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THE RELATION BETWEEN EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION OF YOUTHS IN SARDASHT

***Bisotoon Azizi^{1,2}, Loqman Radpey^{1,2} and Osman Alipour^{1,2}**

¹Young Researchers and Elite Club, Sardasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sardasht, Iran

²Young Researchers and Elite Club, Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relation between cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction of youths in Sardasht. The statistical population consisted of all married youths of Sardasht. 370 couples were selected by Morgan table and 370 questionnaires were analyzed. The study approach was descriptive-correlation. The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire designed by Garnefski *et al.*, (2001) and Enrich Marital Satisfaction questionnaires were applied to measure cognitive emotion regulation and marital satisfaction, respectively. Data analysis was done by Pearson correlation coefficient and regression. The findings revealed a positive relation between compatible cognitive emotion regulation strategies and its components such as a self-criticism, positive reevaluation and planning and marital satisfaction. Also, there was a negative significant relation between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies like self –reproach and catastrophizing and marital satisfaction. It was also uncovered that among adoptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, just positive revaluation strategy ($p < 0.04$, $t = 2.2$) and among maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies just catastrophizing ($p < 0.001$, $t = 2.2$) could significantly predict marital satisfaction.

Keywords: *Emotion Regulation Strategies, Marital Satisfaction, Sardasht*

INTRODUCTION

The family has always been one of the most important parts of each society in the history of mankind and in all countries. Consequently, this very important factor plays a very important role in the progress and stability of the society. Anyway, the formation of family is based on marriage (Omidvar *et al.*, 2009). Family is an appropriate place for meeting various physical, emotional and intellectual needs, therefore, recognizing biological and mental needs, the way of meeting them, and being equipped with knowing techniques of biological and psychological tendencies are undeniable. One's satisfaction from marital life is considered as his/her satisfaction from the family and satisfaction from family means being satisfied with life and therefore, it will facilitate spiritual and material progress of the society (Edalati and Redzuan, 2010).

Marital satisfaction is an important aspect of general wellbeing. Marital dissatisfaction, on the other hand, is linked with impairments in physical and mental health and constitutes a strong risk factor for divorce. Thus, whether marriages fare well or fare poorly is of great consequence (Bloch *et al.*, 2013).

There is a long time that researchers are investigating maladaptive factors in families with conflicts. However, recently, researchers are attending to inter/intrapersonal factors evident in daily interaction of satisfied couples instead of variables related to maladjustment. These researchers suggest that factors such as emotional intelligence, emotional expression, emotion regulation and empathy affect the quality of marriage and its relations (Salovay, 1990).

"Cognitive emotion regulation" is one of the factors that affect marital satisfaction. Psychological adoption is highly dependent to emotion regulation. Most of the psychological disorders have been characterized by an emotional disturbance that is basically related to deficient function of the emotion regulation. Experiencing negative emotions is inevitable in human life; therefore, there is a considerable potential for experiencing "difficulties in emotion regulation" as well. In fact, emotion regulation is one of the most important tasks for psychological and physical health, especially in marital relations (Kring & Werner, 2004).

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Since emotion regulation constitutes an important part of each individual's life, it is not surprising that disturbance in emotion and its regulation leads to heavy grief and even trauma. Reevaluation of DSM-IV showed that more than 50% of disorders of Axis-I and all of the disorders in Axis-II have root in some deficits in emotion regulation (Qorbani *et al.*, 2011).

Emotion regulation refers to the processes people use to modify the type, intensity, duration, or expression of emotion (Kooze, 2009).

One of the most popular theories about emotion regulation strategies has been suggested by Garnefski *et al.*, (2001). This theory is consisted of 9 different strategies of emotion regulation, called: Self-blame, acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive reappraisal, rumination, catastrophizing, blaming others, and accepting perspective (Garnefski *et al.*, 2001; 2002). Definition of each of these strategies is given below:

Self-blame: feeling responsible and guilty for unpleasant experiences. If an individual blames himself/herself excessively for what has happened it shows that he/she feels severely guilty (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Others-reproach: thinking that others are responsible of what has happened to you (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Acceptance: accepting the unpleasant event and isolation from what has happened. Acceptance is a coping strategy that has a positive and mediating relation with a degree of optimism and self-esteem while it is negatively and media tingly related to some degree of anxiety (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Rumination: thinking repeatedly about the feelings and thoughts of unpleasant event without taking any action to modify the immediate effective environment. It is proven that rumination strategy is correlated with high levels of depression; however, this style of thinking helps somewhat to cope with the stressing situation (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Positive refocusing: thinking about positive events instead of negative ones. Studies have shown that this strategy has a positive effect on mental health, per se; however, using it in excessively can be considered as leaving the psychological relation. It is speculated that this strategy is helping in short term but an obstacle for effective coping in long term (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Refocusing on planning: thinking on programs designed to intervene with events, or a design that changes situations (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Positive reevaluation: attributing positive meaning to events of developmental period, thinking that these events can make the individual stronger, or seeking positive aspects of an occasion (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011)

Perspective adoption: adopting this perspective that when some factors come together or when the role was some other factors becomes weak, an event will occur. This strategy is correlated with many psychological disorders (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

Catastrophizing: thinking about the fearfulness of the event and believing that it was the worst one could happen for an individual. Excessive use of this strategy leads to emotional problems and psychological disorders. Generally, it seems that this strategy is related to maladaptation, emotional disturbance and depression (Aminabadi *et al.*, 2011).

According to formal statistics of Iran, Sardasht Township has always had the lowest rate of divorce in West Azerbaijan province and even in Iran. So, we aimed to investigate the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies in marital satisfaction of couples in Sardasht.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methods

The study approach was survey that increases the generalizability of findings. Given the subject nature and study goals, this is a descriptive-correlation study. The study population consisted of all couples of Sardasht Township in 2014. The population of this township according to Iran formal statistics was 111590 in 2011in. the number of families in these areas was 26546 and 10491 families live in Sardasht Township.

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Since the number of families in this township was 10941, the number of our sample was determined 370 ones, using Morgan table. Accessible random sampling was used in this study and the questionnaires were given to 370 individuals randomly. To gather data, the below questionnaires were applied:

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

To assess cognitive emotion regulation strategies, Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire designed by Garnefski (2001) was used.

This scale has 36 items and is scored on a 5 point rate from "never" to "always". It is consisted of 9 cognitive strategies including Self-blame, acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive reappraisal, rumination, catastrophizing, blaming others, and perspective adoption. Yousefi (2006) investigated the reliability of this questionnaire on Iranian adolescents. The reliability coefficient for negative emotion regulation, subscales of positive emotion regulation strategies, and the total scale was obtained 0.78, 0.83, and .81, respectively.

Its validity coefficient was computed .85. Also, the scale of cognitive emotion regulation strategies has satisfactory reliability and validity coefficients (Yousefi, 2006). This questionnaire was validated by Besharat (2009, 2011) and Hasani (2010).

Besharat (2010) reported that psychometric features of this scale including internal consistency, test-retest reliability, content validity, convergent and diagnostic (differential) validity are desirable.

Moreover, Besharat (2009) in a preliminary investigation of this questionnaire in a simple from general population (n=368) reported the Cronbach's alpha spectrum of subscales between 0.67 to 0.89. Correlation coefficient of some subjects' scores (43 female, 36 male) for subscales in 2 part with an interval between 2 to 4 weeks was calculated $r=.57$ to $r=.76$. In the present study, content validity of this cognitive emotion regulation strategies was confirmed by accordance of 5 psychology experts and its subscales Cronbach's alpha was computed 0.83 to 0.91.

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire

Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire was designed in America by Olson and his colleagues with the aim of assessing potential problematic areas or identifying strength points of marital relation.

Enrich questionnaire was designed in Iran by Soleymanian (2004) as a short form and has 47 questions. He also calculated its validity and reliability coefficients. Its criterion validity with Family Compatibility Questionnaire was .86 and .92, respectively ($p<0.05$) that shows its acceptable validity; its reliability coefficient was also obtained 0.95 by Cronbach's alpha.

In this study, reliability coefficients of marital satisfaction questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha and splitting were both calculated .90 that indicates its desirable reliability (quoted by Mohammadi *et al.*, 2010). In this research, 5 psychology experts confirmed content validity of Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire and its reliability coefficient was computed 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha.

Tools

To study the assumptions, Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used. Also, all statistical operations were done by SPSS-20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

86% of our sample (n=370) were male and 14% were female. Correlations among the study variables were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient.

As it is shown in Table 1, there is a positive relation between adoptive strategies and its components such as self-blame, positive refocusing and planning, and marital satisfaction. Moreover, there is a negative significant relation between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies like self-reproach and catastrophizing with marital satisfaction.

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Table 1: The mean and standard deviation of the study variables correlation coefficient among cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction

Variable	Marital satisfaction	N
Acceptance	0.08	370
Self-blame	0.18*	370
Perspective adoption	0.02	370
Positive reevaluation	0.17*	370
Planning	0.19*	370
Sum of adoptive strategies	0.13*	370
Self-reproach	-0.31*	370
Others-reproach	-0.09	370
Rumination	-0.22	370
catastrophizing	-0.47*	370
Sum of maladaptive strategies	-0.39*	370

Table 2: Coefficients of regression analysis of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction

Criterion variable	Predicting variable	r	F	β	T	Sig.
Marital satisfaction	Positive reevaluation	0.8	6.5	0.16	2.2	0.04
	Catastrophizing	0.23	17.6	0.40	5.65	0.001

The results of regression analysis by simultaneous entrance approach for variable of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction have been shown in Table 2. It was revealed that among adoptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies just positive reevaluation strategy ($p < 0.04$, $t = 2.2$) and among maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies just catastrophizing ($p < 0.001$, $t = 2.2$) can significantly predict marital satisfaction. F portion for positive reevaluation strategy was 6.5 ($p < 0.04$) and 17.6 ($p < 0.001$) for catastrophizing strategy, while it was significant for both. Furthermore, the column of determination coefficient in Table 2 uncovers that positive reevaluation and catastrophizing strategies, respectively explains 8% and 24% of the marital satisfaction variance per se.

Discussion and Conclusion

An important aspect of a marital system is the satisfaction which spouses will experience in marriage. But divorce statistics indicate that marital satisfaction is not readily accessible. Moreover, marital dissatisfaction could be an important factor in psychological disorders, due to the fact that it is an important factor in causing depression.

Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to marital satisfaction due to its role in mental health of couples and their children and family life duration (Hojati *et al.*, 2014).

Given that those with progressed emotion regulation skills have better and healthier functions in their close relationships, they can experience higher levels of satisfaction (Besharat and Ganji, 2011). Most of the studies on emotion regulation have assumed that the aim of emotion regulation is to support, self-esteem shaping, the individual efficiency and his/her individuality. This issue can be discussed with the goal of increasing positive emotions and preventing negative emotions for shaping the individual happiness is (Heidari and Eqbal, 2010).

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relation between cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction of youths of Sardasht Township. Findings revealed a positive correlation between cognitive emotion regulation strategies and its components such as self-blame, positive reevaluation, and planning with marital satisfaction. In explaining this finding it can be said that those with strong emotion regulation can evaluate the degree of threat of stressful events, create solutions for these stressors, and regulate their emotions accurately in various situations. Therefore, they can resist against distressful experiences and preserve their happiness that may lead to marital satisfaction.

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Also, the results showed a negative significant relation between maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and its component such as self-reproach and catastrophizing, and marital satisfaction. In explanation of this finding it can be assumed that those who use maladaptive strategies like self-reproach and catastrophizing, experience low levels of marital satisfaction. Using maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies instead of reducing worrisome increases this feeling in couples and has a contributory role in preserving and intensifying the dissatisfaction. In addition, the outcomes indicated that positive reevaluation and catastrophizing strategies could predict marital satisfaction. This finding is in line with those of other researchers. The study of Mohammadi *et al.*, (2011) showed that difficulty in emotion regulation had a negative significant relation with marital satisfaction. Danham (2008) also reported that difficulty in emotion regulation was significantly and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction both in male and female. Kirby (2007) performed a study to investigate the effectiveness of treatment of difficulty in emotion regulation on marital satisfaction. The outcomes demonstrated that treatment of difficulty in emotion regulation had considerable positive effects on various aspects of life including emotion regulation and increase of marital satisfaction and couples' confidence in their ability to regulate their emotions. Mirgain and Cordova (2007) studied the relationship between emotional skills, intimacy and marital satisfaction. The finding was that emotional skills can be reliably effective in relations of couples and their satisfaction. Also, knowing emotional skills has a significant relation with intimacy and marital satisfaction. Abbot (2005) studied the relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and marital satisfaction. His sample consisted of 108 couples. A negative relation between these two variables was uncovered in this study. Yelsma and Sherilyn (2003) performed a research to see if there was a relation between difficulty in emotion regulation and marital satisfaction. They found that difficulty in emotion regulation could negatively affect marital satisfaction. Also, Findings of Bloch *et al.*, (2014) showed that (a) greater down regulation of wives' negative experience and behavior predicted greater marital satisfaction for wives and husbands concurrently and (b) greater down regulation of wives' negative behavior predicted increases in wives' marital satisfaction longitudinally. In addition, Cordova *et al.*, (2005) came to this conclusion that affective skills and the ability to express emotions had a positive relation with marital satisfaction.

According to findings of this study, those who uses adoptive strategies like thinking on positive events (positive thinking) instead of negative ones, thinking to design effective programs to solve the problem, attributing positive meaning to events, and underestimating it compared to more serious ones, experience higher levels of marital satisfaction in contrast to those who do not apply these strategies. Using these kinds of adoptive strategies may increase couples' marital satisfaction by decreasing negative emotions and improving their cognitive and emotional function, and therefore, they may help them to confront problems more efficiently. Also, given the findings of the this study, those used maladaptive strategies like self-reproach and catastrophizing, look at unpleasant events negatively and don not think of solutions for their problems; hens, they begin to reproach themselves and overestimate the difficulty of the situation and finally, experience lower levels of marital satisfaction. One of the most important limitations of the present study was relying on self-reproach questionnaires. In the process of answering to questionnaires it was revealed that if interview was use with the questionnaire, more useful information would be gathered. In addition, this study was done on a accessible sample and therefore, findings generalization and interpretation should be done carefully. So, future studies should be performed on larger samples.

Findings of the present study are applicable in two theoretical and practical aspects. From the theoretical aspect, doing research with variables like emotion regulation can make the scientific body of psychological research stronger. From the practical aspect, the systematic relation between emotion regulation and marital satisfaction can pave the way for officials to help couples of Sardasht have higher levels of marital satisfaction.

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