

The Role of Dysfunctional Beliefs and Self-Sacrifice Motivation in Predicting Marital Adjustment of Married Women

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Abstract

Background: One of the most important issues in family psychology that has become more important with social change is marital adjustment. The present study was conducted to predict marital adjustment based on dysfunctional beliefs and self-sacrifice motivations.

Methods: This study was a correlational study and was conducted in 2020. The statistical population of the study included married women in Babolsar city. In the present study, 305 people were selected using the available sampling method and responded to the tools. The scales of marital adjustment, self-sacrifice motivations and dysfunctional beliefs were used to collect data. SPSS software was used to analyze the data and the multiple regression method was used to test the research hypotheses.

Results: The results showed that the variable of dysfunctional beliefs is a negative and significant predictor of marital adjustment ($\beta=-0.50$, $P=0.001$). The approach motive of sacrifice was a positive and significant predictor of marital adjustment ($\beta=0.26$, $P=0.001$). However, the avoidance motive of sacrifice variable was not able to predict the marital adjustment ($\beta=0.14$, $P=0.178$). In addition, the results showed that 31% of the variance of the dependent variable is predicted by independent variables.

Conclusion: The results showed that dysfunctional beliefs and approach motive of sacrifice play a role in marital adjustment. Therefore, implementing intervention programs to strengthen the approach motive of sacrifice and reduce dysfunctional beliefs can help improve marital adjustment.

Keywords: Female, Motivation, Biometry

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in family issues in the field of psychological studies, and due to the important role that this social institution plays in the quality of life and well-being of individuals (1), its topics have attracted the attention of many researchers (2, 3). In this regard, attention to the variable of marital adjustment has been of great importance. Research evidence shows that marital adjustment has an effective role in the health and well-being of couples. In addition, it affects various aspects of children's lives. This means

that the children of these families have behavioral problems and they have higher well-being (4).

Some researchers define marital adjustment as the satisfaction and happiness of couples from their life together (5). Some other researchers believe that marital adjustment shows the stability of marriage and the quality of marital life (6). Regarding this, Locke and Wallace (7) have defined marital adjustment as the companionship and accommodation of a couple during their life together. According to Burgess and Cottrell (8), the concept of marital adjustment is that couples can have the necessary integration and have a constructive

interaction to complement each other. Furthermore, they strive for mutual satisfaction and achieving common goals. Family researchers believe that the concept of marital adjustment does not mean the absence of any family problems, but means the existence of problem-solving skills and the ability to solve problems (9). Subsequently, this process can lead to the stability of cohabitation, improve the quality of marriage and increase the satisfaction of couples from their cohabitation. Marital adjustment additionally promotes emotional warmth and enjoyment of marital relationships and improves the physical and mental health of family members (10).

It is predicted that marital adjustment, like any other psychological phenomena, can be strengthened or weakened under the influence of some factors. Studies have shown that psychological and social factors predict marital adjustment (11). In this regard, research has shown that people's communication beliefs play an effective role in the quality of their relationships (12). Therefore, dysfunctional communication beliefs are expected to be predictors of marital adjustment. According to Ellis (13), irrational and dysfunctional beliefs are the source of many psychological and behavioral problems and these beliefs are the main cause of family problems.

Edelson and Epstein (14) believe that dysfunctional communication beliefs play a destructive role in marital life and cause disruption in marital relationship. They divide these beliefs into five general types: (1) the belief that disagreement is destructive. According to this belief, any difference of opinion is harmful; (2) mind-reading is expected. Concerning this belief, a person expects his or her spouse to be able to understand his or her feelings, thoughts, and needs without expressing those feelings, needs, and thoughts; (3) person's belief that their spouse cannot change. These people believe that their spouse cannot change their behavior; therefore, they believe that the current behavior of the spouse will be repeated in the future; (4) sexual perfectionism; according to this belief, people expect their sexual needs to be fully considered and answered by their spouse.

For this reason, they do not pay attention to their spouse's circumstances; (5) the sexes are dramatically different; people who have this mindset do not have a proper understanding of the differences between men and women. In the sense that they either expect the same behavior or consider these differences to be

inherent and congenital. Accordingly, evidence suggests that different motivations of individuals influence their efforts for marital adjustment. Thus, some researchers believe that the existence of different and conflicting interests of couples in married life is inevitable and therefore, one of the ways to deal with such conflicting interests is the self-sacrifice motivation (15).

According to some views, the self-sacrifice motivation is divided into two general types; approach motivation and avoidance motivation. In the first type, the spouse's goal is to make the partner content and to amplify their intimacy in family life. In this type of motivation, people go through some of their personal desires with the intention of having a happier life for themselves and their spouse. In fact, the choice of the approach motivation is voluntary. Conversely, in avoidance motivation of sacrifice, people are motivated to avoid more stress or to worry about their spouse losing interest in themselves. In fact, in such a situation, sacrifice is not a choice but a compulsion and necessity; in addition, there is an unpleasant feeling about sacrifice (15, 16).

Research evidence shows that each of the approach or avoidance motivation affects different aspects of married life differently. In this method, approach motivation strengthens positive emotions and increases marital life satisfaction and creates more intimate relationships between couples. On the other hand, avoidant motivation destroys marital relationships, spreads negative emotions, and also reduces life satisfaction. In conclusion, it can be stated that the approach motivation has beneficial effects and consequences while the avoidance motivation has harmful consequences for marital life (15).

Reviewing studies and research evidence, it can be concluded that marital adjustment is an important issue in the family and social system of Iran; as a result, the consequences of low levels of marital adjustment can cause many problems. The reported divorce rate indicates one of these problems. Therefore, finding the predictors of this family phenomenon will be of great importance. Previous studies depict that the simultaneous role of these two variables in predicting marital adjustment has not been investigated; therefore, considering such a research gap and also the important role of the family in the future life of children and the health of society, the present study investigates the role of self-sacrifice motivation and dysfunctional beliefs in

predicting marital adjustment. Hence, the research hypotheses are:

1. Dysfunctional beliefs predict marital adjustment.
2. The approach motivation of sacrifice predicts marital adjustment.
3. The avoidance motivation of sacrifice predicts marital adjustment.

2. Objectives

This study aimed at investigating the prediction of marital adjustment based on dysfunctional beliefs and self-sacrifice motivations.

3. Method

This research was a correlational study and multiple regression was used to foretell the marital adjustment based on self-sacrifice motivations and dysfunctional beliefs. SPSS software version 22 was used for data analysis. The statistical population of this study included all married women in Babolsar who had been married for at least 3 years and their level of education was at least until the end of high school. In this study, 305 women were selected as the sample group using available sampling methods (working women and referring to public and private offices, educational and artistic centers as well as other public places such as parks and shopping centers). Participants had a mean age of 43.1 and a standard deviation of 5.8. Respondents were assured that the information obtained from their responses would be kept strictly confidential and would only be used in a survey. The criteria for entering the research included living in Babolsar city, having finished high school and having cohabitation for at least 3 years, and the criteria for leaving the research was the lack of enough time to answer the questionnaires. It should be noted that this article was extracted from a doctoral dissertation and has been approved by the University Ethics Committee No. IR. IAU. TON. REC. 1399.060.

3.1. Research Instruments

3.1.1. Dysfunctional beliefs scale

The dysfunctional communication beliefs scale was developed by Edelson and Epstein (14) to measure the

extent of dysfunctional communication beliefs associated with marital relationships. In Iran, the validity and reliability of this scale have been reviewed and confirmed. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of total score was 0.80 (16). This scale has 40 items, each item in the Likert scale is scored in 6 options from 0 (completely incorrect) to 5 (completely correct). Edelson and Epstein (14) used Cronbach's alpha method to evaluate the reliability of the scale. They showed that the reliability coefficient of the scale is in the range of 0.72 to 0.81. The validity and reliability of this scale has also been confirmed in Iran. In order to evaluate the validity of the scale, its correlation with the scores of the depression scale was calculated and a coefficient of 0.65 was obtained. The reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha method was 0.75 (17). In the present research, confirmatory factor analysis method was used to assess the validity of the scale whose load factors ranged from 0.40 to 0.73. Therefore, the results indicated the optimal validity of the scale. The reliability of the scale was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha method, which was equal to 0.86.

3.1.2. Self-sacrifice motivation scale

The self-sacrifice motivation scale was developed by Impett and other colleagues (18). This scale includes two separate subscales approach motivation and avoidance motivation. This scale consists of 15 items, 8 of which indicate approach motivation and the other 7 items represent avoidance motivation. Participants respond to each item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Impett and other colleagues (15) calculated the reliability of this scale for a group of women using Cronbach's alpha method. This coefficient for approach and avoidance motivation was 0.76 and 0.83, respectively. In Iran, the reliability of this scale was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method proving reliability coefficient of the subscale of approach motivation and avoidance motivation in a group of women was 0.75 and 0.78, respectively (19). In this study, the validity of the scale was investigated by confirmatory factor analysis, which showed its optimal validity. This means that none of the load factors were less than 0.30. The reliability of the scale was also assessed by Cronbach's alpha method. This coefficient was 0.742 for the approach motivation and 0.786 for the avoidance motivation.

3.1.3. Marital adjustment scale

The Marital Adjustment Scale was developed by Locke and Wallace (7) and contains 15 items. The purpose of this scale is to measure marital adjustment. The items on this scale are multi-degree and the value of the items is not the same. Higher scores indicate more marital adjustment and lower scores indicate lower marital adjustment. The Locke and Wallace (7) Marital Adjustment Scale has been used for different groups, and its psychometric properties have been confirmed for both compatible and incompatible couples. The psychometric adequacy of this scale has been studied in Persian articles and its validity for use in the Iranian society has been confirmed (20). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for reliability of this scale was reported to be 0.819 (20). Herein, confirmatory factor analysis method was used to evaluate the validity of the scale indicating that the load factors are in the range between 0.36 to 0.60. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was again used to check the reliability, which was equal to 0.87.

4. Results

Participants in this study included 305 married women between the ages of 22 and 56 with a mean age of 38.2 (SD= 7.34).

This study was conducted to investigate the role of dysfunctional communication beliefs and self-sacrifice motivations in predicting marital adjustment in married women living in Babolsar who had lived together for at least 3 years and were interested in participating in the

study. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics indicators of the research variables.

Before examining the research hypotheses, the correlation between the variables was calculated. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the dysfunctional communication beliefs variable with the avoidance motivation of sacrifice variable ($r=0.87$, $P=0.001$), positive and significant relationship and with the approach motivation of sacrifice variables ($r=-0.54$, $P=0.001$), and marital adjustment ($r=-0.51$, $P=0.001$) has a negative and significant relationship. Avoidance motivation of sacrifice also has a negative and significant relationship with the variables of approach motivation of sacrifice ($r=-0.49$, $P=0.001$) and marital adjustment ($r=-0.42$, $P=0.001$). Consequently, there is a significant negative relationship between dysfunctional communication beliefs and marital adjustment ($r=-0.46$, $P=0.001$).

In order to test the research hypotheses, the multiple regression method was used. The results are shown in Table 3.

The results in Table 3 illustrate that the sum of predictor variables had a significant effect on the criterion variable ($F=42.02$, $P=0.001$).

The results of multiple regression analysis then indicated that dysfunctional communication beliefs ($\beta=-0.50$, $P=0.001$) are a negative and significant predictor of marital adjustment whereas the approach motivation of sacrifice ($\beta=0.26$, $P=0.001$) has been a positive and significant predictor. Avoidance motivation of sacrifice could not predict marital adjustment ($\beta=0.14$, $P=0.178$).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Dysfunctional beliefs	104.5	9.47
Avoidance motivation	18.5	3.09
Approach motivation	26.5	2.9
Marital adjustment	78.5	22.6

Table 2: Correlation between variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
1Dysfunctional beliefs	1			
2Avoidance motivation	**0.87	1		
3Approach motivation	**-.54	**-.49	1	
4Marital adjustment	**-.51	**-.42	**-.46	1

** Coefficients are significant at 0.01 level.

Table 3: Predicting marital adjustment based on dysfunctional communication beliefs and self-sacrifice motivations

Predictor variable	Criterion variable	F	P	R	R ²	β	t	P
Dysfunctional beliefs	Marital adjustment					-0.50	4.6	0.001
Avoidance motivation		42.02	0.001	0.56	0.31	0.14	1.4	0.178
Approach motivation						0.26	4.4	0.001

5. Discussion

According to the research findings, dysfunctional communication beliefs negatively and significantly predicted marital adjustment. This finding suggests that the rate of marital adjustment of women with dysfunctional communication beliefs will decrease. This means that as the level of dysfunctional communication beliefs increases, the rate of marital adjustment of women will decline. In general, this study findings are in line with the studies concluding that women's personal characteristics are effective in their negative emotions and their adaptation to difficult living conditions (21, 22). This result is in accordance with the research that indicating that the dysfunctional and irrational communication beliefs increase couples' communication problems, improve the quality of marital relationships, and reduce the ability to solve problems (16). Subsequently, it can be expected that dysfunctional beliefs raise negative emotions by creating problems in couples' relationships (10). To further explain this finding, we can refer to the view of Ellis (13). Based on this theory, irrational and dysfunctional beliefs of individuals are the starting point of many psychological and behavioral problems; thus, if these dysfunctional beliefs are related to marital life, they have the ability to destroy the couple's relationship and be a crucial factor in reducing marital adjustment. On the other hand, the test of the second hypothesis of the research showed that the avoidance motivation of sacrifice reduces marital adjustment, which is in line with the research of Impett and other colleagues (15). According to whom, the avoidance motivation of sacrifice disrupts marital relations and reduces couples' satisfaction with their life together. Therefore, it can be expected that in such circumstances, the conflicts between couples will rise up and the spouses will be less adjustment with each other. Examining the third hypothesis of the study proved that the approach motivation of sacrifice can augment marital adjustment, which was in consonance with the research of Impett and other colleagues (15). It can be acknowledged that in the approach motivation of sacrifice, the purpose of sacrificing is to create more intimacy in family relationships and to ignore some of their own personal desires and opinions, in order to consider the needs and desires of their spouse. In fact, they want to make their spouse happier in this way (15), not only do not feel uncomfortable about giving up some

of their personal desires to make their spouse happy, but they are also satisfied with their action and make this sacrifice voluntarily. Obviously, this feeling of happiness and satisfaction of both parties can increase marital adjustment. The findings of this study can theoretically expand our knowledge about research variables and the relationships between them. And from a practical point of view, it can be used by families and counseling centers, and especially its results can be used in family education. There were some limitations in this study. One of them was that some eligible individuals did not have enough time to complete the questionnaires due to personal matters and did not participate in the research; another limitation was the lack of use of environmental variables along with individual factors. Therefore, it is suggested that in future studies, environmental variables along with individual factors be used as predictors of marital adjustment.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study depicted that the marital adjustment can be increased or decreased under the influence of different factors. Accordingly, dysfunctional beliefs were one of the reducing predictors of marital adjustment. Moreover, the approach motives to sacrifice was another predictor of marital adjustment that strengthens it. Due to the widespread social changes and the increase in the phenomenon of divorce, the study results can help to improve the marital adjustment of spouses by providing educational and intervention programs and thus reduce the divorce rate in Iranian families.

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Ethical Approval

This research was conducted by obtaining written consent from the participants. In addition, the research Ethics Committee of the Tonekabon Islamic Azad University approved all research processes and methods in terms of ethical considerations (coded IR. IAU. TON. REC. 1399.060).

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