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THE ROLE OF PERSONALITIES IN THE MARITAL ADJUSTMENT OF JAPANESE COUPLES

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The link between marital adjustment and personality was investigated in 66 Japanese married couples using Locke and Wallace's Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). Structural equation modeling suggests that the husband's neuroticism score is related to the wife's marital satisfaction as is the wife's dyadic consensus score, although to a lesser extent, while the wife's extraversion score is related to the husband's marital satisfaction. Spouses' marital satisfactions were correlated with each other. The study suggests that the personality traits of a partner can predict an individual's marital adjustment.

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Whether by nature or nurture, there are persons so lacking in qualities which make for compatibility that they would be incapable of finding happiness in any marriage.

(Terman, Bittenwieses, Ferguson, Johnson, & Wilson, 1938).

Marital adjustment is the adaptation of a husband and wife that allows the couple to avoid or sufficiently resolve conflicts so that both people feel satisfied with the marriage and each other (Locke, 1968). Many factors influence a successful marital adjustment. Among them, personality characteristics have been a target of research. Since the pioneering works of Terman et al. (1938) nearly three-quarters of a century ago, numerous studies have focused on the link between personality and marital adjustment. There have been three groups of studies on this topic: One group of studies has studied how an individual's personality will predict his/her own marital adjustment. Another group of studies has demonstrated the similarity or dissimilarity of personality between the spouses and its relationship with marital adjustment. A third group of studies has paid attention to the link between marital adjustment and the *partner's* personality.

As an example of the first group of studies, a classical work of Zaleski and Galkowska (1978) showed that neuroticism scores were higher among people who were unhappily married than those who were happily married. Similarly, Watson et al. (2004) found that marital satisfaction of newlywed persons would be predicted by the spouse's own personality, particularly neuroticism. In a long prospective study of married couples, Kelly and Conley (1987) reported that neuroticism was an important predictor of later divorce and if not divorce, marital dissatisfaction. In Japan, Kitamura, Watanabe, Aoki, Fujino, and Ura (1995) reported that a lower neuroticism in wives and a lower psychoticism in husbands correlate to a better marital adjustment. Following unmarried high school students into early adulthood, Donnellan, Larsen-Rife, and Conger (2005) demonstrated that personality characteristics in adolescence – low negative emotionality and high positive emotionality – would predict good relationship quality with their partner in early adulthood.

Some researchers thought that similarity of personality between the couple would be no less important than individual personality. For example, it was reported that wives whose extraversion-introversion score was similar to that of the partner were more sexually satisfied than wives whose extraversion-introversion score was dissimilar to that of the partner (Farley & Davis, 1980). Luo and Klohnen (2005) studied a large sample of newlyweds and found that marital quality was linked to similarity of personality of the couples. However,

Watson et al. (2004) reported that the spouses' marital satisfaction would be explained little more by the personality similarity (measured by the Big Five) after controlling for their own and the partner's personality. Thus, research on the link between similarity of personality and marital adjustment is still controversial.

Some researchers have been interested in the effects on the marital adjustment of the partner's personality rather than, or in addition to, the spouse's own personality (Kenny & Cook, 1999). Hafner and Spence (1988) found that the husband's marital satisfaction would be predicted by the wife's guilt and projected hostility, whereas the wife's marital satisfaction would be predicted by the husband's assertive behavior and acting-out hostility (in addition to some of his/her own characteristics). Botwin, Buss, and Shackelford (1997) reported that marital and sexual satisfaction was predicted by the partners' personality, particularly agreeableness, emotional stability, and intellect-openness. Using the Pleasantness-Arousability-Dominance temperament scales, Blum and Mehrabian (1999) studied the marital satisfaction of 166 married couples and found that spouses whose partners had a more pleasant temperament were more satisfied in their marriage. In a prospective study of newlyweds, Caughlin, Huston, and Houts (2000) noted that trait anxiety of spouses would predict the later marital dissatisfaction of the partners. Watson et al. (2004) also found that marital satisfaction would be predicted, after controlling for the spouse's own personality, by the partner's neuroticism, openness, and agreeableness. Thus, it may be feasible to speculate that the spouse's personality will predict the partner's marital adjustment. Researchers have not yet reached consensus as to the extent to which the spouse's own and the partner's personality influence marital satisfaction.

When analyzing the marital adjustment of a married person, the partner's marital adjustment to his or her spouse should be taken into consideration. For example, husbands' marital adjustment was reported to be correlated to wives' marital adjustment (Freeston & Plechaty, 1997).

Most of the previous investigations on the quality of marriage have been conducted in Western countries. There have been fewer studies in Asian countries. Because the quality of a marital relationship may be determined substantially by the cultural norm, it will be of research and clinical importance to replicate the studies using couples in non-Western countries. One of us performed a community study on marital adjustment and examined the effects of the husband or wife's own personality on the marital adjustment. The primary purpose of this paper is to reanalyze our data (Kitamura, Watanabe et al., 1995) in order to examine how a partner's traits, as well as a spouse's personality traits, relate to marital adjustment among couples and to consider the interaction of marital adjustment between spouses.

METHOD

RESPONDENTS

As part of an epidemiological study, which covered vast areas of mental health and mental illness, we sent a letter inviting 508 inhabitants (of 18 years or older), to participate in an interview. We successfully interviewed 207 respondents (Kitamura, Fujihara, Iwata, Tomoda, & Kawakami, 1999; Kitamura et al., 2000a, 2000b; Kitamura, Kitahara et al., 1995). Of these, 66 men and 66 women made up married couples and were included in the present study. They were between 25 and 85 years old with a mean age of 55.2 ($SD = 13.5$). The mean age of the men (57.9; $SD = 13.6$) was significantly higher than that of the women (53.5; $SD = 13.2$) ($p < .001$). Length of marriage ranged from 1 to 60 years, with a mean length of 27.5 ($SD = 14.1$) years.

MEASUREMENT

Marital adjustment This study used the Short Marital Adjustment Test (SMAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959), which consists of 15 items. The SMAT has been used for nearly half a century but its continued use is still justified (Freeston & Plechaty, 1997). The Japanese version has two factors: dyadic consensus and satisfaction (Kitamura, Watanabe et al., 1995). The former incorporates various aspects of marital life such as confiding in one's partner, while the latter incorporates global judgment for one's marriage, wish to marry again, regrets for having married, and so on. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of dyadic consensus and satisfaction are .88 and .54 respectively.

Personality We used the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) to evaluate personality traits. The EPQ is a well-validated personality measurement, which examines three personality dimensions – Neuroticism (N), Extraversion-introversion (E), and Psychoticism (P) scores – together with Lie (L) score. Professor S. Iwawaki (personal communication) provided the Japanese version of the EPQ. The Japanese EPQ consists of 100 items organized into four subscales with each item rated on a two-point scale (*No* - 0, *Yes* - 1, with some items being reversed). The N (23 items) score measures emotional instability, the E (21 items) score measures extraversion compared to introversion, while the P (25 items) score measures psychological isolation and aloofness. The L (21 items) score measures an individual's tendency to distort responses to what he or she thinks is socially desirable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of N, E, P, and L in this participant population are .83, .75, .52 and .66, respectively.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

We used SPSS 10.0 (SPSS Inc., 1999) to analyze the demographic scores and

variable correlations. After examining the correlations between all the variables, path analytic model was designed (Figure 1) to analyze marital adjustment and personality. The upper section of Figure 1 displays the hypothesis that individual personality traits are related to the individual's and his or her spouse's marital adjustment. The lower section displays the hypothesis that a couple's marital adjustment scores are correlated. This structural equation model was performed by AMOS 5.0 software (SmallWaters, 2003). The limitations of AMOS prevented bidirectional pathways (covariances) between exogenous variables. To overcome this problem, we correlated the residuals of the measured variables between spouses' marital adjustment scores. As the goodness-of-fit indices, we used chi-squared statistics, X^2/df , goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). According to conventional criteria, an adequate fit would be indicated by $X^2/df < 2$, $GFI > 0.85$, $CFI > 0.90$, and $RMSEA < 0.1$ (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984; Bentler, 1990; Byrne, 2001).

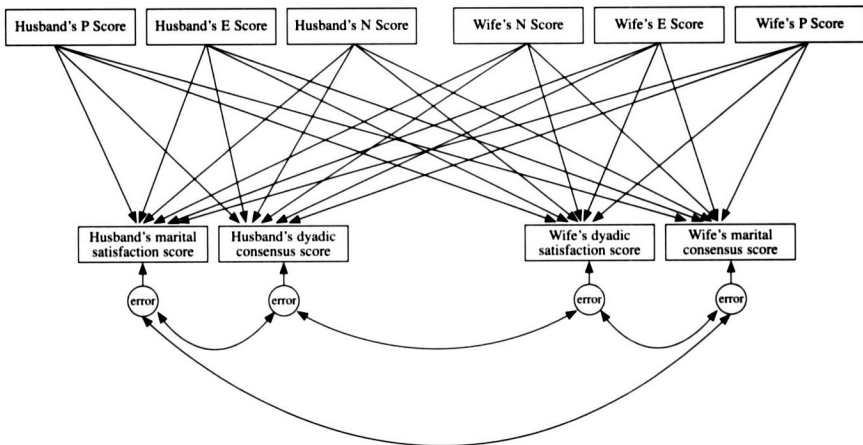


Figure 1: Hypothetical model of marital adjustment and personality

RESULTS

CORRELATION OF MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AND PERSONALITY BETWEEN SPOUSES

The duration of marriage and the age of couples were not related to personality traits and the SMAT subscales, except that the ages of husbands ($r = -.41, p < .01$) and wives ($r = -.40, p < .01$) correlated with wives' N scores (Table 1). The two subscales of the SMAT – dyadic consensus and satisfaction – showed

TABLE 1
CORRELATION OF ALL OBSERVED VARIABLES

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Marital duration (year)	-												
2. Husband's age	.89**	-											
3. Wife's age	.86**	.89**	-										
4. Husband's dyadic consensus	.15	.16	.18	-									
5. Husband's satisfaction	.03	.05	.03	.30*	-								
6. Wife's dyadic consensus	.15	.16	.18	.06	.18	-							
7. Wife's satisfaction	.06	.09	.10	-.00	.41**	.45**	-						
8. Husband's N score	-.20	-.19	-.19	-.02	.06	-.36**	-.18	-					
9. Husband's E score	.09	.10	.10	.17	.21	.08	.16	-.16	-				
10. Husband's P score	-.16	-.17	-.12	-.22	-.22	.01	-.23	-.08	-.02	-			
11. Wife's N score	-.22	-.41*	-.40*	-.09	-.14	-.20	-.09	.06	-.15	-.01	-		
12. Wife's E score	.17	-.28	-.28	-.07	.20	.03	-.03	.13	-.06	.10	-.02	-	
13. Wife's P score	-.22	-.22	-.22	-.04	-.07	-.00	-.08	-.23	-.12	.06	.32**	-.05	-
Highest score	56	81	79	63	65	63	65	17	18	12	23	21	9
Lowest score	1	24	18	36	8	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0
M	29.00	57.91	53.53	55.36	45.58	51.63	41.62	7.36	10.72	3.70	8.98	11.07	3.46
SD	13.21	13.35	13.22	4.94	13.26	12.68	16.74	4.12	3.95	2.11	4.56	4.54	2.07

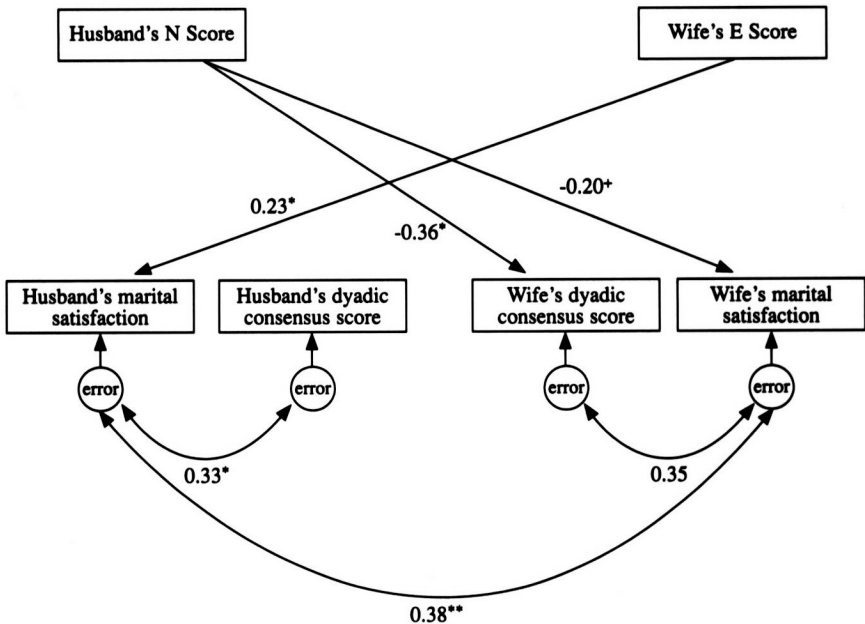
* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

a significant correlation with each other among husbands ($r = .30$; $p < .05$) and wives ($r = .45$; $p < .01$). Husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction scores were also correlated with each other ($r = .41$; $p < .01$). However, husbands' and wives' dyadic consensus scores were not correlated with each other. Significant correlations were found between the husbands' N scores and the wives' dyadic consensus scores ($r = -.36$; $p < .01$) and between the wives' N and P scores ($r = .32$; $p < .01$).

RELATIONSHIP OF PERSONALITY AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

While running the hypothetical model analysis, causal paths were deleted that failed to reach a significant level of .10, and a new model was obtained (Figure 2). This model suggests that the husband's N score negatively predicts the wife's dyadic consensus and her marital satisfaction, but the wife's E score positively predicts the husband's marital satisfaction.

There appear to be correlations between the error variables of marital satisfaction and dyadic consensus scores for both the husbands and wives as well as between the error variables of the marital satisfaction scores of the couple.



+ $p < 0.1$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 2: Final model of marital adjustment and personality

The goodness-of-fit indices of this model were very successful: $X^2 = 6.317$, $df = 12$; GFI = .977; AGFI = .946; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the husband's neuroticism is linked to the wife's perception of a poor dyadic consensus and, to a lesser extent, to the wife's marital dissatisfaction, while the wife's extraversion is related to the husband's marital satisfaction. A couple's marital satisfaction scores covary, but their dyadic consensus scores do not.

The neuroticism personality trait is the most researched personality trait when studying the relationship between personality and marriage (Bono, Boles, Judge, & Lauver, 2002). Researchers have consistently linked neuroticism with dissatisfying and unstable marriages (Kelly & Conley, 1987; Watson, Hubbard, & Weise, 2000; Zaleski & Galkowska, 1978). People who are highly neurotic tend to experience negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger, and are likely to overestimate stressful situations (David & Suls, 1999; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; Kelly & Conley, 1987). In addition, individuals high in neuroticism report the greatest number of complaints and conflicts with their partners (Bono et al., 2002). Thus, we hypothesized that people with high N scores often feel defeated when communicating with their spouse because of the difficulties in coping with stress and solving problems (Eysenck, 1971).

The results show that the N score does not predict one's own marital adjustment, but the husband's N score does predict the wife's marital adjustment. Watson et al. (2004) have reported that the effects on the marital adjustment are stronger for the spouse's personality than for the partner's personality. They used a multiple regression analysis in which the spouses' own personality scores were entered and the partners' personality scores were entered. This may not be a fair comparison of the effects between the individuals and their partners. The present study has advantages in that the spouses' and partners' personality effects were compared in a structural equation analysis. A structural equation modeling was used by Caughlin et al. (2000) who reported that the spouses' trait anxiety would predict their own and the partners' marital satisfaction in later stages of the investigation. A unique finding of this study that merits discussion was that the partners' effects were stronger than those of the individual. Japanese often pay the utmost attention to what other persons do and say. They are therefore sensitive as to how they will be seen by others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They try to harmonize with others in their opinions and comments, often sacrificing their own beliefs. They generally give priority to group aim over an individual aim. According to Markus and Kitayama construals of the self can influence the nature of individual experiences, including cognition, emotion,

and motivation. Japanese people have interdependent construals of self, tending to behave based on others' opinions, judgments, and personality characteristics (Triandis, 1989). Because marital adjustment may be tightly related to the self-construals, these national characteristics may explain the mutual influences on the marital adjustment.

The different personality trait patterns linked to marital adjustment between the two sexes may be explained by the fact that women are more concerned about affection and companionship than men (Ying, 1991). For women, the closer the emotional relationship with their partner is, the greater the likelihood that they will find their marital lives satisfying (Kelly & Conley, 1987). Farley and Davis (1980) have reported that females are more sensitive to personality traits than males because women hold greater expectations for their marriage and because women are more likely to be sensitive to problems and find faults with their husbands.

The present study indicates that the wife's E score is linked to the husband's marital satisfaction. Extraversion is defined as 'an enduring personality trait characterized by interest in the outside world rather than the self' (Spirling & Persaud, 2003); an individual high in extraversion is gregarious, outgoing, energetic, cheerful, prefers frequent changes in activity, and is not susceptible to permanent conditioning. Extraverts are generally positive, social, joyful, and interested in other people. Individuals who score high on extraversion report fewer relationship conflicts (Bono et al., 2002). Extraverts show warmth and affection towards their partner. Thus, extraversion is a moderately strong predictor of marital satisfaction (Watson et al., 2000). In the present study, a husband felt more satisfied if his wife had a high E score. However, it was surprising that a husband's E score did not relate to the wife's marital satisfaction and there is no clear explanation for this difference between the sexes. The reasons for this difference warrant further research.

We did not find a link between the psychoticism trait and marital adjustment scores. Unlike the two other personality traits of the EPQ, psychoticism has not been extensively studied (Farley & Davis, 1980). Thus, the link between psychoticism and marital satisfaction warrants further investigation.

We also found a correlation between husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction. Spouses share their pleasure, joy, cheerfulness, and happiness with each other, and the husband's marital satisfaction appears to positively influence his wife's marital satisfaction and vice versa. Surprisingly, the dyadic agreement between spouses was poor. Initially we expected that dyadic consensus would show a greater agreement between a husband and his wife compared to marital satisfaction because dyadic consensus might deal with more objective issues. The finding may be explained by the existence of an individual who, although not agreeable to his or her partner according to that partner, is submissive with

regard to marital and family issues.

This study has several limitations. First, our study has a relatively small sample size and suffers from problems associated with limited statistical power. Moreover, the correlation values reported in Table 1 were not very high but moderate. A larger sample size is required to be conclusive about the present model. However, the goodness-of-fit indices advanced here suggest that the model fit the data well. Further replication may be warranted. Second, because of the high attrition rate of the participants, we should be cautious when interpreting the results. Perhaps the participants were more greatly interested in marriage and sex, and it is possible that nonparticipants created selection bias of personality and marital adjustment (Trivedi & Sabini, 1998). Another issue is the use of measures. Both the SMAT and the EPQ are traditional measures of marital adjustment and personality. Measures of marital adjustment and personality recently developed should be used when the present findings are to be replicated.

Despite these limitations, the present study demonstrates different relationship patterns of marital adjustment with personality and gender. This study should contribute to the understanding of the relationship between personality and marital adjustment.

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