

# Association between a value system and marital commitment along couple burnout in nurses

Sarebanha F, BSc<sup>1\*</sup>, Zaharakar K, PhD<sup>2</sup>, Nazari AM, PhD<sup>3</sup>

1- MSc Students in Family Counseling, Dept. of Counseling, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran. 2- Assistant Prof., Dept. of Counseling, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran. 3- Assistant Prof., Dept. of Counseling, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran

## Abstract

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**Background:** Marital commitment and marital burnout are general evaluations of the value system in spouses' marital or romantic relationship, which relate to different factors. The present study was conducted with the aim to investigate the relationship between value system, and marital commitment and marital burnout.

**Materials and Methods:** This was a descriptive correlational study. The study population included all married nurses working in the hospitals of Tehran, Iran. The sample included 340 nurses selected using multistage cluster sampling method. In this study, marital commitment was evaluated using Adams and Jones Marital Commitment Survey, burnout and its dimensions using Pines Couple Burnout Measure, and value system using Schwartz Value System Questionnaire. For data analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient and multivariate regression were used.

**Results:** According to the results, the variables of value system had a significant relationship with marital commitment ( $r = 0.7$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and they completely explained 0.48% of the variance of marital commitment. The predicted model was significant ( $f = 32.73$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). The results showed that the variables of value system and marital burnout had a significant relationship ( $r = 0.46$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Moreover, value system completely explained 0.18% of the variance of marital burnout; hence, the predicted model was significant ( $f = 8.88$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusions:** It can be concluded that the value system can raise commitment and reduce marital burnout, and its components will eventually cause stability in the family.

**Keywords:** Marital, Burnout, Nurses.

## Introduction

Women's employment which can be effective on family conflicts has an undeniable effect on family structure, the traditional relationship of couples, and the future of children (1). It should be noted that it is within the family system that individuals meet their physical, mental, and emotional needs. Satisfaction with marital life refers to satisfaction with spouse's behavior, commitment, and reduced marital burnout. Satisfaction with family refers to satisfaction with mutual behavior, reform, and lack of conflict which in effect facilitates the growth of the spiritual and material dimensions of society (2).

Commitment to marital life results in the wellbeing and happiness of couples. The

existence of values and a sustainable value system in couples' relationship leads to increased satisfaction quality, marital commitment, high adaptation, and high mutual understanding. This in turn will provide the grounds for an appropriate relationship and decrease the amount of emotional exhaustion, and couple burnout (1).

One of the important features of successful and long marriages is marital commitment. The term "commitment" refers to principled rational decision, a mood of emotional attachment which obliges the individual to perform certain acts, or emotional or rational

\* **Corresponding author:** Fahimah Sarebanha, Dept. of Counseling, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.  
**Email:** Fahimehsarebanha@yahoo.com

attachment to a desired ideal. (3). Spouses' marital commitment is a significant predictor of a lasting and satisfactory marriage. Marital commitment is a boundary in which individuals plan a long-term marriage, sacrifice for their relationship, and attempt to retain and reinforce their unity and solidarity, and stay even when their marriage is not rewarding. Commitment is considered as a tool that emerges the level of security and the distance between spouses (4). Obligatory or selfless commitment is important to quality of marital life and stability in marriage (5). Johnson has provided a comprehensive framework that he has divided marital commitment to three independent types: personal commitment, moral obligation and structural commitment proposed structure (6). Personal commitment indicates moral loyalty of an individual to marriage. Many theorists believe that marital commitment is based on moral loyalty to marriage and marital relationship, as well as the belief that marriage is a holy communion. Some researchers also believe that this dimension of commitment is related to the moral and religious preference of individuals. Obligatory commitment to or feeling trapped in a relationship is due to the costs and problems of ending a relationship. People with high marital commitment tend to work on their relationship in order to improve satisfaction and reduce interest in the alternatives which may reduce the security felt by their spouse. Studies indicate that low levels of marital commitment lead to dissatisfaction and divorce. It seems that lifestyle has a determinant role in marital commitment (7).

The proposed theories and models regarding marital area indicates that several factors affect satisfaction, stability, and inconstancy that lifestyle has been concerned a lot (8). Marital burnout which is the result of value differences and cultural differences is a phenomenon that disrupts the functioning of a family. Burnout in couples' relationships is a continuous disabling symptom associated with physical, psychological, behavioral, and social

problems. This feeling is expressed in different forms, through weak to severe intention to leave a relationship (9).

According to the abovementioned facts, marital commitment and marital burnout are a general evaluation of the situation of value system in the marital relationship or love relationship of a couple which are affected by many different factors. Marital commitment and marital burnout can be considered as a situation in which cognitive and emotional dimensions are affected. Hence, the present research was conducted in order to study the relationship of the value system with marital commitment and marital burnout.

### **Material and Methods**

The descriptive correlational study method was used in the present research. The statistical population included all married female nurses working in Laleh, Eqbal, Mehr, Sevom Shaban, and Al-Qadir Hospitals in Tehran, Iran. The sample size was calculated using the Morgan table. The participants consisted of 340 nurses selected through multistage cluster sampling method. For data collection, the Marital Commitment Survey, Pines Couple Burnout Measure, and Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) were used.

#### **Marital Commitment Survey:**

This questionnaire measures the commitment of individuals to their spouse and marriage, and its dimensions. It was developed by Adams and Jones (1997) for research intentions, and measures three dimensions of marital commitment. These dimensions include:

Personal commitment: spouse commitment that is based attraction of marital relationship

Moral commitment: marriage commitment that is based on respecting the marital relationship

Structural commitment: Spouse and marriage commitment that is based on obligatory feeling of obligation to continue the marriage or fear of the consequences of divorce.

The Marital Commitment Survey has 44 items which are scored based on a 5-point scale

including completely disagree, disagree, I do not know, agree, and completely agree [ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree)]. Most items of the questionnaire are scored directly and questions 11, 12, 16, 23, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, and 38 are scored reversely. In reverse scoring, completely agree receives 1 point and other options receive none. The total score ranges from 1 to 172, and higher total scores indicate higher commitment. In the present study, the reliability of this survey was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and was found to be 0.87 for marital commitment, 0.71 for personal commitment, 0.78 for moral commitment, and 0.78 for structural commitment.

**Pines Couple Burnout Measure:**

To investigate the level of marital burnout, a 21-item questionnaire was distributed among the participants. This questionnaire included three main parts of physical exhaustion (fatigue, physical exhaustion, feeling empty, weakness and sleep disorders, feeling hyper-energetic), emotional exhaustion (feeling happy, weariness, sadness, feeling trapped, isolation from spouse, emotional depression, and exhaustion), and mental exhaustion (feeling worthless, having a good day, indigence, having problems, anger toward spouse, disappointment, optimism, and anxiety). All of these items were answered on a 7-point Likert scale. The respondents determined how often they experienced each of these states in their lives (never = 1, sometimes = 4, always = 7). The level of burnout is calculated by determining the mean of answers. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha (0.83).

**Schwartz Value Survey (SVS):**

This questionnaire includes two lists of values. List one includes 30 values, and list 2 includes 31-57 items which evaluate 10 value forms. Value forms include:

- Self-directedness: independent thought and work, selection, creation, exploration, agitation, emotion, freshness, life challenges

- Pleasure: joy and satisfaction based on physical pleasure
- Progress: personal success through showing competency regarding social standards
- Power: social status and value, control or dominance over people and resources
- Security: harmony, and social stability of the individual and relationships.
- Harmony: continence from deeds, intentions, and behaviors are socially irritating and damaging and also violating the rights of others or the social norms
- Tradition: respect, commitment, and accepting etiquette, manners, and opinions are arised from the religious and/or traditional culture
- Benevolence: preserving and promoting of the welfare of those people who are in personal contact of an individual
- Universalism: understanding, appreciating, tolerating, and protecting the wellbeing of all creatures and nature.

In the present study, the reliability of this questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and found to be 0.83 for the entire questionnaire and 0.78 to 0.84 for its dimensions. For data analysis, the Pearson correlation and multivariate regression were used.

**Results**

According to table 1, the highest mean in value system was that of universalism and the lowest mean of arousal and benevolence. The highest mean in marital commitment belonged to moral commitment and personal commitment, and the lowest mean to structural commitment. The highest mean in couple burnout was related to emotional exhaustion and mental exhaustion, and the lowest mean to physical exhaustion.

According to table 2, the values of power, pleasure, and progress had a significant correlation with marital commitment in general and its subscales of structural, personal, and moral commitment ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of value system, marital commitment, and marital burnout**

Variables	Mean	SD
Power	17.17	6.42
Progress	16.86	6.06
Pleasure	17.42	7.94
Arousal	16.51	5.73
Self-sufficiency	17.19	5.96
Universalism	18.22	4.36
Benevolence	16.55	5.25
Tradition	17.03	6.33
Conventionalization	17.50	4.22
Security	16.89	5.69
Total	170.94	21.66
Personal commitment	40.40	11.23
Moral commitment	41.03	9.42
Structural commitment	36.51	14.22
Total commitment	188.27	27.93
Physical exhaustion	26.08	7.33
Emotional exhaustion	28.73	8.16
Mental exhaustion	28.07	7.70
Burnout	82.89	18.60

In other words, by increasing the significance of power, pleasure, and progress, marital commitment and its components are reduced. Moreover, other values including arousal, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security had positive significant correlations with marital commitment and its subscales of structural,

personal, and moral commitment ( $P < 0.05$ ). Only the correlation between universalism and personal commitment was not significant ( $P > 0.05$ ). It should be noted that among the list of values, the pleasure variable had the highest correlation (0.54) and universalism variable had the lowest correlation (0.18) with marital commitment.

**Table 2: Correlation coefficients among value system and marital commitment**

Value system \ Marital Commitment	Personal commitment	Moral commitment	Structural commitment	Total marital commitment
Power	-0.30**	-0.19**	-0.25**	-0.38**
Progress	-0.25**	-0.19**	-0.25**	-0.35**
Pleasure	-0.38**	-0.31**	-0.38**	-0.54**
Arousal	0.13*	0.11*	0.25**	0.25**
Self-sufficiency	0.22**	0.13*	0.14**	0.25**
Universalism	0.09	0.16**	0.10*	0.18**
Benevolence	0.10**	0.11*	0.20**	0.23**
Tradition	0.25**	0.21**	0.33**	0.40**
Conventionalization	0.29**	0.13**	0.25**	0.34**
Security	0.21**	0.16**	0.18**	0.28**

\*  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$

**Table 3: Predicting marital commitment based on value system**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of estimation	Durbin-Watson
1	0.70	0.49	0.48	20.07	1.92

According to table 3, the variables of value system had a significant correlation with marital commitment ( $r = 0.70$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and simultaneously explained 0.48% of variance of marital commitment.

According to table 4, the variables of value system which had a significant correlation with marital commitment created a significant predicting model ( $f = 32.73$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4: Predicting marital commitment based on value system**

Source of changes	df	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	F	P
Regression	10	131933.71	13193.37	32.73	< 0.001
Remain	329	132603.84	403.05		
Total	339	364537.56			

Table 5 indicates that by an increase in the standard deviation of power, pleasure, progress, arousal, self-government, and tradition variables by one unit, the standard deviation of marital commitment variables (power, progress, pleasure, arousal, self-sufficiency, and tradition) decreased by 0.12,

0.13, 0.39 units and increased by 0.19, 0.08, and 0.24 units, respectively. It should be noted that other values did not show strong correlation with marital commitment, and hence, could not predict marital commitment in multivariate regression model.

**Table 5: Predicting marital commitment based on value system**

Criteria variable	Predicting variables	B	$\beta$	Standard error	T	P
Marital commitment	Power	-0.54	-0.12	0.19	-2.75	0.006
	Progress	-0.61	-0.13	0.20	-3.06	0.002
	Pleasure	-1.40	-0.39	0.15	-8.87	< 0.001
	Arousal	0.96	0.19	0.20	4.74	< 0.001
	Self-sufficiency	0.38	0.08	0.20	1.97	0.050
	Universalism	0.10	0.02	0.18	0.54	0.580
	Benevolence	-0.30	-0.06	0.25	-1.21	0.220
	Tradition	1.17	0.24	0.31	3.75	< 0.001
	Conventionalization	0.08	0.01	0.29	0.29	0.770
	Security	0.29	0.05	0.24	1.18	0.230

Table 6 indicates that the physical exhaustion variable had a significant correlation with the value of progress ( $P < 0.05$ ). In addition, the variables of power, progress, and pleasure had a significant positive correlation with marital burnout and emotional and mental exhaustion ( $P < 0.05$ ). Arousal, self-sufficiency,

universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security had negative significant correlations with marital burnout and emotional and mental exhaustion ( $P < 0.05$ ). In other words, it is less likely for individuals to suffer from marital burnout due to the increasing of these values.

**Table 6: Correlation coefficients among value system and marital burnout**

Value system \ Marital burnout	Physical exhaustion	Emotional exhaustion	Mental exhaustion	Marital burnout
Power	0.09	0.24	0.23	0.28**
Progress	0.14**	0.08	0.11	0.17**
Pleasure	0.01	0.26**	0.16	0.21**
Arousal	0.03	-0.11*	-0.15**	-0.11*
Self-sufficiency	0.08	-0.12*	-0.18**	-0.18**
Universalism	-0.06	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.19**
Benevolence	-0.03	-0.27**	-0.26**	-0.25**
Tradition	0.04	-0.34**	-0.30**	-0.31**
Conventionalization	0.08	-0.33**	-0.26**	-0.29**
Security	0.02	-0.36**	-0.33**	-0.33**

\*\* P < 0.01, \* P < 0.05

According to table 7, value system had a significant correlation with marital burnout (r

= 0.46, P < 0.05), and explained 0.18% of variances of marital burnout.

**Table 7: Predicting marital burnout based on value system**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error of estimation	Durbin-Watson
1	0.46	0.21	0.18	16.75	1.66

According to table 8, the variables of value system which had a significant correlation

with marital burnout created a significant predicting model (r = 8.88, P < 0.05).

**Table 8: Predicting marital burnout based on value system**

Source of changes	Df	Sum of squares	Mean of squares	f	P
Regression	10	24931.48	2493.14	8.88	< 0.001
Remain	329	92349.48	280.69		
Total	339	117280.97			

Table 9 showed that an increasing in standard deviation of power, universalism, and security variables, and marital burnout by one unit increasing in standard deviation of power in marital commitment by 0.16 and decreased the standard deviation of universalism and

security by 0.08 and 0.17. It should be noted that other values did not have strong correlations with marital burnout and could not predict marital burnout in multivariate regression model.

**Table 9: Predicting marital burnout based on values system**

Criterion variable	Predicting variables	B	$\beta$	Standard Error	t	P
Marital commitment	Power	0.46	0.16	0.16	2.82	0.005
	Progress	0.16	0.05	0.16	0.95	0.330
	Pleasure	0.16	0.07	0.13	1.26	0.200
	Arousal	-0.14	-0.04	0.16	-0.85	0.390
	Self-sufficiency	-0.20	-0.06	0.16	-1.22	0.220
	Universalism	-0.25	-0.08	0.15	-1.86	0.040
	Benevolence	-0.12	-0.03	0.20	-0.58	0.56
	Tradition	-0.28	-0.09	0.26	-1.10	0.590
	Conventionalization	-0.13	-0.04	0.24	-0.53	0.006
	Security	-0.56	-0.17	0.20	-2.78	



## **Discussion**

Results showed that the values of power, pleasure, and progress have significant negative correlation with marital commitment in general and its subscales of structural, moral, and personal commitment. Moreover, the variables of arousal, self-sufficiency, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security have positive significant correlation with marital commitment and its subscales. However, universalism had no significant correlation with personal commitment. This finding is consistent with the study of Khazal (10).

Studies show that the low level of marital commitment in marriage can lead to dissatisfaction and divorce (11). According to the results of studies, marital commitment is the second factor of preserving marriage (12), and lack of this factor is the most important factor in divorce (13).

Arousal, self-sufficiency, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security values have significant positive correlations with marital commitment and structural, personal, and ethical commitment. It should be noted that value exists in every culture in a particular form. An individual with values and high value system enjoys an ethical source of important objectives with a commitment-oriented attitude. In such a situation, presentation of a clear and meaningful picture of life with positive value system encourages stepping toward a goal-oriented meaningful path and reaching growth, perfection, and happiness that leads to increased marital commitment. With the enhancement of collective values, couples can seek security and peace in their marital life. These values include benevolence which requires reducing selfishness and paying attention to the needs of others, arousal that guarantees the passion and vivacity of a relationship, and self-sufficiency which implies lack of attachment and having an independent identity. They also include universalism which requires the acceptance of

the differences of others and establishment of positive relationships, following traditions which result in adaptation and stability of relationship and arousal, conventionalization which indicates paying attention to the thoughts and opinions of others and less disagreement with their values. The sample of this research consisted of employed nurses with a good economic status, and thus, ending a relationship would not be a particular economic concern. Hence, it was expected that higher marital commitment would be observed among them.

As conclusion, it can be said that commitment to marital life provides a valuable stock for the marital life of couples and brings about physical and mental health for the couples. Furthermore, the underlying basis for marital commitment is a collection of basic beliefs about values and couples' perception of each other's value system, and the mutual understanding of these values. Such a value system in couples' relationships leads to the emergence of commitment and reduction of conflicts; therefore, the couple can experience a happy emotional life. In general, it can be said that a significant correlation exists among value system and marital commitment.

Moreover, a positive significant correlation was observed between physical exhaustion and progress value. Power, progress, and pleasure values had positive significant correlations with marital burnout, and emotional and mental exhaustion. Arousal, self-sufficiency, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security had negative significant correlations with marital burnout, and emotional and mental exhaustion.

To explain these results indicating the correlation of value system with marital burnout, we can refer to the meaning-therapy viewpoint which states that an individual who does not have meaningful experiences fails as an individual. The feeling of failure and lack of meaning are the factors most contributing to burnout. In the meaning-therapy point of view, the main cause of burnout is the individual's need to believe that her/his life is meaningful.

The correlation among burnout and the failure of those who do not enjoy a positive meaning and value system can be explained in three ways. First, these people select a particular person as spouse and expect that person to create meaning in their life. Second, they experience the feeling of failure in the existential question and how this issue relates to burnout. Third, they seek great changes in order to determine the meaning of their existence through their spouse.

It should be noted that the variable of physical exhaustion was only significantly correlated with progress value, indicating that more work and effort by nurses to receive promotions and achieve professional progress renders them more susceptible to physical exhaustion.

Moreover, the variables of power, progress, and pleasure had significant positive correlations with marital burnout, and mental and emotional exhaustion. This means that married nurses who have higher expectations from life with respect to having more power, progress, and pleasure are more likely to be affected by emotional and psychological marital burnout. In other words, an increase in these values makes people more vulnerable to marital burnout.

Only the correlation between emotional exhaustion and progress value was not significant. This can be due to the fact that the emotion of women and its effect on burnout is much less dependent on progress in life and can be related to other factors such as the quality of marital relationship.

Arousal, self-sufficiency, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conventionalization, and security showed negative significant correlation with marital burnout, and emotional and mental exhaustion. In other words, by enhancing these values, people are less likely to suffer from marital burnout. These are collective and more traditional values. Nurses for whom the value of arousal and happiness increase, and who are more dependent, become more benevolent, traditional, universalism, conventional, and concordant, and have more respect for security

are less likely to think of ending a relationship and experience less marital burnout.

Positive values and value system play an effective role in decreasing the problems of marital life and burnout. Value increases adaptability and sublime values create the need to move beyond the self in everyday life and integrate with someone other than oneself. It emphasizes on having rational conduct, along with passion, and internal and external peace, and seeking sublimity and honesty in marital life. Hence, it limits failure in recognition and description of marital emotions, emergence of emotional feedbacks, feeling of emotional exhaustion in relationships, and marital burnout. It should be noted that the limitation of this research to one gender (women) makes the generalizability of findings difficult. It is suggested that, regarding the findings of this research and other similar studies, consultants and psychologists of nurses take steps to improve and enhance collective values which are based on partnership and collaboration in marital life, so that nurses experience higher marital commitment and less marital burnout.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the values of power, pleasure, and progress had a significant negative relationship with marital commitment and the subscales of structural, personal, and moral commitment. Moreover, there was a significant positive relationship between arousal, self-directedness, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and safety and marital commitment and the subscales of structural, personal, and moral commitment. No significant correlation was observed between the value of universalism and personal commitment. The results show that there was a significant positive correlation between physical exhaustion and the value of progress. There was a significant positive relationship between the values of power, progress, and pleasure and marital burnout, emotional exhaustion, and psychological burnout. There was a significant negative



relationship between the values of arousal, self-directedness, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and safety and marital burnout, and the components of emotional exhaustion, and psychological burnout.

From the results in can be concluded that commitment to marital life provides a valuable part for couples, and contributes to their physical and mental health. The fundamentals of marital commitment are a set of basic beliefs in values, and each spouses' understanding of the other's value system. The existence of a value system can result in commitment and reduction of conflicts in marital life, and hence, couples experience happiness and excitement in their lives.

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