household labor, argue that the gender division of household tasks is rooted in gender discrimination, which is itself grounded in the patriarchal structures of traditional societies. Consequently, they believe that the only solution to empower women is their participation in the labor market (Khadivi et al., 2022). Women's employment and their role in income generation can reduce the traditional cycle of household labor and, as a result, decrease men's power within the family, leading to the growth of cooperative family dynamics and shared decision-making. Families of employed women tend to have a more democratic structure compared to families of non-employed women (Bagheri et al., 2009).

Employed women, more than housewives, may perceive household labor as unfair, as the combination of traditional and modern roles can create role conflict and affect their well-being (Balali et al., 2017). Various studies have been conducted on the causes of couples' satisfaction in the country, with most focusing on personal and psychological aspects, communication skills, economic issues, and other factors. However, gender issues and gender roles have received relatively less attention in research on marital satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary to further explore the impact of gender attitudes, the division of household labor, and the perception of fairness in the distribution of household labor on marital satisfaction for both women and men.

Thus, the current research aims to investigate the effects of the degree of division of household labor and the perception of its fairness on the marital satisfaction of employed women and men.

### **Theoretical Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study is first to identify different views on gender roles (traditional, intermediate, and modern) and, subsequently, to analyze how these diverse views of gender roles influence marital satisfaction levels among employed women and men living in Sari.

This research seeks to identify different views on gender roles (traditional, intermediate, and modern) and to explain the relationship between these views, the division of household labor, and marital satisfaction among employed women and men in Sari city. The study integrates social role theory, gender socialization theory, and the

relative resource bargaining approach to create a new theoretical framework to explain the relationship between gender role attitudes, the division of household labor, and marital satisfaction. Previous research has shown that the type of attitude towards gender roles can significantly affect marital satisfaction (Li et al., 2020; Mickelson et al., 2006). Additionally, researchers have argued that the degree of division of household labor and the perception of its fairness can affect marital satisfaction (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016; Qian et al., 2016; Greenstein, 2000). Therefore, the main goal of this approach is to enhance the theoretical understanding of the role that couples' gender attitudes and the division of household labor, and its fairness, play in marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the results of this study contribute to the existing literature on the relationship between the division of household labor and marital satisfaction among employed couples.

### **Practical Significance of the Study**

Those involved in family development constantly face challenges such as decreasing marital satisfaction, increasing divorce rates, and a decline in marriage rates in Iranian society. Some sociologists even argue that the family has lost its function and become disordered. The phenomenon of divorce, which is one of the primary reasons for the decrease in marital satisfaction in Iran, has been growing despite social and cultural policies and plans over the last two decades. The efforts of policymaking institutions to control and reduce this phenomenon have not been very successful (Ghanbari Barzian et al., 2023).

Studies related to gender, which is one of the newer and more up-to-date areas of sociology, show that the changes caused by modernity, particularly those that have led to changes in values, are some of the most important factors contributing to conflict and an increase in divorce rates in Iranian society. Therefore, it is not surprising that the shift in gender roles and the conflict between the gender attitudes of women and men are considered to be among the most significant reasons for couples' dissatisfaction (Akbari, 2020). The results of Balali et al.'s research (2015) on the factors affecting the conflict between women's roles and its relationship with family conflicts indicate that the division of gender labor and belief in gender stereotypes increase the feeling of role conflict. Thus, the type of gender attitudes and the division of gender labor are considered significant issues within families.

The division of household labor is usually measured by the share of household tasks that women and men perform, and this share is influenced by gender ideology. It depends on the couple (Razeghi Nasrabad et al., 2021). Regarding the consequences of traditional gender ideology, it can be noted that it leads to increased role pressure on employed women due to men's non-participation in household labor, which results in greater marital dissatisfaction. It also affects the reduction of childbearing and lower marriage rates, as well as the discrimination women face in employment. The traditional gender attitude, which emphasizes men as breadwinners and women as housewives, can be a factor in reducing women's economic participation and increasing the gender gap in the economy (Few-Demo & Allen, 2012; Ghanbari Barzian et al., 2023; Gogerdchian et al., 2013; Rostami, 2014).

Although Iranian families have become more modern in their lifestyle and attitudes, positive attitudes toward women's employment, as a dimension of modernity in society,

are growing (Shiri, 2019). With the increasing share of women in higher education and, consequently, the workforce, family structures have moved toward democratization. Additionally, the positive contribution of women's employment to family stability has increased (Khadivi et al., 2022). Afrasiabi and Zia Kashani (2021) showed that women's employment has affected family dynamics, including men's roles and perceptions, leading to changes in the power structure and a move toward family democratization.

Moreover, the increasing trend of women's education and their desire to enter the labor market will influence future trends in women's employment. Despite this progress, however, women's traditional roles, especially in housekeeping and child-rearing, still place a significant burden on them. As a result, the combination of modern and traditional roles for employed women often leads to communication tensions and family disputes (Balali et al., 2015). Research in Iran has shown that women's economic activity outside the home influences the level of male participation in household labor and female participation in family decision-making, with female employment being associated with a decrease in husbands' decision-making power (BakhshiPour et al., 2019). Likewise, women's employment has led to increased marital satisfaction by improving the family's welfare (Khadivi et al., 2022).

Thus, this study aims to explore the change in patterns of attitudes toward gender roles and the participation of spouses in the division of household labor as influential factors shaped by socialization processes. The reproduction of gender attitudes is influenced by people's socialization, and the cultural background, values, and social norms that people adhere to play a significant role in the formation of egalitarian attitudes. The results of various studies indicate that in Iranian families, men tend to have more traditional attitudes toward women and continue to resist accepting modern roles within the family. Consequently, power relations emerge between husband and wife, particularly in the division of household labor, especially in families where both spouses work.

The goal of the current research is to investigate the relationship between the type of gender attitude of couples, the degree of household labor division, its fairness, and the satisfaction levels of women and men in the family. The findings of this study can be useful in assessing changes in the gender division of labor and can provide new policies and programs aimed at improving the relationship between couples within the family.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The general purpose of this research is to investigate the direct effects of gender (male and female) and the type of gender role attitude (traditional) on the marital satisfaction of employed women and men in the city of Sari. This research also aims to examine the indirect effects of gender (male and female) and the type of gender role attitude (traditional) through the variables of the amount of division of household labor and the level of perception of the fairness of the distribution of household labor on the marital satisfaction of women and men.

### **Sub-objectives:**

In this research, the accuracy and inaccuracy of the sub-objectives are investigated using statistical tests:

1. Identifying the level of marital satisfaction among employed women and men in Sari city.
2. Identifying the level of acceptance of the (traditional) gender role attitude among employed women and men in Sari city.
3. Identifying the level of division of household labor among employed women and men in Sari city.
4. Identifying their perception of the fairness of the distribution of household labor among employed women and men in Sari city.
5. Identifying the distribution of marital satisfaction according to socio-demographic variables such as education level, spouse's education level, age, spouse's age, family income, type of occupation, spouse's occupation, number of children, and duration of marriage among employed women and men in Sari city.
6. Examining the degree of correlation between marital satisfaction and some background variables.
7. Examining the relationship between gender (male and female) and marital satisfaction.
8. Investigating the effects of women's and men's (traditional) gender role attitudes on their marital satisfaction.
9. Investigating the effects of the division of household labor between women and men on their marital satisfaction.

## **Research Methods**

The current research adopts a descriptive-survey method in terms of methodology. In terms of its goal, the research is applied, aiming to provide practical solutions, and it is cross-sectional in terms of time. The statistical population of this research consists of all men and women working in government offices and medical centers in Sari city.

The data collection tool is a questionnaire; therefore, the data of the current research is the result of a cross-sectional survey collected using a constructed questionnaire tool. Cochran's classification formula was used to determine the sample size. Based on statistics available on the website of Mazandaran province's civil registration information in 2019, the sample size was set at 386 people, accepting the error value. Sampling was done in three stages: classified, clustered, and available sampling in government offices and medical centers located in Sari city in 2020. In this process, 10 centers were randomly selected from government offices and medical centers. Among employed and married men and women, individuals interested in participating in the study were selected. The inclusion criteria were as follows: being employed, living with a spouse at the time of the study, and completing the questionnaire. Incomplete questionnaires led to exclusion from the study.

Using self-report questionnaires and standardized tools, this research identified different views on gender roles (traditional, intermediate, and modern), the level of division of household labor, and the level of marital satisfaction. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires among employed men and women in northern Iran. Additionally, a preliminary study was conducted among 50 employed men and women to check the content validity of the constructs of the proposed research model by verifying the appropriateness of the translated version of the questionnaires and



ensuring the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions. To ensure the validity of the questions and items in the questionnaire, the opinions of experts were used. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.83.

### **Demographic Variables**

In this study, the variables of gender, age, spouse's age, length of marriage, number of children, education, spouse's education, spouse's job, respondent's occupational status, spouse's occupational status, respondent's income, and spouse's income are included as independent predictors that could influence the study.

### **Dependent Variable**

**Marital Satisfaction.** Marital satisfaction refers to a positive feeling about marriage and is related to general happiness and contentment with the relationships between couples (Kaplan & Maddux, 2002). In marital relationships, the level of satisfaction is related to the valuable resources exchanged, where couples expect more rewards than costs. It also emphasizes the importance of fairness in the relationship (Sabatelli, 1999).

The **ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS)**, developed by Fowers & Olson (1989), was translated into Persian by Asoodeh & Team (2009). To assess marital satisfaction in this research, the ENRICH questionnaire was chosen, as it has been used as a valid research tool in many studies. Fowers & Olson (1989) used this questionnaire to assess marital satisfaction and believe that this scale is sensitive to changes occurring within the family. Each of the topics in this questionnaire corresponds to one of the important domains of marital satisfaction.

The long-scale form contains 115 items. Asoodeh and colleagues translated the 35-item short form into Farsi with comments and guidance, with written permission from Professor David Elson. After the translation revisions, the Farsi version was reviewed and translated back into English, and the final permission to implement the questionnaire in Iran was granted by Dr. Elson.

In Asoodeh et al.'s (2009) research, using 365 couples (730 individuals), the alpha coefficient for marital satisfaction was 0.68, for communication 0.78, for conflict resolution 0.62, and for ideal distortion 0.77. In this study, using a sample of 364 men and women and a 35-item questionnaire that includes four subscales—ideal distortion, marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict resolution—the marital satisfaction of the respondents was measured with an alpha coefficient of 0.93.

The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire is a 35-item, multidimensional assessment instrument that consists of the following subscales: idealistic distortion (5 items), marital satisfaction (10 items), communication (10 items), and conflict resolution (10 items). The Likert scale used in the questionnaire ranges from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

### **Independent Variables**

**Division of Household Labor.** Household labor, as unpaid and invisible work, is a classic example of gender stratification, which is shaped by cultural beliefs and structural constraints at the societal level (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020).

The division of household labor was designed in Persian based on Cowan & Cowan (1988) and tailored to Iranian culture. To determine the content validity of the questionnaire, 10 faculty members from the Sociology Department reviewed and revised it. Its reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was obtained as 0.65. The questionnaire consists of 14 items answered by couples to describe the division of household labor in various family life areas. The five tasks typically considered women's work include laundry, cleaning, dishes, cooking, and cleanup. The five tasks usually considered men's work include general repairs, yard work, car repairs, taking out the garbage, and grocery shopping. The four tasks are considered shared responsibilities for both spouses.

### **Gender Role Attitudes**

Gender role attitudes refer to distinct ways of thinking about gender and social roles that are socially constructed and influenced by life experiences (Baber & Tucker, 2006). Attitudes about gender roles were measured using the Traditional-Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESR; Larsen & Long, 1988) and the Social Roles Questionnaire by Baber & Tucker (2006), adapted for Iranian culture. The scale consists of 30 items. The statements describe attitudes different people hold toward the roles of men and women, with 8 items being reverse coded. This variable was measured on a Likert scale ranging from completely agree to completely disagree, and by summing the scores of the items, an index of gender attitudes was created on an interval scale. In the multivariate analysis, it was classified as traditional, egalitarian, or intermediate. Lower scores indicate more traditional attitudes toward gender roles. To determine the content validity of the questionnaire, 10 faculty members from the Sociology Department reviewed and revised it. Its reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be 0.84.

### **Perceived Fairness of the Division of Household Labor**

Equality, as a 50/50 division of time and tasks, is not the primary basis for perceptions of fairness in household labor. Instead, fair perceptions of household labor are influenced by various factors, especially gender attitudes and different contexts. Thus, what each couple considers fair varies from couple to couple and from context to context (McDonald, 2013).

### **Respondents were asked:**

How do you feel about the fairness and justice of the way you and your spouse divide household labor? Please mark (×):

- It is very unfair and unjust because I do "all" the household labor by myself \_\_\_\_ (1)
- It is somewhat unfair and unjust because I do "most" of the household labor by myself \_\_\_\_ (2)
- It is fair and just because my wife and I "jointly" do the household labor \_\_\_\_ (3)
- It is somewhat unfair and unjust because my wife does "most" of the household labor alone \_\_\_\_ (4)

- It is very unfair and unjust because my wife does "all" the household labor alone \_\_\_\_\_ (5)

## Findings and Discussion

The results of the correlation coefficient between the variables (age, spouse's age, level of education, spouse's education level, length of marriage, number of children, gender, type of employment, spouse's income, and marital satisfaction) are as follows:

In all dimensions, there is a significant association between the "gender of the respondents" and the marital satisfaction variable. The amount of education and the "conflict resolution" dimension have a positive and direct relationship. This suggests that respondents with a higher degree of education reported greater marital satisfaction in the domain of conflict resolution.

The "division of household labor" has a favorable and direct association with "all aspects of marital satisfaction." According to the results, it is evident that the greater the division of labor and household obligations, the greater the marital satisfaction.

"Perceived fairness of household labor distribution" had an indirect effect on marital satisfaction, without having a direct effect, mediated by the division of household labor. As a result, it can be said that with increasing "perceived fairness of household labor distribution," and subsequent improvement in the division of household labor, marital satisfaction increases.

The results indicate that the majority of men (83%) and women (68.9%) had an intermediate attitude toward gender roles. In the second order, the majority of men had a traditional attitude (12.1%), and among women, a modern attitude (30%) toward gender roles. As a result, it can be stated that considering the intermediate role attitudes both groups exhibited, women had a more modern attitude than men, while men had a more traditional attitude toward gender roles than women.

Additionally, the present study shows the results of examining the direct, indirect, and total standard coefficients of the relationship between marital satisfaction and gender, along with the mediation of gender role attitudes, division of household labor, and the fairness of the division of labor among people. The results indicate that the exogenous variable of gender, in addition to its direct effect on marital satisfaction with a standard coefficient of -0.322, also has an indirect effect with a coefficient of 0.050 through the mediation of gender attitude. Also, by mediating the fairness of division of household labor and the division of household labor, gender has an indirect and insignificant effect with a rate of 0.001. The results also show that the variable of fairness in the division of labor had an indirect effect on marital satisfaction, without having a direct effect, mediated by the division of household labor with a rate of 0.013. As a result, it can be said that with increasing fairness in the division of labor and subsequent improvement in the division of household labor, marital satisfaction increases.

The results of this research, combined with the review of previous studies, show that women have a more modern gender attitude than men. Women's employment, as one of the indicators of modernity, has caused a change in their attitudes, so that, in Iranian society, like many societies transitioning from tradition to modernity, the acceptance of modern roles has increased in recent decades. The type of attitude toward gender roles, which is affected by the organization of society, can vary depending on

the cultural context of the society. In traditional societies, where the culture and laws still support the gender division of roles, men's emphasis on the division of labor and resistance against equal roles can increase the conflict between modern and traditional gender attitudes within couples, thus reducing marital satisfaction. Therefore, the type of gender attitude of women and men can be one of the influencing factors on marital satisfaction (Faizi & Madaghi, 2022). Another factor that affects the level of marital satisfaction and is the source of many marital conflicts is the division of household labor.

Regarding the role of the gender variable, the results of this research indicate that there was a significant difference between the marital satisfaction of women and men, with men reporting more marital satisfaction than women. In terms of household labor, the share of women was greater than that of men. Therefore, not only did women perform much more household labor than men, but the types of household labor that women and men performed were different. According to research conducted in Iran, it is noted that in Iranian society, household labor is still strongly segregated based on gender (BakhshiPour et al., 2019; Garoosi, 2008; Razaghi Nasrabad et al., 2021).

One possible reason why women had less marital satisfaction than men in this study could be their employment status. The primary issue for employed women is balancing roles inside and outside the home, which leads to multiple roles in marital relationships, particularly as parenting and child care responsibilities increase. Gender is one of the strongest predictors of household labor, as even women who are full-time breadwinners report a higher share of household labor, suggesting that gender structures household labor. According to the gender socialization approach, gender roles that assign household labor to women are the result of socialization that is strongly differentiated by gender. As a result, we observe that women perform more household labor than men (Cudeville et al., 2020).

Another finding of this study was that as family members' participation in household labor increases, their marital satisfaction increases. Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the division of household labor, and only 14.3% were dissatisfied with this situation. A possible explanation for these findings is that women's employment has increased men's participation in household labor, which confirms the exchange-bargaining approach. Wage work and women's participation in family income increase women's bargaining power in the division of household labor. Additionally, the results of this research show that there is a positive relationship between the division of household labor in relation to women and the dimensions of marital satisfaction. The more the division of household labor increases, the higher the marital satisfaction in women. However, no significant relationship was observed between the division of tasks in men's homes and the dimensions of marital satisfaction. These results align with the findings of Amato et al. (2003), who showed that increasing the proportion of household labor done by husbands improved the marital quality of wives but decreased the marital quality of husbands. Similarly, Qian et al. (2016) found that Japanese and Korean husbands who did a higher share of household labor had lower marital satisfaction.

The results of this research also showed that although women had a more modern gender attitude than men, they did more household labor than men. This can be explained by role theory, which suggests that cultural forces pressure women to take on

more household labor. In the context of the effect of attitudes toward traditional gender roles on marital satisfaction, the results of the regression analysis showed that as traditional gender attitudes intensify, the level of marital satisfaction increases. In fact, having traditional gender attitudes in both women and men increases the acceptance of the gender division of labor, which can reduce marital conflicts.

Furthermore, the results of the relationship between marital satisfaction and gender, mediated by traditional gender role attitudes, the division of household labor, and the fairness of labor distribution, indicate that the exogenous variable of gender, in addition to its direct effect on marital satisfaction (with a standard coefficient of -0.322), also has an indirect effect (with a coefficient of 0.050) through the mediation of traditional gender attitudes. The results also show that the fairness of division of labor has an indirect effect on marital satisfaction, without a direct effect, mediated by the division of labor (with a coefficient of 0.013). As a result, it can be said that as the fairness of the division of labor increases, and the division of household labor improves, marital satisfaction also increases. According to the theories used in this research (gender role theory and resource bargaining theory), this study predicts that as women's (financial) independence increases, there will be a more equal division of household labor.

After conducting the study, the hypotheses were answered as follows:

1. **There is a significant relationship between respondents' gender and marital satisfaction, meaning that men have more marital satisfaction than women.** Based on the first hypothesis, the marital satisfaction level of respondents is significantly different according to their gender (men have more marital satisfaction than women). This hypothesis is confirmed because the results of this study showed that men reported higher marital satisfaction than women, and women had lower marital satisfaction than men. This is consistent with many studies conducted in Iran and other countries (e.g., Rostami, 2013; Nourani et al., 2019; Oshio et al., 2013).
2. **There is a significant relationship between gender (male and female) and traditional gender attitude, meaning that men seem to have a more traditional gender attitude than women.** This hypothesis is based on the significant difference in traditional gender attitudes between respondents of different genders (men have more traditional gender attitudes than women). This hypothesis was also accepted because the findings statistically showed that women have more modern attitudes toward gender roles than men, and that men report a higher traditional attitude toward gender roles, which is consistent with many studies. These findings align with earlier research that revealed men in transition societies resist accepting new roles in the family sphere due to concerns about losing privileges previously afforded by traditional societies, especially if societal expectations and policies align with traditional attitudes (Davis & Greenstein, 2009).
3. **There is a significant relationship between traditional gender attitude and the level of marital satisfaction of respondents, meaning that as traditional gender attitudes increase, marital satisfaction increases.** The third hypothesis claims that respondents with stronger traditional gender attitudes have higher marital satisfaction. The results of this study showed that people with traditional

attitudes reported higher marital satisfaction, so this hypothesis is confirmed. The reason for the higher marital satisfaction among traditional gender role holders in this study is that, according to the first hypothesis, men had more marital satisfaction than women. Additionally, in the descriptive findings, it was found that men were more in favor of traditional gender roles than women. Therefore, most of those who accepted traditional gender roles were men, who were also seen to have higher marital satisfaction than women. This leads to the conclusion that higher acceptance of traditional gender roles is associated with higher marital satisfaction. The results were in line with Akbari's (2020) research, which showed that the more gender attitudes tend toward traditional views, the less conflict there is between couples.

4. **As the intensity of respondents' traditional gender attitudes increases, the division of household labor decreases.** The fourth hypothesis suggests that as respondents' traditional gender attitudes increase, the level of family members' participation in household labor decreases (i.e., the division of household labor between men and women becomes less equal, with women doing more). The descriptive results of this research show that most respondents had intermediate gender attitudes, and men had more traditional gender attitudes than women. However, three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the division of household labor. Based on the results of the statistical test, this hypothesis was not confirmed. It seems that another variable, in addition to traditional gender attitude, affects family members' participation in household labor, which could be the employment status of women in this study. Studies in Iran have examined the relationship between women's employment and their husbands' cooperation in housework based on resource exchange theory. A comparative study by Amini et al. (2015) confirmed that family power structures differ between employed and non-employed married women, with women's employment providing them with resources to increase their husbands' participation in household labor.
5. **As the intensity of respondents' traditional gender attitudes increases, their perception of the fairness of household labor increases.** This hypothesis suggests a relationship between traditional gender attitudes and perceptions of fairness, with higher traditional gender attitudes corresponding to higher levels of perceived fairness. According to gender socialization and social role theory, individuals who grew up with traditional roles, such as women with traditional attitudes, are satisfied if their husbands do less housework, believing it is their main role. Similarly, men with traditional attitudes do not feel guilty when women do housework, as they see it as a woman's job. In this study, this hypothesis was not confirmed according to the regression results, meaning there was no relationship between traditional gender attitudes and perceptions of fairness. This may be due to the variable of women's employment, as employed women expect more instrumental support (such as sharing housework) from their husbands, while housewives expect more emotional support (such as appreciation and gratitude) (Mickelson et al., 2006; Kawamura & Brown, 2010).
6. **As the level of perception of the fairness of household labor increases, the level of participation of family members in the division of household labor**

**increases.** This hypothesis was confirmed because the regression results show that fairness in the division of labor, with a standard beta coefficient of 0.119 and significance of 0.039, has a positive and significant effect on the division of tasks among people at the 0.05 error level. The more fair the division of household labor, the better the division of labor becomes.

7. **As the amount of division of household labor between couples increases, their marital satisfaction increases.** According to the seventh hypothesis, as the level of participation in household labor increases, marital satisfaction increases. Descriptive findings on the division of household labor (e.g., who does most of the household tasks?) showed that more than three-quarters (69.1%) of respondents were satisfied with the division of household labor, indicating that the division of labor affects marital satisfaction. This hypothesis is confirmed and is consistent with studies conducted in Iran by BakhshiPour et al. (2019), Razaghi Nasrabad et al. (2021), Garoosi (2008), and Noorani et al. (2019).
8. **As the level of respondents' perception of the fairness of the distribution of household labor increases, their level of marital satisfaction increases.** The results of the research show that, according to the sixth hypothesis, the fairness of the division of labor, without having a direct effect on marital satisfaction, has an indirect effect through the mediation of the division of household labor (with a coefficient of 0.013). This suggests that as fairness in the division of labor increases, and the division of household labor improves, marital satisfaction also increases. A lack of perceived fairness in household labor may decrease women's family life satisfaction, in turn increasing the likelihood of relationship and marital dissolution (Kawamura & Brown, 2010; Greenstein, 2009).
9. **The level of marital satisfaction of respondents is significantly different according to socio-demographic variables (age, education, occupation, income, years of marriage, number of children).** There is a positive and direct correlation between education level and the "conflict resolution" subscale, with a correlation coefficient of 0.105 and a significance level of 0.045. This means that respondents with higher education reported higher levels of marital satisfaction in conflict resolution. This finding is consistent with research by Rostami (2014), Islami (2020), and Rashvand Sorkhkouleh & Mirhosseini (2022). Additionally, there is a significant relationship between the spouse's job type and marital satisfaction, with a chi-square value of 0.975 and a significance of 0.001. This means that the average marital satisfaction of unemployed respondents (84) was lower than that of employed individuals (121.8), housewives (125.68), and those in other occupations (128.50). Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between "wife's age" and all dimensions of marital satisfaction, except conflict resolution, with a negative correlation of -0.174 at a significance level of 0.001. This indicates that the higher the spouse's age, the lower the marital satisfaction.

## Conclusion

The present research aimed to identify the level of marital satisfaction among employed women and men and examine the effect of factors such as gender attitudes on their marital satisfaction. This study also sought to evaluate the impact of variables including gender, attitudes toward gender roles, the division of household labor, the fairness of household labor division, and socio-demographic factors (age, education, occupation, income, years of marriage, and number of children) on marital satisfaction. The results obtained in this study are consistent with the theoretical assumptions based on gender theories (social role theory and gender socialization theory), the relative bargaining approach to resources, and other research in this field.

According to the results of the present study, women were found to have more modern attitudes toward gender roles than men, while men reported more traditional attitudes toward gender roles. This is consistent with many studies. Additionally, men reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than women. Based on the findings of the current study, the most influential independent variables on the level of marital satisfaction were the respondent's gender, the acceptance of traditional gender roles, and the extent of the division of gender tasks in the household. Moreover, the results indicated that the more traditional the participants' gender attitudes, the more satisfied they were with their marriage. It was also revealed that as the level of perceived fairness in the division of household labor increased, so did the level of participation of family members in the division of labor. Lastly, the study found that as the amount of household labor division between couples increased, their marital satisfaction improved. This research also suggests that in Iranian society, the acceptance of traditional gender roles among couples—an important aspect of beliefs about marriage and family responsibilities—can significantly influence marital satisfaction through its relationship with the division of household labor.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the results of this research, the following strategies are proposed to increase marital satisfaction:

1. **Promote Gender Equality:** Efforts to promote gender equality in society and family are essential. Employability policies that encourage women to pursue high-paying jobs represent a clear departure from the male breadwinner model (Köppen & Trappe, 2019).
2. **Increase Women's Employment and Education:** Increasing women's employment and education is one of the most important steps toward combating gender inequality. Women can reduce household labor by increasing their power resources. In fact, women who have more resources tend to resist inequality more effectively. Thus, increasing women's presence in various domains can serve as the basis for many societal changes and transformations (Riahi, 2022).
3. **Encourage Men's Participation in Household Labor:** Increasing men's participation in household labor can significantly enhance couples' satisfaction (Dernberger & Pepin, 2020; Sudkämper et al., 2020).



Finally, we endorse the views of Eagly and Stephen (1984), who argue that changes in gender beliefs should occur at the level of social change. As long as people do not share social roles equally, gender stereotypes - such as the belief that women are inherently different from men - will persist. This means that, until responsibilities like child care and housework are equally divided between women and men, and both sexes equally share the responsibility of working outside the home, these stereotypes will continue.

### Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations in this study. First, the men and women who participated were not married couples. If the gender attitudes of husband and wife were measured as a pair, it is possible that the contrast or harmony of their attitudes would have a greater impact on marital satisfaction, as seen in many other studies. Another limitation of this study is that it did not examine employed women and housewives separately. Additionally, all women who participated in this research were employed, so the study did not compare the gender attitudes of employed women with those of housewives.

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#### **Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

#### **Ethical Standards**

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects..