

The Relationship between Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies with Marital Satisfaction in Married Student

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to appoint the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation strategies with marital satisfaction in married students of Science and Research branch, Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz. The study sample consisted of 300 students that who were simple randomly selected from all them who had married. The participants completed research tools including cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire and Enrich marital satisfaction scale. Data was analyzed by Statistical methods as correlation and multiple regressions. The results showed that there was a significant correlation between study variables and marital satisfaction ($P < 0.001$). Regression analysis also showed that 61% of the marital satisfaction variance predicted with positive and negative cognitive emotion regulation strategies. Based on results, It's was concluded that cognitive emotion regulation strategies play an important role in marital satisfaction among married students.

Keywords: cognitive emotion regulation strategies, marital satisfaction, married students.

INTRODUCTION

Family is represented as a social institution which is formed by a man's and woman's marriage. One of the manifestations of human social life is the sense of healthy and constructive interactions, expression of love to others as well as intimacy and empathy for them. Family institution is the origin of satisfying different needs such as physical, rational and emotional needs. Knowledge of what human biological and psychological needs are and how to meet them as well as the strategies to identify and handle them is an undeniable fact. A person's satisfaction from marital life is equivalent to satisfaction from family life and the latter is equivalent to satisfaction from life which will lead to both material and spiritual growth and development of the society (Edalati & Redzuan, 2010).

Marital Satisfaction on the other hand, is defined as a person's married love relationship with their partner. Marital Satisfaction can be reflected in person's happiness with their marital life or a combination of other important factors in marital life. One can assume marital happiness as a cognitive situation which cannot be obtained per se, but it needs both partners' effort specifically in early years of marital life when the relationship is unstable and is exposed to much danger (Ahmady, Nabipour, Kimiayi & Afzali, 2010).

Kaplan and Maddux (2002) define marital satisfaction as existence of a sense of happiness and enjoyment of relations and further state that it's a personal experience from marriage which can be evaluated merely by the person's own response to quantity of marital satisfaction and is very dependent to person's expectations.

Taking into account the importance of standard function of family as an institution and the necessity of prevention of its disjoint, identification of items related to marital satisfaction is necessary. Consequently, by considering the effective factors on marital satisfaction, different types of psychological, emotional and social needs could be met and a healthier family and subsequently society can be obtained. As by increasing the level of marital satisfaction, people can be more effective in different domains of society such as growth and development of the society, offering economic, social and cultural services, etc. And can be reflected back towards the families (Sanayi, Alaqband & human, 2000).

Humans have been looking for strategies to regulate and improve their psychological and behavior status throughout the time. The physical aspect of human's body is regulated by its own and the needs are easily identifiable (such as the level of body fluids, temperature, etc.). Only in cases when the balance of the physical system is irregular, we resort to doctors and scientific solutions. As for regulating the blood sugar, one may need injection of insulin. The same is true about psychological aspect of human as years ago Freud introduced defense mechanisms for keeping the psychological balance. Nevertheless, persons can always apply different strategies consciously to ensure the regulation of their emotions and behaviors. For instance as human is in favor of happiness, enjoyment and all positive feelings and emotions, they try to find ways and to apply strategies to obtain them. It can demonstrate itself in their cognitive status, their behaviors and their decisions. They can be personally experienced through test and trials or can be educated through parents, school, books and others. The literature show that selecting specific strategies is affected by person's character and a closer look to healthy behaviors or risky behaviors and their distinction is in fact the different strategies applied by the person (Beidel DC & Turner SM 2005, Vohs KD et al. 2005). A great body of research as well shows that people's success through life, depends on the strategies they apply to a great extent (Baumeister RF & Vohs KD 2004, Baumeister RF & Alquist JL 2009).

Basically when a person desires to do some action which has been in harmony with their goals, it brings them emotions and excitements (Lazarus, 1991) and the way of controlling the emotion should be taught to the person as it is an important skill. Emotion regulation is defined as starting, preserving and balancing or changing the severity or stability of emotions such as internal emotions, psycho emotions, physical and social emotion in such a way that helps the person achieve their goal (Vimz & Pina, 2010). By emotion regulation, not only repression is intended, but also shifting the emotion status is also intended in such a manner that the person should not be in the same emotion arousal status, but it evidently refers to regulation, supervision, and fluctuation of emotional experiences over which the person should have control (Thompson, 1994). Emotions enjoy a high-level power which can cause negative or positive reactions. If they are in accordance with intended goals or situations, it leads to positive reactions otherwise to a negative one. In the latter situation, when the emotions become severe, or take long or are not in accordance with the current situation, they need regulation (Gross, 1998).

Emotional self-regulation is a situation when the role of the person in regulating their own emotions is significant (Thompson, 1994). Emotion regulation consists of all internal and external processes responsible for supervision, evaluation and modification of emotional reactions specially severe and rapid ones, in order to achieve someone's goal (Thompson, 1994). By emotion regulation in fact, not

only repression is intended, but also shifting the emotion status is also intended in such a manner that the person should not be in the same emotion arousal status and the shift can occur automatically, controlled, consciously or unconsciously (Mauss, Evers, Wilhelm & Gross 2006, Gross & Thompson 2007). Marital life as the most intimate relation of an adult, is abundant from emotions and is an appropriate bed for emotion regulation (Shaver, 1984). Despite its significance, few research if any has studied it quantitatively on married couples.

In his study, Ebrahimi (2012) evaluated the effectiveness of scientific program of education of spiritual intelligence skills on marital satisfaction and regulation of aspects of emotion. The research was of semi-experimental nature with the method of pretest and posttest on two groups of married women (each group consisted of 10 participants) who were selected via sampling method from the referrals of psychology clinics. The statistical analysis of result of the t test showed that group therapies of spiritual intelligence skills improved the marital satisfaction significantly.

Evaluation and comparison of emotion regulation and marital satisfaction in men and women in city of Ahvaz, was carried out by Hamidi in 2012. He concluded that there is significant difference between men and women in of emotion regulation and marital satisfaction in a way that Alexithymia was seen in women more than in men. It was further found that there is a negative relation between marital satisfaction and Alexithymia (all aspects including difficulty in identification and expression of feelings and objective thinking).

Parsa (2011) investigated the relation between emotion regulation and spiritual intelligence at one hand and marital satisfaction and genetic predisposing backgrounds on the other hand. 114 couples were under investigation and the results show that $\frac{2}{3}$ of couples who were incapable of emotion regulation, did have less marital satisfaction and $\frac{1}{3}$ of couples who were incapable of emotion regulation, had less spiritual intelligence. It was further shown that age gap of more than 10 years and owning at least one parent incapable of emotion regulation are other factors with significant effect on decreasing the marital satisfaction among the couples under study.

In another study carried out by Shahqolian et al. (2011), the result showed that difficulty in emotion regulation has a significant negative relation with the style of secure attachment style and marital satisfaction. In addition there was no difference between married men and women regarding the difficulty in emotion regulation.

Hakim Javadi (2012) did a research on couples on the verge of divorce in city of Tehran to find out the relation between emotion regulation and marital satisfaction. The participants were 119 women and 63 men who were selected randomly and all were on the verge of divorce. The result showed that marital satisfaction had a negative relation with three factors of emotion incapability (i.e. difficulty in identification of emotions, difficulty in oral expression of emotions and objective thinking). Taking into account the previous literature, the present study aims at evaluation of the role of cognitive strategies of emotion regulation (positive and negative) on marital satisfaction of married university students.

Halajani (2011), studied the relation between three factors of emotion regulation, spiritual intelligence and optimism with marital satisfaction among married university students of higher education. As a result, he concluded that While there was a significant negative relation between three factors of emotion regulation with marital satisfaction, there was a positive significant relation between spiritual intelligence and optimism with marital satisfaction.

Maherdast (2010), as well studied the relation between spiritual intelligence with marital satisfaction on married university students of Ferdowsi University of Mashad. The aim of the mentioned study was to study the relation between spiritual intelligence with its three factors of difficulty in identification of emotions, difficulty in oral expression of emotions and objective thinking with incapability of emotion regulation. Participants were 306 married university students (136 men and 170 women)

from different majors. The result showed that there was a significant negative relation between spiritual intelligence and the three factors of incapability of emotion regulation (the three factors refer to identification of emotions, difficulty in oral expression of emotions and objective thinking).

Another similar research was carried out on 40 married women in Tehran by Nikugoftar (2008) where he studied the effects of emotion self-regulation and its two factors of identification and oral expression of emotions on the spiritual intelligence and marital satisfaction. Pretest and posttest method was applied after 10 sessions of education of self-regulation and its mentioned two factors.

Toronto Alexithymia Scale, ISIS spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire and ENRICH marital satisfaction Questionnaire was filled by participants. The results of variance and covariance show that teaching emotion regulation skills leads to decrease of difficulty in identification and oral expression of emotions and increases the spiritual intelligence and social skills which will lead to marital satisfaction.

Moriguchi et al. (2013) who investigated the effect of gender on emotion regulation and marital satisfaction, concluded that women's score was significantly higher in factors of difficulty in identification of emotions compared to men's alexithymia. Also men's score was significantly higher in objective thinking compared with women. They justify the differences in this way that women are not as good as men in identification of internal emotions, while men are better in objective thinking. Assuming the two difference between the two genders they finally concluded that marital satisfaction in women is less than in men.

Larsena et al. (2013) in a research on gender difference and its relation with incapability of emotion regulation and spiritual intelligence in 800 American couples who were referrals to a family consult clinic found out that emotion regulation incapability is higher in men and spiritual intelligence is higher in women.

Ronaldof et al. (2013), did the similar study of gender differences on emotion regulation on a sample of 41 American men and women. The result confirms the gender difference and a slight difference between men and women in their emotion regulation shows that men enjoy a higher status of incapability compared to women.

In Finland, Mattila et al. (2012) studied on a 5454 member sample of Finnish adults. The result stated that the commonness of incapability of emotion regulation is 9/9 percents of which men dedicate 11/9 % and women dedicate 8/1 % of alexithymia. It is stated by researchers that the commonness of alexithymia is between 9 to 17 % amongst men and between 5 to 10% amongst women in adult population. They further stated that alexithymia has a relation with male gender, age increase, and low level of education, physical illnesses, and decrease of couples intimacy, psychological disorders and decrease of marital satisfaction.

LeHN et al. (2012) in a research on the relationship between culture and alexithymia, age and level of interaction and communication as well as the role of parents' marital satisfaction on socialization of emotions were investigated. In this study, American, European-American and Asian students of a school in Malaysia were chosen to be studied. Based on the results obtained, the Asian group showed a higher rate of alexithymia compared to American and European culture. In the second investigation of the same study i.e. between culture and gender, between the two factors and alexithymia, a significant relation was found. Furthermore, between culture and male gender at one hand and alexithymia on the other, no significant difference was found.

METHOD

The statistical society of this study consisted of almost all married students of Islamic Azad University of Olum Tahqiqat, Ahvaz, Khuzestan in the year of 2013 who consisted of 300 persons who were selected randomly.

RESEARCH TOOLS

- A) Self-regulatory questionnaire: the 36 item questionnaire of cognitive strategies of emotion regulation introduced by Garnefski et al. (2001). The questions were answered on Likert five degree scale (1 = almost never... 5= always). The questionair had two prientations of positive and negative cognitive emotion regulation and nine subscales. In negative cognitive emotion regulation the domain of scores were form 1 to 80 and in positive cognitive emotion regulation the domain was from 1 to 100. 5 subscales of the questionnaire were related to positive domain and four of them were related to positive domain. The reliability of test was tested via cronbach's alpha coefficient which were 91% and 87% respectively. This reliability numbers has been confirmed in Iran. cronbach's alpha coefficientfor each of the subscales was 64% to 82%.. The reliability of the study was confirmed using cronbach's alpha coefficient and bisection method which were74% and 72% , respectively.
- B) ENRICH marital satisfaction questionnaire: the questionnaire was introduced by Fournier and Druckman in 1989 in USA with the aim of identification and evaluation of potential weaknesses and power of marital relations. The 115 item questionnaire consists of 12 subscales. The shorter form of the questionnaire includes 47 items which were answered on a 5 degree likert scale (from extremely agree to extremely disagree). Correlation of the two tests was 0.77 and in the level of 0.001 reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by cronbach's alpha coefficient and bisection method which was equal to 0.92 and 0.87, respectively and was acceptable. reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by cronbach's alpha coefficient and bisection method which was equal to 0.69 and 0.79, respectively and was acceptable.

RESULTS

Descriptive data of the study and statistical indices such as average, standard deviation, variance and minimum and maximum score for all the variables has been provided in table one

Table 1. average and standard deviation of research variables

num ber	Maximu m score	Minimum score	Varianc e	Standard deviation	Average	Research variables	
300	79	52	35/39	5/94	63/77	positive	Cognitive strategies of emotion regulation
	58	30	3943	6/27	41/99	negative	
	181	118	211/57	14/54	153/53	Marital satisfaction	

As shown in table 1 average and SD for positive Cognitive strategies of emotion regulation were 63/77 and 5/94 respectively. Also for negative Cognitive strategies of emotion regulation were 41/91 and 6/27 respectively. Also the average and SD related to variable marital satisfaction was 153/53 and 14/53 respectively. Pearson correlation coefficient was used for relation between the variables of the study. they are shown in table 2.

Table 2. correlation coefficient between variables of study

Number (n)	Significance (p)	Correlation coefficient (r)	Statistical index	Dependent variable
300	$P \leq 0/01$	0/72	Marital satisfaction	Positive Regulation strategy
	$P \leq 0/01$	-0/67		Negative Regulation strategy

Based on the result of table 2, and due to significant correlations between variables of study and marital satisfaction, simultaneous and stepwise regression was used, results of which is shown in table 3 and 4.

Table 3. regressions of variables of negative and positive cognitive strategies of emotion regulation with marital satisfaction via method of simultaneous

Regression coefficient

sig	T	Regression coefficient		Sig	Relati on F	R ² adjustm ented	R	Statistical index	method
		B	b					Research variables	
0/01	64/11	130/41		0/01	244/04	0/61	0/78	Number fixed	Simultaneous enter
0/01	8/77	1/03	0/42					Positive Regulation strategy	
0/01	-9/14	-1/02	-0/44					Negative Regulation strategy	

As shown in table 3, the result of analysis of simultaneous regression shows that the marital satisfaction based on positive and negative strategies are significant. The square number shows a 61% variance from marital satisfaction variable.

Table 4. Regressions of variables of negative and positive cognitive strategies of emotion regulation with marital satisfaction via method of stepwise

Sig	T	Regression coefficient		Sig	Relati on F	R ² adjustment ed	R	Statistical index	method
		B	b					Research variables	

0/01	-18/09	-1/67	-0/72	0/01	327/54	0/52	0/72	Negative Regulation strategy
0/01	-9/14	-1/02	-0/44	0/01	244/04	0/61	0/78	Negative Regulation strategy
0/01	8/77	1/03	0/42					Positive Regulation strategy

As the regression analysis shows the square of negative cognitive strategy of emotion regulation is 0/52 means that by using this strategy 52% of marital satisfaction is estimated. In the second stage, the positive cognitive strategy of emotion regulation entered into the equation, increasing the correlation square to 0/61 means that by using this strategy 61 % of marital satisfaction is estimated.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

As stated throughout the study, there is a significant relation between cognitive strategy of emotion regulation and marital satisfaction among university students. In other words, by increase of positive self-regulation marital satisfaction has also risen. The result of the current study confirms the result of previous similar studies such as that of Ebrahimi (2012), Hamidi (2012), Hakim Javadi (2012), Parsa (2011), Halajian (2011), Shahqolian et al. (2011), Maherdast (2010), Nikugoftar (2008), Ronaldof et al. (2013), Moriguchi et al. (2013), Moriguchi et al. (2013), LeHN et al. (2012) and Larsena et al. (2013).

As regulation of emotion can form the quality of persons relations with others, those capable of regulation of emotions can understand their own as well as others' feelings much effective and can understand different situations better and enjoy better internal and interpersonal skills. These persons communicate better and their relations have higher quality and longer consistency. In contrast those with little or no emotion regulation skills cannot retain their emotional status and they feel that their emotions are out of control and due to this fact, they risk their relationships and do not last in marriages. On the other hand, when the couples encounter severe negative currents (such as anger of opposing opinions, disappointments, betrayal), they return to early stages of interaction which is interaction for survival. In this situation both partners try to justify their actions and criticize each other which usually makes the situation worse. Emotion regulation helps the couples to prevent negative situations and self-regulatory actions and skills not only can be positive for the same person, but also benefits their partner. In case of success in this matter couples can experience less emotional arousal which can lead to better communication behaviors, remedy the contrast of previous problems, and finally eliminating fundamental problems. Knowledge of the cognitive strategies of emotion regulation provides the couples with better understanding and more efficiency and guarantees a higher quality of married life which will lead to marital satisfaction.

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