

## Personality Traits as a Predictor of Marital Quality: A Systematic Review

Samsul Ariski<sup>1</sup>, Siti Rohmah Nurhayati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Psychology Postgraduate Program, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
[samsulariski.2019@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:samsulariski.2019@student.uny.ac.id)

### Abstract

*This research aimed to analyze journals in order to provide accurately the complete information about personality traits as a predictor of marital quality. All related studies in electronic databases, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Elsevier, and Springer Link, were reviewed based on Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method. A total of 215 sorted articles based on PRISMA guidelines resulted 26 articles to review. The findings showed that couples in high neuroticism had lower levels of marital quality. In other side, couples in high conscientiousness were more satisfied with their relationship so that they had higher levels of marital quality. This study could assist practitioners in analyzing personality traits related to the marital quality. Therefore, practitioners could take appropriate treatments to strengthen couple's marital life.*

### Keywords

personality traits;  
marital quality;  
conscientiousness;  
neuroticism



## I. Introduction

Marriage is an important and desirable life step for almost people. It is a social union between humans to form a kinship (Gary & Woolverton, 2008). The important of marriage is because married people have a higher life quality than unmarried people (Holman, 2002). However, the life quality expected by each individual in a marriage cannot be fully obtained easily (Shoer, Roelf, Bugyi, & Schwartz, 2012). There were dynamics and complexities of marriage for a married couple so that invites many researchers to study about it.

Marriage has positive impacts on married couples (Lucas, 2016). But, on the other hand, marriage also has negative impacts suffering them due to divorce and domestic violence (Shor, Roelfs, Bugyi, & Schwartz, 2012; Lucas, 2016). A high marriage quality will prevent a couple from negative psychological pressure so that it prevents domestic violence and divorce (Li, Co, Lin, Ju, Zheng, Chen, Zhou & Fang, 2019). Many terms of marital quality, such as marital happiness, marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and marital success, were considered as the concept of marital quality (Fincham & Rogge, 2010; Knapp & Lott, 2010; Abbasi, 2017). In addition, the marital quality more reflects the evaluation of marital life on the whole (Nuhayati, Faturochman, & Helmi 2017).

The marital quality is a subjective assessment of a relationship between married couples (Abbasi, 2017; Lucas, 2016). It is referred to multidimensional concept that contains two sides, including positive sides, such as happiness, satisfaction, and commitment; and negative sides, such as conflict and negative emotions (Lucas, 2016). The marital quality is also defined as relationship quality between husband and wife, i.e.

an activity that shows interaction between husband and wife (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017).

The categories of relationship quality involve intimacy, respect, conflict management, and power sharing. Moreover, the marital quality covers the personal quality of husband and wife, relationship between husband and wife, perceived welfare, offspring characteristics, and the relationships with extended families and environment (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017). The personal quality of husband and wife is husband and wife's characters, their commitments, and their behavior that is in accordance with values (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017). The characters are inherent traits of individuals describing them (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017). The commitment is the eagerness to preserve relationships, including loyalty, give priority to the family, and take care of family (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017). Then, the values refer to individual behaviors that are appropriate with kindness (Nurhayati, Faturochman, Helmi, 2017).

Allendorf & Ghimire (2012) have stated from his research findings in Nepal, that the dimensions of marital quality include positive effects, i.e. satisfaction, communication, togetherness, and negative effects, namely problems and disputes. Then, Zhang, Xu, & Tsang (2012) have suggested from his research findings in China, the dimensions of marital quality cover marital happiness, marital interaction, strife, marital problems, and marital instability. While Nurhayati, Faturochman, and Helmi (2017) have described that the dimensions of marital quality involve relationship quality and welfare. According to Lucas (2016), marital quality is affected by several factors, i.e. demographics, socioeconomic, and personality. Personality traits affect a person in carrying out a marriage process, in which it involves an explanation of the individual's tendency to act in response the situations when facing marital dynamics (Lucas, 2016).

Remembering each married individual have different types of personality, it can be said that a marriage relationship is a bond between two different personalities (Gholizadeh, Hasan & Jalil, 2010). However, people tend to impose the behavior and characters of her partner, so that they can act as a trigger in their marriage relationship (Sadeghi, Mootabi, & Dehghani, 2016). For many years, this has been a challenge for the researchers of personality, so that different definitions have been provided for the concept of personality traits. Although there are many different types of personality traits, most researchers have agreed that the five-factor model can accurately describe personality aspects (John & Srivastava, 1999). The five-factor personality traits model is a characteristic pattern of thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that tends to persist and is consistent over time and in relevant situations (Weidmann, Lederman & Grob, 2016).

Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experiences are five dimensions characterizing bipolar and form personality traits mostly used as personality structures (John & Srivastava, 1999; Boyce, Wood & Ferguson, 2016; Weidmann, 2016; Weidmann, 2016 Lederman & Grob, 2016). Openness to experience is a dimension of individual's openness in proactively assessing and appreciating self's experiences and how he explores something new and unusual. Neuroticism is a dimension of self-adjustment with emotional instability. Extraversion is quantity estimation and intensity of interpersonal interactions. Its level activity is the need for stimulation and the ability to be happy. Agreeableness describes the quality of individual's interpersonal orientation on an ongoing sense, from feeling affected as far as feeling resistance in his thoughts, emotions, and actions. Conscientiousness is impulse control in describing task behavior and goal direction, it assesses the ability of individual in organization, both regarding perseverance or motivation (John & Srivastava, 1999).

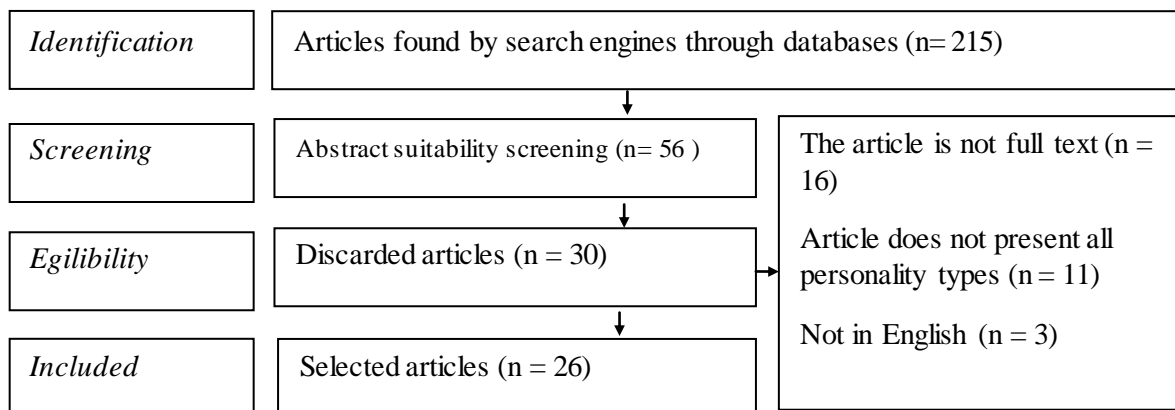
In a few years, the number of marriages in Indonesia and other countries have been deteriorated, marked by the divorces increased significantly every year. It has been regarded that personality traits of married people become a factor related to divorce and marital quality. The related studies on this problem have been reported but with inconsistent results. Some studies have not yet led to comprehensive results, and only assessed one personality traits (especially neuroticism) related to marriage satisfaction. Therefore, this systematic review is intended to examine personality traits as a whole can predict marital quality.

## II. Research Methods

This paper used a systematic review based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyzes (PRISMA) to examine by synthesis how personality traits predicted marital quality. The used database included Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Elsevier, and Springer Link. Searching process used keywords that determined by researchers, i.e. "Personality Traits", "Personality Factor", "Big Five Personality", "Quality of Marriage", "Marital Quality", and "Marital Satisfaction". After searching for articles that were in accordance with the keywords, an analysis and synthesis were performed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included (1) the personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experiences, (2) marital quality prediction, (3) international journal, (4) written in English, (5) minimum 30 times citation, (6) among last 15 years (2005-2020). The exclusion criteria in this systematic review were articles that do not provide five personality traits on the whole. The articles were adjusted to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the articles found would be selected by the researcher and synthesized according to the theme. The convenient articles would be analyzed and discussed according to the purpose of the study.

## III. Discussion

Initial literature searching resulted 215 articles. After reviewing the abstract relevance and compliance with the inclusion criteria, 56 articles were selected for full review. There are 30 excluded articles due to those were not full text, did not provide all personality traits, and were not in English. Finally, 26 articles were selected for review.



**Figure 1.** The Sorting and Selecting Articles Process Based on PRISMA Guidelines

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Selected Articles as Research Data

<b>First Researcher</b>	<b>Publication Year</b>	<b>Variable</b>
Sayehmiri	2020	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Leikas	2018	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Cirhinlioglu	2017	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Taraghijah	2017	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Boyce	2016	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Molaei	2016	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Weidmann	2016	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Goodarzimehr	2016	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Sadeghi	2016	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Etemadnia	2015	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Khademi	2015	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Schaffhuser	2014	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Ashoori	2014	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Solomon	2014	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Mund	2014	Marital Quality, Personality Trait
Gorbanzadeh	2013	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Javanmard	2013	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Sadeghi	2012	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Amiri	2011	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Yaseminejad	2011	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Razeghi	2011	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Razavieh	2011	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Gholizadeh	2010	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Janati	2010	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Ahadi	2007	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait
Atari	2006	Marital Satisfaction, Personality Trait

The findings in this study indicated that the highest predictor of marital quality is conscientiousness, and the lowest predictor is neuroticism. The findings were in line with the findings of longitudinal study by Caughlin, Huston, & Houts (2000). These also corresponded with longitudinal study conducted by Fisher and McNulty (2008), with 72 couples in Australia and United States, they said that high neuroticism is predicted to cause low levels of marital satisfaction at one year of marriage. It was reinforced by the findings on Indian people who had high neuroticism often felt sadness, anger, and dissatisfaction with their self. The feelings that could reduce their overall happiness was be caused they might be angry easily, so they could not reach a higher marital quality (Donnellan, Congel & Bryant, 2004; Seidman, 2013).

Taraghijah, Khosroshahi, & Khanjani (2017) noted that people in high neuroticism felt unhappy because they pointed negative events in their life too much. The negative effects of neuroticism on marital quality got through the individual's tendency with anxiety, tension, seeking attention, hostility, impulse, depression, and low self-esteem (Ahadi, 2007). Personality traits such as emotional instability and neuroticism could keep couples in a persistent condition and influence the way they adapted to life that causing stress (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). A longitudinal study over 13 years showed that between husband and wife with negative marital relationship was caused by high neuroticism. In other words, individuals in high neuroticism inclined to show negative and

harder behavior against their partners, which in turn reduced the marriage quality between them (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000).

Sayehmiri, Kareem, Abdi, Dalvand & Gheshlagh (2020) found that couples in Iran with high neuroticism experienced low marital quality, while couples with high conscientiousness experienced high marital quality. Then in a research conducted by Boyce, Wood & Ferguson (2016) with the German population showed that personality traits could be predictors of marital quality, with the data evidence that showed the respondents in high conscientiousness experienced greater marital quality. Other evidence showed that intrapersonal and interpersonal of agreeableness, and conscientiousness affected partner's satisfaction (Weidmann, Lederman & Grob, 2016). The findings of longitudinal research indicated that personality traits had strength to predict the relationship satisfaction levels in the future. Specifically explained that neuroticism predicted lower levels of satisfaction, while extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness predicted higher levels of satisfaction (Schaffhuser, Wagner, Ludtke, & Allemand, 2014; Solomon & Jackson, 2014).

Then, Cirhinlioglu, Tepe, & Cirhinlioglu (2017) showed that agreeableness could predict positively the marital quality, especially for women. The study was conducted on 488 married couples in Turkey. Reinforced by the findings of other studies showing that low neuroticism, low agreeableness, high conscientiousness, and high extraversion could be the predictors for personal's relationship satisfaction from time to time (Mund & Neyer, 2014; Solomon & Jackson, 2014). This study indicated that conscientiousness was the strongest predictor of the quality of the marriage. Marriage contracts from the dimensions of sacredness are special contracts compared to other contracts such as buying and selling, pawning and others (Imran, 2019). Individuals with high conscientiousness had self-discipline, principled, and able to deal effectively with relationship problems, so that they experienced a high level of marriage satisfaction (Razeghi, Mujembari, & Masihi, 2011). Engel & Olson (2002) found that conscientiousness was the best predictor of couple's intimacy and a commitment of men. They stated that people with high low showed stronger levels of intimacy in their relationship. Therefore, they were more capable to build quality relationships (Engel & Olson, 2002).

A study whose respondents were elderly couple aged 40-70 years who had been married more than 15 years, showed that marital satisfaction had strong correlation with extraversion and conscientiousness (Shiota & Levenson, 2007). In a longitudinal study conducted in Switzerland, the satisfaction of intimate relationships in couples was positively correlated with agreeableness and conscientiousness (Schaffhuser, Allemand, & Martin, 2014). Gattis, Berns, Simpson, & Christensen (2004) found that marital dissatisfaction was associated with low conscientiousness and high neuroticism. Individuals with high conscientiousness could refrain from showing aggression and afford in controlling impulses marriage relationship (Amiri, Farhoodi, Abdolvand, & Bidakhavidi, 2011). Ahadi (2007) argued that individuals with low conscientiousness inclined to use alcohol and physical aggression appearing as response to stressors in the marriage relationship, and this gradually decreased their marriage satisfaction.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

This research found couples in high neuroticism have lower levels of marital quality, while couples in high conscientiousness were more satisfied with their relationship so that they have higher levels of marital quality. Personality trait is a trait that is stable from time to time, and can be used to predict information about the individual's behavior in any life situations, including marital relationship. Personality traits examination can increase our

knowledge about personality traits related to marital quality, as well as reducing of divorce and broken marriage. In addition, personality traits can make a better, healthier, and more stable marriage relationship.

Marriage is the process by which two people make their relationship public, official, and permanent (Jamaluddin, 2018). Considering the interrelationship between personality and interpersonal relationship, health service providers, psychology consultants and marriage consultants need to pay more attention toward personality variables and its relations between a couple. Personality traits of both husband and wife have significant role in avoiding mismatches in marriage and its satisfaction. In addition, incorrect selected life partner may cause personality problems generating disharmony in the family. The findings of this study can assist practitioners in analyzing personality traits with marital quality. Therefore, the practitioners can take appropriate treatments to strengthen the couple's marital life.

## References

- Abbasi I. S., 2017. *Personality and Marital Relationships: Developing a Satisfactory Relationship with an Imperfect Partner*. Springer Science & Business Media New York
- Ahadi B. 2007. Relationship between personality and marital satisfaction. *Contemp Psychol*, 2:31–7.
- Allendorf, K., & Ghimire, D.J. (2012). Determinants of marital quality in an arranged marriage society. *Social Science Research*. 42, 59-70
- Amiri M., Farzad Farhoodi, Abdolvand N., Bidakhavidi A. R. 2011. A study of the relationship between Big-five personality traits and communication styles with marital satisfaction of married students majoring in public universities of Tehran. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 30, 685 – 68
- Ashoori J. 2014. The relationship between personality traits, religiosity orientation and locus of control and marital satisfaction of elder women. *Nurs J elderly*, 1(3):21–33.
- Atari Yousofali AA, Mahnaz MH. 2006. The relationship between personality characteristics and family-personal factors and marital satisfaction among office workers in Ahvaz. *J Educ Psychol*, 13(3):81–108
- Boyce C. J., Wood A. M., Ferguson E. 2016. For better or for worse: The moderating effects of personality on the marriage-life satisfaction link. *Personality and Individual Differences*. 97,61–66
- Bradbury TN, Fincham FD, Beach SR. 2000. Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: a decade in review. *J Marriage Fam*, 62(4):964–8
- Caughlin JP, Huston TL, Houts RM. 2000. How does personality matter in marriage? An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 78(2):326.
- Caughlin JP, Huston TL, Houts RM. 2000. How does personality matter in marriage? An examination of trait anxiety, interpersonal negativity, and marital satisfaction. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 78(2):326
- Cirhinlioglu Z., Tepe Y. K., Cirhinlioglu F. G. (2016) The Relationship between Personality Traits and Marital Quality in Married Couples in Turkey. *The Anthropologist*, 25:1-2, 34-44
- Donnellan MB, Conger RD, Bryant CM. 2004. The big five and enduring marriages. *J Res Pers*, 38(5):481–504.
- Engel G, Olson KR, Patrick C. 2002. The personality of love: fundamental motives and traits related to components of love. *Personal Individ Differ*, 32(5): 839–53

- Etemadnia M. B. N. , Bahri M. R. Z. 2015. Relationship between the personality factors (indicators) and the rate of marital satisfaction of married teachers. *J Appl Environ Biol Sci.*, 5:132–7
- Fincham, F.D., & Rogge, R. (2010). Understanding relationship quality: Theretical challenges and new tools for assesment. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 2, 227-242
- Fisher TD, McNulty JK. 2008. Neuroticism and marital satisfaction: the mediating role played by the sexual relationship. *J Fam Psychol*, 22(1):112
- Gary H., Woolverton A. 2008. *Marriage Ministry by Design: Designing Effective Ministry to Marriages in the Church and Beyond*. WestBow Press
- Gattis KS, Berns S, Simpson LE, Christensen A. 2004. Birds of a feather or strange birds? Ties among personality dimensions, similarity, and marital quality. *J Fam Psychol*, 18(4):564
- Gholizadeh zoleikha B, Hasan G, Jalil BK. 2010. The relation between five factor of personality and marital satisfaction. *J Shahed Univ*, 17:57–66
- Goodarzimehr R. F. M. 2016. The relationship between five personality factors and marital satisfaction among women in Babol. Iran *J Psychol Behavioral Stud*. 2016;4:84–9.
- Gorbanzadeh F, Gahari S, Bagdasarian A, Mohamadi Arya A, Rostaie A. 2013. The relation between five factor of personality and marital satisfaction. *J Shahed Univ*, 17:57–66.
- Holman D. 2002. Employee wellbeing in call centres. *Human Resource Management Journal*. (12) 35-50
- Imran, et. al . (2019). Tawkil Traditions in the Implementation of Marriage Contract in Aceh, Indonesia. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* Vol 2, No (3): 210-218.
- Jamaluddin. (2018). AL Ghazali's View Regarding to the Witness in Islamic Wedding Ceremony. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)* Vol I (2): 01-10.
- Janati Jahromi Mehrdad LM, Leila Y. 2010. The relationship between personality characteristics and marital satisfaction among employed women in Kazeroon. *J Women Soci*, 2:143–61
- Javanmard GH, Garegozlo RM. 2013. The study of relationship between marital satisfaction and personality characteristics in Iranian families. *Procedia Soc Behav Sci*, 84:396–9
- Khademi A., Valipour M., Moradzadeh Khorasani L. S N. 2015. Relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction and its components among the married couples. *J Appl Psychol*, 8(4):95–109
- Knapp, S.J. & Lott, B. (2010). Forming the central framework for a science of marital quality: an interpretive alternative to marital satisfaction as a proxy for marital quality. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 2, 316-333
- Kourosh Sayehmiri, Karez Ibrahim Kareem, Kamel Abdi, Sahar Dalvand dan Reza Ghanei Gheshlagh .2020. The relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC psychology*, 8:15
- Leikas S., Ilmarinen V. J., Verkasalo M., Vartiainen H. L. 2018. Relationship satisfaction and similarity of personality traits, personal values, and attitudes. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 123:191-198
- Li X., Cao H., Lan J., Ju X., Zheng Y., Chen Y., Zhou N., Fang X. The association between transition pattern of marital conflict resolution styles and marital quality trajectory during the early years of Chinese marriage. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(1) 153–186

- Lucas A. 2016. *Marital Quality*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Molaei M., Banihashem S. K. 2016. The relationship between marital satisfaction and the personality variables of the five-factor model. *Int J Humanit Cult Stud*, 1(1):1783–90
- Mund M & Neyer FJ, .2014. Personality-relationship transactions revisited. *J Pers*, 82(6):539–50
- Nurhayati S. R., Faturochman, Helmi A. V. 2017. Marital Quality: A Conceptual Review. *Buletin Psikologi*. 27, 2, 109 – 124
- Razavieh AML, Bohlooli F. 2011. On the role of personality traits and marital satisfaction in predicting job satisfaction among the personnel of Bonyad-e-Shahid and Omoor-e-Isargaran in shiraz. *Quarterly J Woman Soc*, 1(4): 1–10
- Razeghi NNM, Mujembari AK, Masihi AZ. 2011. Relationship between big five personality factors and marital satisfaction. *J Iran Psychol*, 7:269–78.
- Sadeghi A, Akbari B, Salek R. 2012. The investigation of the relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction and mental health among the women seeking divorce in the Guilan province. *J Basic Appl Sci Res*, 2(3):2385–94
- Sadeghi A. M. F. 2016. Surveying the relationship between personality traits and self-esteem with marital satisfaction in married students of Islamic Azad University students, City of Rasht, Guilan Province. *Iran Psychol Dev Soc*, 7:655–61
- Schaffhuser K., Wagner M., Ludtke M., & Allemand, 2014. Personality traits and relationship satisfaction in intimate couples: three perspectives on personality. *Eur J Personal*, 28(2):120–33
- Seidman G. 2013. Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: how personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personal Individ Differ*, 54(3):402–7
- Shor E., Roelfs DJ., Bugyi P., Schwartz JE. 2012. Meta-analysis of marital dissolution and mortality: Reevaluating the intersection of gender and age. *Social science & medicine*.
- Solomon B. C. & Jackson J. J. 2014. Why do personality traits predict divorce? Multiple pathways through satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 106(6), 978–996
- Taraghijah S, Khosroshahi JB, Khanjani Z. 2017. The prediction of the women's marital satisfaction by their personality characteristics and religiosity. *J Family Couns Psychother*, (2):107–22
- Taraghijah S., Khosroshahi JB., Khanjani Z. 2017. The prediction of the women's marital satisfaction by their personality characteristics and religiosity. *J Family Couns Psychother*, 6(2):107–22
- Weidmann R., Schönbrodt F. D., Ledermann T., Grob A. 2016. Concurrent and longitudinal dyadic polynomial regression analyses of Big Five traits and relationship satisfaction: Does similarity matter?. *Journal of Research in Personality*
- Yaseminejad Parisa M, Loghman E. 2011. Investigate the relationship between personality characteristics and marital satisfaction widow women married with their husband's brother. *J Couns Psychother*, 7(102):85
- Zhang, H., Xu, X., & Tsang, S.K.M. (2012). Conceptualizing and validating marital quality in Beijing: A pilot study. *Social Indicators Research*, Published online: 02 June 2012.