Investigating the relationship between watching satellite channels and intimacy and marital satisfaction of couples in Isfahan, Iran, in 2014

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ABSTRACT
Background: In the age of communication and media that families are rapidly driven towards using satellite channels and other media, considering family health in this regard is essential. A determinant of health is marital satisfaction. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between watching satellite channels and intimacy and marital satisfaction in Isfahan, Iran.

Materials and Methods: This cross-sectional and correlational study was conducted on one group of 480 couples (n = 960) participating from 8 health-treatment centers in Isfahan. Multi-stage cluster sampling was used in this study. Inclusion criteria included at least 2 years of marriage. After completion of Bagarozzi’s Marital Intimacy Questionnaire and ENRICH Marital Inventory, the couples were divided into two groups based on watching satellite networks. Data were analyzed using SPSS 18.

Results: There was a significant relationship between intimacy and marital satisfaction in both viewers and non-viewers of satellite channels (P < 0.050). Average duration of couple’s interaction in the satellite viewing group was 22.4 minutes and in non-viewers group was 47.95 min. In addition, the duration of interaction had a significant relationship with marital satisfaction and intimacy (P < 0.050).

Conclusions: This study showed that watching satellite channels reduced the intimacy and marital satisfaction of the couples, and duration of interaction among the couples.

Key words: Couples, Intimacy, Iran, marital satisfaction, watching satellite networks

INTRODUCTION

A healthy society depends on healthy families and healthy couples. One of the determinants of a healthy family is marital satisfaction.¹ One of the factors associated with marital satisfaction is intimacy. To promote the intimate emotional bond among family members, interaction and communication with a true mutual understanding is required.² Another factor associated with marital satisfaction is the role of the media, and in particular, satellites. Not only can satellites directly affect all members of the society it also has an important impact on institutions such as the family.³ Metani et al. in 2013 concluded that people of all ages spent an average of 3 h per day watching satellite networks.⁴ This amount of use can reduce verbal communication between family members. Moreover, it can lead to increased individualism and reduced collectivism; this issue has been considered to be a factor that can damage family cohesion.⁵ Numerous studies have been conducted on this media (satellite), some of which will be mentioned in this study. The results of

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some studies demonstrated a negative relationship between media and marital satisfaction.[3,6] However, the amount of use and the type of satellite channels cannot be ignored. In regards to the relationship between satellite channel use and family relations, studies have shown that families who did not use satellite networks compared to families who used satellite networks had significantly better family relations.[7] In general, families who do not use satellite networks have a stronger family structure compared to families who do. In another study, an inverse relationship was observed between the use of satellite networks and family structures.[8] In line with this subject, it should be noted that, according to family counseling specialists and experts, satellite networks have an important role in the analysis of factors that cause changes in the institution of family in the age of communication. Satellites have made possible the experiencing of intercultural relations with minimum expenses, which has facilitated the increasing use of this media. However, this media has in fact increased the contradictions in human relations and has reduced face-to-face interactions and understanding among individuals.[9] Given the importance of the family and the factors affecting spousal relations and the use of satellites by the majority of families as a way to spend family leisure time, pathological studies must be conducted on satellite networks’ effects on factors influencing spousal relations (marital satisfaction and intimacy). Nevertheless, no studies were found in this regard in the field of medical sciences, especially community health nursing. There were few studies on the relationship between watching satellite channels and marital satisfaction and marital intimacy. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study with the aim of investigating the relationship between watching satellite channels and intimacy and marital satisfaction in Isfahan, Iran, in 2014.

**Materials and Methods**

This cross-sectional and correlational study was conducted on one group of 960 participants (consisting of men and women) in 2014. The number of samples was estimated based on the following formula: \( n = \left( \frac{Z_1 + Z_2}{2} \right)^2 \frac{S^2}{d^2} \), with confidence interval \( Z_1 = 95\% \) and test power \( Z_2 = 80\% \) \((n = 439\) couples). With the consideration of a 10% sample loss, this number was increased to 480 couples. Multi-stage cluster sampling was used in this study. In the first step, one health center was selected from the provincial health department using simple random sampling method. Then, from this center, 8 health-treatment centers were chosen randomly. Among these centers, 120 couples were chosen and entered into the study via systematic sampling method, a random number table, and based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included at least 2 years of marriage, willingness to participate in the study, the absence of any previous physical and mental illnesses, and the ability to read and write Persian. The exclusion criteria included lack of response to more than 20% of the questions.[3] A written informed consent was obtained from each participant. This research was approved by the ethics committee of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

**Study design**

To collect data, a questionnaire consisting of three parts was used. The first part included demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, occupation, length of interaction, and whether they watched satellite networks or not). The second part consisted of the ENRICHD Marital Inventory,[10] and the third part included Bagarozzi’s Marital Intimacy Questionnaire.[11] The validity and reliability of the questionnaires were approved in the studies by Asoodeh et al.[12] and Etemadi.[13] The questionnaire was distributed among the participants and they had to complete it individually. Information was collected within 2 months. After receiving the completed questionnaire, the subjects were divided into two groups (satellite viewers and nonviewers). High scores in the ENRICHD Marital Inventory indicated low satisfaction and low scores showed high marital satisfaction due to reverse scoring. In Bagarozzi’s Marital Intimacy Questionnaire, higher scores indicated higher intimacy and lower scores indicated lower intimacy.

**Statistical methods**

All quantitative variables are presented as mean and standard deviation [Table 1]. To compare the marital satisfaction and intimacy and duration of interaction in the group of nonviewers of satellite networks and viewers of satellite group, F-test was used. To determine the association between dependent and independent variables, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (version 18, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Significant levels were set to be \( P \) value less than 0.05.

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation score of marital satisfaction, intimacy, and duration of interaction of couples living in Isfahan in 2014 based on satellite use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Viewers of satellite Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Non-viewers of satellite Mean (SD)</th>
<th>( F )</th>
<th>( P ) value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital satisfaction</td>
<td>38.75 (12.04)</td>
<td>30.12 (7.85)</td>
<td>F(_{(1,439)})=86.06</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>60.13 (12.7)</td>
<td>69.59 (9.97)</td>
<td>F(_{(1,439)})=81.97</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of interaction (minutes)</td>
<td>22.4 (7.98)</td>
<td>47.95 (31.41)</td>
<td>F(_{(1,439)})=292.7</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of F-test showed that there was a significant difference between marital satisfaction scores and the intimacy scores along with mean score of the couples’ duration of interaction in the two groups \( (P<0.001) \).
Ethical considerations
This research was approved by the ethics committee of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran.

RESULTS
In this study, 960 subjects (480 couples) participated. The mean score of the couple’s marital satisfaction and intimacy and duration of interaction based on watching satellite networks are presented in Table 1. The mean marital satisfaction in viewers and nonviewers of satellite networks was 38.75 ± 12.04 and 30.12 ± 7.85, respectively. Therefore, there was a significant difference between the two groups regarding marital satisfaction (P < 0.001). The mean score of intimacy of viewers and nonviewers of satellite channels was 60.13 ± 12.7 and 69.59 ± 9.97, respectively. The results also showed a significant difference between the two groups in terms of intimacy (P < 0.001). The mean interaction duration between the couples in viewers and nonviewers of satellite channels was 22.4 ± 7.98 minutes and 47.95 ± 31.41 minutes, respectively. These results also indicated that there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of duration of interaction between the couples (P < 0.001). The Pearson correlation coefficient also showed that there was a significant relationship between intimacy and marital satisfaction (P < 0.050) and this relationship was stronger in the group of nonviewers of satellite. Moreover, the duration of interaction had a significant relationship with intimacy and marital satisfaction (P < 0.050) [Table 2].

DISCUSSION
In the present study, a significant difference was observed between the mean scores of marital satisfaction and intimacy and the duration of the couples’ interaction among the two groups of viewers and nonviewers of satellite networks. This study showed that watching satellite channels reduced the intimacy and marital satisfaction of the couples and duration of interaction among the couples. The findings of some studies were in agreement with that of the present study including the study by Shakerinia.[14] In his study in Rasht, Shakerinia indicated that satellite viewers have weaker social capital, low life satisfaction, and undesirable mental health.[14] Furthermore, Sharievska suggested that people with low marital satisfaction are drawn to the use of social networks and experience their positive and negative effects.[15] Rianne, C, Farrugia, 2013 in a comparative study entitled trust, community, and gender studied mutual trust between the two genders and explained that media, both in terms of access and use, has a significant relationship with mutual trust.[16] The fundamental point is that the greater the access to the media, the more the mutual trust between people is reduced. It can be assumed that access to and use of media can reduce mutual trust between people through analyzing different life aspects and relationships and illustration of its negative aspects and occupying leisure time and replacing people’s relationships with media. Mutual trust between individuals has a direct relationship with creating intimate relationships.[16] Other comparative studies can be noted regarding the relationship between intimacy and marital satisfaction of the two groups.[6,17-22] In a longitudinal study, researchers concluded that insincerity among young couples was the predictor of divorce during middle-age years. One of the causes of divorce is low marital satisfaction, and these two components (intimacy and marital satisfaction) can be linked to each other. A similar study showed that the more the couples interacted the less time they spent watching satellite channels.[5] In other words, more intimacy is possible as a result of more interaction. People who experience this intimate relationship through using online social networks attempt to maintain and even increase this connection. Interacting with media prevents the interaction of the family and reduces mean interaction among family members.[23] In a similar study, it was observed that marital satisfaction, especially for women, was associated with the consulting of spouses with one another.[24] The studies of Amato et al.[25] and Johnson and Anderson[26] showed that the more time people spend with each other and interact with each other the higher their marital satisfaction will be. The present study had some limitations. This was a descriptive analytical study and it could show the relationship between the variables, however, it could not determine their effectiveness. There were also problems related to the high volume of samples and establishing mutual trust and feelings of security among the participants. The researcher tried to provide comprehensive information about the study and the participants results in order to create a sense of mutual trust. Couples’ psychological conditions can also be considered as a confounding factor. Its impact could not be ignored during the completion of the questionnaire. In general, the results of this study and previous researches have established the need for education regarding the positive and negative consequences of satellite programs.

CONCLUSION
This study showed that the mean scores of intimacy, marital satisfaction, and duration of interaction were higher in the
group of nonviewers of satellite networks compared to the group of viewers. Watching satellite programs is associated with intimacy, marital satisfaction, and interaction among couples.

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Conflicts of interest
There are no conflicts of interest.

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