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A BRIEF SCALE TO MEASURE MARITAL/RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION BY DOMAINS: METRICS, CORRELATES, GENDER AND MARRIAGE/ RELATIONSHIP STATUS DIFFERENCES

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The aim of the study was to analyse psychometric properties of the Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale (MRS) developed for the purpose of this research, and its association with other well-being indicators. Additionally, differences in well-being between participants who were married or in a relationship and single participants, and gender differences were tested. The sample consisted of 1087 adult internet users from Croatia. We assessed general well-being, satisfaction with specific life domains, marital/relationship satisfaction and demographic variables. MRS proved to be a reliable single factor instrument which correlated moderately with all well-being indices, but highest with satisfaction with love life and family relations. Men and women did not differ regarding MRS. Participants who were married or in a relationship showed higher levels of well-being.

Keywords: well-being, marriage/relationship satisfaction scale, PWI, marital/relationship satisfaction domains



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INTRODUCTION

Marriage can contribute to one's well-being and life satisfaction in various ways: it can fulfil one's need for affiliation, communication and connectedness, provide support, safety, pooled resources and shared household investments, enable sexual and emotional intimacy, and it can also help in managing daily tasks. But, is it enough to be married or in a relationship to profit from it?

Marital satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is defined as "a spouse's conceptualisation of the level of quality in the marital relationship on the basis of his or her subjective feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and pleasure when considering all aspects of marriage" (Rollings & Gallian, 1978, p. 76). Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, and Kim (2002) see marital satisfaction as a combination of one's evaluation of a marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning.

Research on marital satisfaction flourished at the end of 20th century and continues to attract attention from marital, developmental and family scholars across the world, but most of the research was conducted in the United States. Studying marital satisfaction is important for individual, family and societal well-being, in order to reduce divorce rates and promote strong and stable marriages as a foundation of prosperous society. Not surprisingly, it was found that married people are more satisfied with their lives in general compared to those widowed, divorced or single (del Mar Salinas-Jiménez, Artés, & Salinas-Jiménez, 2013; Liu, Li, & Feldman, 2013; Malešević Perović, 2010). Diener, Gohm, Suh, and Oishi (2000) and Tucker, Friedman, Wingard, and Schwartz (1996) argue that marital satisfaction affects mental and physical health, mood, social integration and subjective well-being throughout the life span. Proulx, Helms, and Buehler (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 93 studies to examine the association between marital quality and personal well-being and found a positive and significant relationship between the two across all available cross-sectional studies.

Obradović and Čudina Obradović (2000) and Huić, Kamenov, and Jelić (2012) explored marital satisfaction in Croatia. Obradović and Čudina Obradović (2000) analysed predictors of wife's marital satisfaction among 770 married couples and found that her marital satisfaction can be predicted from sexual intimacy in marriage, love for husband, feeling of being loved by husband, husband's perception of sexual intimacy in marriage, and his smaller participation in raising children and involvement in strategic decision making. Huić et al. (2012) found

that, for both genders, showing and perceiving love is crucial for marital happiness.

Theories of marital satisfaction

Many theories of marital satisfaction have been developed in order to describe marital interactions and various factors that may influence well-being of spouses and their perceptions of quality of marriage. Behavioural theories argue that positive behaviours enhance global evaluation of marriage (such as marital satisfaction) while negative behaviours tend to decrease marital satisfaction. Thereby, marital satisfaction is facilitated by every satisfactory interaction. The most influential behavioural theory, The Social Exchange Theory (Levinger, 1976), argues that stability of marriage depends on the balance of advantages (e.g. emotional support) and disadvantages (e.g. material restraints). Marital satisfaction, therefore, is defined by the proportion of rewards and costs the partners receive from each other (Homans, 1974). Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) claims that one's personal internal working model, developed from attachment styles during childhood, influences relationships to others in adulthood. Therefore, early interactions are associated with a persons' marital expectations and behaviour. Securely attached persons hold more positive relationship expectations (Collins & Read, 1994), and enjoy greater relationship satisfaction, including marital satisfaction (e.g. Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994). Equity theory (Adams, 1963) is a general social psychological theory that can explain satisfaction in a broad range of dyadic interactions. According to equity theory, a person is satisfied only if he/she perceives fairness or equity in a relationship. On the other hand, individuals who perceive themselves as either under or over rewarded experience dissatisfaction or distress and try to restore equity. Thus, according to this theory, marital satisfaction would depend on whether partners feel equitably treated in a marriage. From an evolutionary point of view, marital satisfaction is defined as a psychological state regulated by evolved mechanisms that monitor rewards and costs of marriage (Buss, 1995). Marital (dis)satisfaction motivates a person to stay in the relationship (marriage), try to change it, or leave it in order to find another, more rewarding relationship.

The dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction (Li & Fung, 2011) argues that the most essential determinant of marital satisfaction is achievement of marital goals, especially the prioritised ones. Li and Fung (2011, p. 246) define marital satisfaction as "people's global subjective evaluation about the quality of their marriage". According to this theory, people hold var-

ious goals they want to achieve in marriage, and the priority of these goals dynamically changes with various developmental stages. Various factors (like children, economic status) can also influence marital satisfaction by either changing the priority of goals or by facilitating the achievement of the prioritised goals.

The theory of marital flourishing was proposed by Fowers and Owenz (2010). This theory postulates that flourished marriage is the highest quality of marriage, capturing concepts such as intimacy, growth, resiliency and dynamic balance, and activities are held together in meaningful ways.

Gender differences in marital satisfaction

Findings regarding gender differences in marital satisfaction are not conclusive. While some research reported lower marital satisfaction in women (e.g. Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007; Kamp Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009), other found no differences between men and women (e.g. Broman, 2005; Kurdek, 2005). The results of meta-analysis conducted by Jackson, Miller, Oka, and Henry (2014) indicated small gender differences in marital satisfaction, indicating that wives were 7% less likely to be satisfied with their marital relationship when compared with husbands. However, even this small difference was mainly the consequence of clinical samples included in the analysis. Corra, Carter, Carter, and Knox (2009) explored trends in marital satisfaction by gender and race from 1973 to 2006 and reported highest levels of marital satisfaction among white husbands. Gender differences in marital satisfaction are usually explained by male dominance in marriage, characterised by unequal control of family finances, higher risk for interpersonal violence, and double standards in regard to sexual behaviour. Pardo, Weisfeld, Hill, and Slatcher (2013) found that gender differences in marital satisfaction differ across cultures due to traditional sex roles, while Taniguchi and Kaufman (2013) found that gender differences in marital satisfaction may be attributed to culture related variables, such as sex egalitarianism.

Subjective well-being

Diener (2000, p. 34) argues that subjective well-being (SWB) refers to people's evaluations of their lives, both affective and cognitive. Affective well-being comprises many positive and few negative emotions, while cognitive well-being refers to evaluation of life in general or life domains. Diener (2000) distinguished between separable components of SWB: overall life satisfaction (global evaluation of one's life), satisfaction with important life domains (e.g. marital satisfaction), positive affect (experiencing positive emotions), and low levels of

negative affect (experiencing few negative emotions).

The set point theory postulates that inborn personality factors determine one's level or "set-point" of happiness. Supporters of this theory argue that the happiness level can temporarily change due to specific life events, but with time people would adapt to both positive and negative life events and inevitably return to their "set-point". The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions postulates that positive emotions broaden peoples thought-action repertoires and trigger upward spirals towards increasing well-being. According to this theory, positive emotions increase physical, intellectual, social and psychological resources that help individuals in future challenges.

In general, the correlation between subjective estimations of happiness and life circumstances such as income, health, age is rather low. However, it is well established that social interactions are important for one's well-being, and satisfaction with social life, including family and friends, often contributes to well-being more than other factors (Diener et al., 2000; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2017).

Rationale for this research

Many instruments were developed to measure marriage and/or relationship quality or satisfaction with relationship. Some of them were constructed to measure specific domains of the relation, for example conflict, with primarily diagnostic purposes (e.g. Conflict Tactics Scale, Straus, 1979), while others were designed to measure general satisfaction with a relationship/marriage (e.g. Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale; Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grigsby, 1983; or Quality of Marriage Index; Norton, 1983).

Although marital satisfaction was studied from different perspectives, and a lot of effort has been put into analysing its relationship with personality, value systems and marital dynamics, most authors tend to assess negative outcomes, such as conflicts and depression (Bookwala, 2012; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Those who explored positive psychological outcomes mostly employed general indicators such as overall life satisfaction (Cohen, Geron, & Farchi, 2009). In this research, we focused on positive outcomes (satisfaction) and we wanted to capture both global well-being measures and satisfaction with various life domains and their association to satisfaction with marriage/relationship.

The aims of this study were: (1) to analyse psychometric properties of the Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale, and its association with well-being indicators: life satisfaction, happiness and satisfaction with specific life domains, (2) to examine gender differences in marital/relationship satisfaction (3) to

examine the differences between participants who were married or in a relationship and single participants in well-being indicators.

METHODS

Procedure

The data for this study were collected as a part of the Croatian longitudinal study on well-being (CRO-WELL project).¹ The research was conducted via on-line application, which comprised of a comprehensive battery of questionnaires. All adults were able to participate in the survey using the link provided at the research web site (<https://www.sreca.hr>). Anonymity was secured by the system of tokens given to every participant before starting the survey. At the beginning of the survey, participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, that they can quit at any point without explanation, and that the data would be used for scientific purposes only.

Measures

Life satisfaction. Overall life satisfaction (i.e. global cognitive judgment of satisfaction with one's life) was measured by a single-item: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?" which is prevalently employed in similar studies (e.g. World Values Survey, 2007). Participants rated their overall life satisfaction using an 11-point scale, from 0 "not satisfied at all" to 10 "extremely satisfied". We chose a single item scale in this research in line with Cummins's (1995), one of the leading authorities in well-being research, recommendation, who argued that "if researchers are interested only in an overall life satisfaction score, there seems little benefit in asking respondents multiple questions; it seems that a single question can yield reliable and valid data" (p. 196).

Happiness. A single-item of happiness: "In general, how happy do you usually feel?" was used to measure the affective component of subjective well-being (adapted from Fordyce, 1988). Participants rated their happiness using an 11-point scale, from 0 "not happy at all" to 10 "extremely happy". The same rationale as in the life satisfaction scale was applied for using the single item happiness scale for the purpose of this research.

Adapted Personal Well-being Index. To assess satisfaction with various life domains an adapted Personal Well-being Index (PWI, Cummins, 1996) was used. The original PWI scale has seven items which correspond to different personal life domains: standard of living, health, achievement in life, relation-

¹ CRO-WELL "Croatian longitudinal study on well-being" is a Croatian Science Foundation Research Project (IP-09-2014).

ships, safety, community connectedness, and future security. We adapted this scale by dividing "relationships" into two domains (family and friends) and also added four additional domains: free time, work, physical appearance, and love life. Participants have to rate satisfaction with each domain on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 as "completely dissatisfied" to 10 as "completely satisfied". PWI shows good reliability $\alpha = 0.83$ with a single-factor structure (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, & Lawson, 2008). Cronbach's α of the Adapted PWI was 0.89. However, in this study we were interested in satisfaction with specific life domains, not PWI as a global measure.

Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale. For the purpose of this research the Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale (MRS) was developed. Our intention was to construct an instrument that would capture satisfaction with various domains of an intimate relationship. Following the rationale of the Personal Well-Being Index (Cummins, 1996) – the well-being measure that contains items assessing satisfaction with various life domains, we opt to construct a similar instrument covering the main sources of (dis)satisfaction in a marriage/relationship. Therefore we needed to isolate the most important aspects of marriage/relationship that contribute to overall marriage/relationship satisfaction, while keeping the scale simple and short enough to be easy to apply and interpret.

The first step was to study the items of marital/relationship scales in order to make a list of concepts. In this procedure we used the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1983), Quality of Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), Stevens Relationship Questionnaire (Stevens & Stevens, 1994), The Couples Satisfaction Index (Funk & Rogge, 2007), Relationship Rating Form, (Davis, 1996), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Overall assessment questions such as "How good is your relationship compared to most?" or "How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?" were excluded from the analysis since we focused on specific themes to generate relationship domains. Content analysis resulted in 83 different themes, presented in the Table 1 below (middle column).

In the third step we organised focus group discussions in three groups in order to (1) check correspondence between themes from the questionnaires and groups, (2) check if new themes would emerge, and (3) to organise themes into logical categories. First, a preliminary discussion was organised with students, and the rest comprised participants aged 25 to 55, of both sexes. About half of the participants were married. Groups of 5-7 people first discussed "what is important for satisfaction

with marriage or relationship". Participants mentioned almost all the themes previously found in scales, and a few new topics (Table 1, right column) emerged in discussion, amongst which attitude towards children was the most recognisable, and stood out as a separate theme.

Category	Specific topics (scale)	Specific topics (focus groups)
(1) Understanding and support between partners	making small/major decisions, giving partner autonomy, sacrifice, long term goals, understanding, trust, knowing each other, forgiving, confiding, supporting when under stress, commitment, supportiveness, championing, counting on, honesty, ambivalence, communion, care, connection, giving the utmost, sticking together against the others, "part of the team", maintenance of the relationship, dependence, keeping promises disappointing (-), forgetting other's welfare (-), using things against partner (-), jealousy (-), coercion (-)	
(2) Communication	simulative talks, discussing ideas/feelings, open communication, assertiveness, praising, manipulation (-), confiding, communication, dealing with disagreements, dealing with conflict, arguing (-), losing temper (-), offences (-), criticism (-)	
(3) Distribution of duties and responsibilities	mutual assistance, division of household tasks, doing favours to each other, allocation of roles, counting on help	being lazy (-), not taking responsibilities (-), delaying things (-), not taking initiatives (-)
(4) Intimacy	fantasising about partner, passion, fascination, love, exclusiveness, sexual intimacy, romantic things, charming, physical attractiveness, playful teasing, sex relation, touching, demonstration of affection	hugging, petting, holding hands, spontaneous touching
(5) Mutual respect of partner's attitudes and values	philosophy of life, reciprocity, acceptance/tolerance, respect, esteem, equality, religious matter, conventionality, leisure/recreation attitudes and choices, friends, parents and in-laws	respecting work of the other, respecting time of the other, education, political attitudes, attitude towards pets and animals in general
(6) Joint activities	time spent together, doing things together, working together on a project/goal, enjoying each other's company, having fun together, laugh together, surprising partner, celebrating together	going on vacation together, sharing common interests, going out together, having same friends
(7) Attitude towards money and material goods	family finances, independent finances, economic support, lending money	similar attitude towards money, buying/renting home, saving
(8) Children		taking care of children, being good father/mother, spending time with children, showing emotion towards children, being gentle towards children, being responsible parent, ignoring children (-)

TABLE 1
General themes and specific topics developed from relationship/marital satisfaction scales and additionally produced by focus groups

All the participants agreed that children are a very important source of marital/relationship satisfaction for all who have them. Compared to other persons that may affect the relationship (e.g. friends, family) children were without exception considered the most important. In the scales studied, this category did not appear probably because it is not mutual to all. After the discussion started to repeat, participants were

asked to try to group topics into more general concepts. Discussions revealed that mutual understanding and support is by far the most important issue, followed by communication matters, and respect for partner's attitudes and values. Participants pointed out that "when people support each other and feel safe in the relationship, everything else can be agreed" or that "it is perfectly ok that partners have different opinions as far as they respect each other's values.". Grouping of the concepts (Table 1, left column) followed the same pattern in all the groups, except for one group that merged the second and third theme. While one can argue that attitudes towards family, friends, recreation, religion, politics etc. should be treated as independent categories, we opt to stick to more general concepts, which would allow broader comprehension. We believe that, for example, if a person is not satisfied with his/her partner's attitude towards family, this should reflect on his/her assessment of "mutual respect of partner's attitude and values".

Finally, we added one item to assess the general satisfaction with relationship/marriage and one item to assess caring for and relationship to the children which should be applied only if the couple has children.

Ultimately, the MRS scale consists of nine items, one general and eight specific, related to various domains of a marriage/relationship: communication between partners, mutual respect of partners' attitudes and values, joint activities, understanding and support between partners, distribution of duties and responsibilities, intimacy, and attitude towards money and material goods. Since the ninth item dealt with children: "In your relationship, how satisfied are you regarding care and relationship with the children?", it was limited to those who had children. Participants were instructed to indicate their level of satisfaction with each specific domain using an 11-point scale from 0 "completely unsatisfied", to 10 "completely satisfied". Since it applied only to those participants who were married or in a relationship, an elimination question was asked prior to the MRS scale: "Are you currently married or in a relationship?".

Sociodemographic variables. Participants' age, gender, educational level, personal income and employment status were obtained.

Participants

The survey was conducted among 1087 participants, out of which 191 were male (17.6%). The average age was 37.2 ($SD = 11.72$), ranging from 18 to 78 years. The proportion of older participants was small, only 3.2% were older than 60, and only 0.9% were over 65. The education level of our participants was rather high: 28.4% had secondary or lower education, 53.9% had a university or higher degree. This informa-

tion suggests that the sample was biased, probably due to the online administration of the survey, and favoured young, educated women.

The financial status was slightly above the Croatian average: most participants (37.1%) had a personal monthly income between 5.000 and 9.000 HRK (equivalent to 650 to 1200 EUR), where the average salary in Croatia, according to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2017), was about 6.000 HRK (800 euro). 73.6% of the participants were employed, 14.3% were studying, 7.5% were unemployed, and 3.5% were retired, while the remaining 1% were farmers and housewives. The characteristics of the sample are presented in the Table 2.

↻ TABLE 2
Summary of sample characteristics by gender and relationship status

Relationship status	Men	Women	N
Married/Relationship	136	658	794
Single	55	238	293
Total	191	896	1087

Overall, most participants were married or in a relationship (73% of all participants).

Statistical analysis

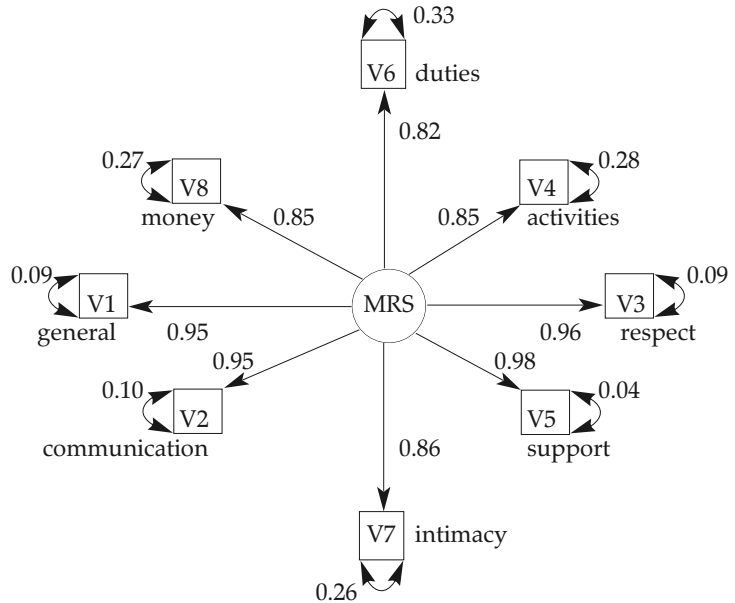
To examine the metrical characteristics of the MRS scale, we conducted reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. The descriptive statistics of variables as well as the Pearson correlation analyses were performed for a better understanding of the relationships of the examined variables. To test the differences between participants who were married or in a relationship and single participants, we conducted *t*-tests for independent samples and χ^2 tests.

RESULTS

Psychometric properties of the Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale

In order to analyse the structure of the MRS scale, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted, using weighted least squares method. The results show that a single factor structure was the most appropriate, although it required several modifications to gain a satisfactory model. An eight-item scale (without the item assessing satisfaction with relationship to the children) fitted the model better than a nine-item scale. All the items showed satisfactory saturations (Figure 1). While the RMSEA and SRMR were adequate, chi square and CFI were out of fitting range, which was probably a consequence of high multicollinearity, big sample size and asymmetrical distributions of

items. Mardia's measures (Mardia, 1970) of multivariate skewness and kurtosis were used to compare the joint distribution of several variables against a multivariate normal distribution. Both values showed that our data differs from normal distribution significantly (Mardia Skewness = 881.6; $p < 0.01$; Mardia Kurtosis = 24.3; $p < 0.1$).



➔ FIGURE 1
The measurement
model of the Marital/
Relationship Satis-
faction Scale

Chi square = 59.4 (20), $p < 0.01$
CFI = 0.83, RMSEA = 0.069, SRMR = 0.036

Cronbach Alpha indicated high reliability of the scale, $\alpha = 0.95$ ($N = 784$) for the 8-item scale (without the item asking for relationship with children) and $\alpha = 0.96$ when the ninth item was included ($N = 430$). All the items were highly inter-correlated, correlations ranging from 0.57 to 0.91, and the average correlation 0.72 for the 9-item scale (0.57 to 0.90, with the average correlation 0.72 for the 8-item scale). Although alpha values higher than 0.90 and high correlations among items may suggest that some of the items are redundant, we believe this was not the case here, since the items clearly dealt with different aspects of the same underlying construct: satisfaction with the relationship or marriage. Additionally, deleting any of the items would not increase or decrease the Alpha value.

The results for all the items showed moderate variability (standard deviations between 2.29 and 2.93 for 11-point scales), negative asymmetry, and covered the full range of possible answers (from 0 to 10). The total result of the scale was formed as an average of all the items for every participant.

The total results on the scale, as well as the results on separate items (ranging from 6.9 to 8.1), indicate moderate to high satisfaction with relationship or marriage among our participants. For further analysis in this study, we used an 8-item scale (i.e., without the item concerning satisfaction with the care of children) to be able to include in the analysis the participants who do not have children.

Descriptive statistics of the items and parameters of factor and reliability analyses of the MRS scale are presented in Table 3.

☛ TABLE 3
Descriptive statistics of the items and reliability analyses of the MRS scale

MRS scale In your relationship, how satisfied are you regarding...	Reliability analysis			
	N	M	SD	Item-total correlation
1. ...your marriage/ relationship in general	793	7.8	2.29	0.90 0.89
2. ...communication with your partner	792	7.4	2.60	0.91 0.89
3. ...mutual respect of partner's attitudes and values	792	7.8	2.40	0.89 0.88
4. ... joint activities	792	6.9	2.68	0.81 0.80
5. ...understanding and support between partners	791	7.8	2.58	0.91 0.91
6. ...distribution of duties and responsibilities	793	7.3	2.63	0.75 0.73
7. ...intimacy	790	7.1	2.93	0.81 0.75
8. ...attitude towards money and material goods	792	7.5	2.57	0.78 0.76
9. ...caring for and relationship to the children	437	8.1	2.31	0.72
Scale (1-9)	430	7.1	2.34	$\alpha = 0.96$
Scale (1-8)	784	7.5	2.19	$\alpha = 0.95$

To examine concurrent validity of the MRS scale, Pearson's correlation coefficients between the MRS scores and well-being indicators: life satisfaction, happiness and adapted PWI scales measuring satisfaction with specific life domains were calculated. The Pearson correlations between the MRS score and well-being indicators are presented in the last column of Table 4.

☛ TABLE 4
Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations between MRS and well-being indicators

Well-being indicators	Married or in a relationship		
	M	SD	r (MRS)
Life satisfaction	7.3	1.88	0.47
Happiness	7.2	1.95	0.47
Your standard of living	6.1	2.36	0.29
Your health	7.6	2.08	0.23
What you are achieving in life	7.1	2.05	0.33
Relationship with friends	7.7	1.90	0.36
Relationship with family	7.8	2.04	0.53
Love life	7.7	2.33	0.78
How safe you feel	7.0	2.44	0.38
Feeling a part of your community	6.6	2.59	0.34
Your future security	5.5	2.69	0.31
Leisure time	6.2	2.57	0.32
Work	6.1	2.80	0.22
Physical appearance	6.9	2.01	0.31
N	794		

The scores of the MRS scale correlated moderately but significantly with all the well-being indicators. The highest correlations were found for satisfaction with love life (sharing over 60% of the common variance with marital/relationship satisfaction), followed by satisfaction with relationship with the family members ($r = 0.53$), and overall life satisfaction ($r = 0.47$) and happiness ($r = 0.47$).

Additionally, we ran Hierarchical Multiple Regression to examine the contribution of different well-being indices in explaining the variance of marital satisfaction (Table 5). At the first step we entered life satisfaction and happiness, as general indices of well-being, and in the second step we entered PWI. We managed to explain 64,8% of the variance of marriage/relationship satisfaction and the significant predictors in the final model were life satisfaction, satisfaction with family, satisfaction with physical appearance and satisfaction with love life.

☞ TABLE 5
Hierarchical Multiple
Regression analysis on
the MRS scale with
different well-being
indices

	Predictors	B	t
Step 1	Life satisfaction	0.299	4.565**
	Happiness	0.306	4.839**
$R^2 = 0.243$			
Step 2	Life satisfaction	0.121	2.428*
	Happiness	0.012	0.257
	Life standard	0.039	1.457
	Health	-0.028	-1.045
	Achievement	-0.066	-1.751
	Family	0.160	4.929**
	Friends	-0.024	-0.744
	Safety	0.042	1.270
	Community	-0.002	-0.088
	Future security	0.000	-0.008
	Free time	0.036	1.685
	Work	0.012	0.539
	Physical appearance	-0.075	-2.536*
	Love	0.647	24.340**
$R^2 = 0.648$			

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Gender differences in marital/relationship satisfaction

The mean scores and associated standard deviations for MRS scores by gender are presented in Table 6.

☞ TABLE 6
Descriptive statistics
for the MRS score by
gender (N=784)

	Gender		Total
	Women	Men	
MRS M (SD)	7.4 (2.25)	7.5 (2.25)	7.5 (2.19)

Men and women did not differ in ratings of marital/relationship satisfaction ($t(782) = 0.48, p = 0.63$).

Relationship status and well-being

Men and women did not differ regarding relationship status ($\chi^2 = 0.39, p > 0.05$) as 71.2% of men, and 73.4% of women were married or in a relationship.

Furthermore, we tested the differences in well-being (life satisfaction, happiness, adapted PWI scales measuring satisfaction with specific life domains) between participants who were married or in a relationship and single participants. Descriptive statistics for the well-being measures of each group regarding marital status (i.e. married/relationship versus single participants) are presented in Table 7 with *t*-test statistics as well as Pearson correlations between the MRS score and well-being indicators (Table 4).

TABLE 7
Differences between participants who were married or in a relationship and single participants regarding well-being indicators

Well-being indicators	Married or in a relationship		Single		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Life satisfaction	7.3	1.88	6.5	2.22	5.25	< 0.004
Happiness	7.2	1.95	6.4	2.30	5.43	< 0.004
Your standard of living	6.1	2.36	5.7	2.61	2.39	NS
Your health	7.6	2.08	7.4	2.35	1.18	NS
What you are achieving in life	7.1	2.05	6.6	2.53	2.95	< 0.004
Relationship with friends	7.7	1.90	7.6	2.12	1.34	NS
Relationship with family	7.8	2.04	7.2	2.48	3.50	< 0.004
Love life	7.7	2.33	3.8	3.15	19.6	< 0.004
How safe you feel	7.0	2.44	6.7	2.79	1.48	NS
Feeling a part of your community	6.6	2.59	6.2	2.74	1.76	NS
Your future security	5.5	2.69	5.2	2.80	1.29	NS
Leisure time	6.2	2.57	6.1	2.64	0.48	NS
Work	6.1	2.80	5.7	2.89	1.91	NS
Physical appearance	6.9	2.01	6.4	2.35	3.04	< 0.004
<i>N</i>	794		293			

Note: Because of multiple comparison, *p* is set to $p < 0.004$ (adjusted for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni correction); NS – non significant

Comparison of those married/in a relationship and single participants revealed that participants who were married or in a relationship were happier and more satisfied with their lives. They were also more satisfied with their love life, relationship with family members, physical appearance and achievements in life. Although there was a general trend of higher satisfaction of those who were married or in a relationship in all life domains, for the rest of the satisfaction ratings of specific life domains these differences did not reach a level of significance.

DISCUSSION

The Marital/Relationship Satisfaction Scale (MRS) proved to have satisfying psychometrical properties with a high Cronbach alpha index of reliability ($\alpha = 0.95$), confirming that the items have relatively high internal consistency. George and Mallery (2003) provided the following rules of thumb to evaluate Cronbach alpha coefficients: " $\geq .9$ – Excellent, $\geq .8$ – Good, $\geq .7$ – Acceptable, $\geq .6$ – Questionable, $\geq .5$ – Poor, and $< .5$ – Unacceptable" (p. 231). Moreover, since the number of items in the scale was not too big (8 or 9) and since we didn't detect any redundancy (questions voiced differently, but practically the same), that might artificially increase the alpha value, we don't have reason to question the reliability of the scale. The scale proved to be unidimensional, with a single factor accounting for about 75% of the total variance.

The results of the MRS scale were moderately and significantly correlated to both overall life satisfaction and happiness, and all life domains from the adapted PWI scale. However, the only high correlations (above 0.5) were found between MRS and satisfaction with love life ($r = 0.78$), and satisfaction with family relations ($r = 0.53$), suggesting discriminant and concurrent validity of the scale. However, because of the characteristics of our sample which was biased by online administration (favouring young, educated women), further research on a more balanced sample is needed. Additionally, this research did not account for other variables that might influence well-being such as personality traits or life events but focused on satisfaction with life domains and marital/relationship satisfaction.

Gender differences regarding the total result on the MRS scale were not found. These results are consistent with Broman, (2005), Gager and Sanchez (2003) and Kurdek (2005). However, there are studies which found that men are more satisfied with marriage compared to women (Kamp Dush et al., 2008; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2007). Lower marital satisfaction in women was often attributed to their subordinate role in marriage and unequal balance of power (Jackson et al., 2014). However, in our research no differences in typical status parameters, such as education level, employment status and personal income between men and women were found. Since most of the women had a university or higher degree, it is possible that unequal balance of power was not present in their marriages, and this resulted in similar levels of marital satisfaction. This presumption should be explored by future research.

In our study, participants who were married or in a relationship, reported higher levels of general well-being, and additionally they were more satisfied with their love life, rela-

tionship with family members, achievement and physical appearance. These results are in line with numerous studies that have found that marriage benefits well-being (e.g. Carr & Springer, 2010; Kim & McKenry, 2002; Lamb, Lee, & DeMaris, 2003). However, due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, we cannot draw firm casual conclusions about the nature of the relationship between marital/relationship status and well-being indicators.

Still, it is quite probable that satisfaction with love life is mostly a consequence of being in a relationship/married, while satisfaction with family, achievement and physical appearance might be either antecedents and consequences, or both. The biggest difference between participants who were married or involved in a romantic relationship and single participants was in satisfaction with love life. Married participants and those in a relationship were two times more satisfied with their love life compared to the single participants. We presume that satisfaction with love life is mostly a consequence of relationship status, since marriage/relationship gratifies one's needs for love as spouses provide intimacy, companionship, and day-to-day interaction (Musick & Bumpass, 2012). This explanation is in line with Huić et al. (2012), who found that showing and perceiving love is crucial for marital satisfaction.

Marriage or relationship may also contribute to one's satisfaction with family relationships, feeling of achievement, and make someone more satisfied with his/her physical appearance. On the other hand, those circumstances could also foster one's decision to get involved and serve as antecedents of romantic relationship or marriage. Longitudinal studies have the potential to reveal the true nature of these associations, and it is our intention to further examine these issues once we collect responses from subsequent waves of data collection.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, in this research we constructed and validated a new measure of marital/relationship satisfaction that can be applied to both married couples or those in a romantic relationship. This brief questionnaire was developed, following the rationale of Personal Well-Being Index, to examine satisfaction with various domains of romantic relationship or marriage. The instrument proved to be unidimensional with high internal consistency, and the highest external correlations with satisfaction with love life and satisfaction with family relations. This study contributes to the literature by providing a new robust instrument to measure marital/relationship satisfaction, and empirical analysis of the association between marital/relationship satisfaction, general well-being and satisfaction with various life domains.

Although the present study offers an interesting analysis of marital/relationship satisfaction and personal well-being cross-sectional, it has some limitations that need to be clarified. Most importantly, although the number of participants in our research was quite large, the sample was biased by online procedure. Therefore, the sample predominantly consisted of women and younger people. Besides the sample structure, one of the weaknesses of the research was the fact that we did not examine the duration of the relationship or marriage. This variable can be important when examining satisfaction and we strongly suggest that future researchers include it.

Furthermore, since we did not distinguish between married participants and those in a relationship, this could affect the results. However, with growing rates of divorces and separations, and increasing number of cohabitations and other types of relationships, in recent years marriage has rarely been considered as a lifetime relationship, and therefore once firm boundaries between marriage and other relationships are getting softer and more permeable. Moreover, the effects of marriage and cohabitation were found to be similar across a range of measures (Musick & Bumpass, 2012). In this research it was not our intention to test the differences between various types of relationships (e.g. marriage, cohabitation, romantic relationship), but to contrast those who were involved in any sort of romantic relationship to those who were not. Similarly, we opt to apply MRS to all participants who were either married or in any other type of romantic relationship and to analyse possible gender differences.

Future research design should try to include more senior citizens in the research, as well as males, those less educated, and from rural areas, which could give a better insight into the emerging differences.

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Kratka skala za mjerenje zadovoljstva brakom / vezom: metrijske karakteris- tike, korelati te razlike po spolu i sta- tusu braka / veze

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Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je analizirati psihometrijska svojstva Skale zadovoljstva brakom / vezom te odnos s drugim indikatorima dobrobiti. Ispitane su razlike u dobrobiti između sudionika u braku / vezi i samaca, kao i razlike s obzirom na pripadnost dobnoj skupini. Uzorak se sastojao od 1087

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Ključne riječi: dobrobit, skala zadovoljstva brakom / vezom, dobne razlike u dobrobiti, PWI, domene zadovoljstva brakom / vezom



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