



Structural model of marital commitment based on irrational beliefs and marital justice with the mediation of cognitive emotion regulation

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this research is to investigate the structural model of marital commitment based on irrational beliefs and marital justice with the mediation of cognitive emotion regulation. **Methods:** The research method was correlation and structural equation modeling. The statistical population in this research included all couples who referred to Tehran counseling centers in 2021. Purposive sampling method was used to select the research sample, so that 300 couples were selected as the sample group based on the criteria for entering and exiting the research. The research tools included the Jones Irrational Beliefs Questionnaire (1968), the Marital Commitment Questionnaire of Adams and Jones (1997), the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire of Garnefski and Kraaij (2006), and the Marital Justice Scale of Ghaffari et al. (2018). Structural equation modeling method was used for data analysis. **Results:** The results of the conceptual model test showed that the fit indices of the research model are in a favorable condition. Irrational beliefs have a significant indirect effect (through positive emotion regulation and negative emotion regulation) on couples' marital commitment ($p < 0.05$). Marital justice and self-efficacy affect patients' marital commitment through negative emotion regulation ($p < 0.05$). **Conclusion:** According to research findings, in counseling centers, to increase the level of marital commitment, it is necessary to pay attention to the antecedents of irrational beliefs and marital justice.

Keywords: *marital commitment, irrational beliefs, marital justice, cognitive emotion regulation.*

Introduction

People have a great desire to feel intimacy and love from others, and marriage is done in order to satisfy the need for love and intimacy (Allen et al., 2022). Every successful marriage contains the three pillars of commitment, attraction and understanding, among which marital commitment is the strongest and most stable predictor of marital quality and stability (Jan et al., 2017). The lack of marital commitment will have many complications and consequences that affect both the individual, the family, and the society, especially the unfaithful spouse, causing them to undergo physiological changes in their nervous system and cognitive activity. (Geortz et al., 2016).

Dean and Spanier (1974) define marital commitment as the couple's desire to maintain and continue a long-term joint relationship. Stanley and Amato, Johnson and Markham (2006) also stated in the definition of commitment that commitment is defined as the amount of value that couples place on their marital relationship and the amount of effort and motivation they put into maintaining and continuing this relationship. Commitment has multiple dimensions and includes personal, moral and religious reasons that commit a person to the continuation of a marital relationship (Hu et al., 2019). Studies show that many individual, couple and environmental factors affect marital commitment (Bilal et al., 2021; Dev et al., 2018).

In recent years, the importance of the role of cognitive emotion regulation on marital relationships has been confirmed in various researches (Fahad & Hanif, 2021). Emotion regulation strategies is a category that gives people control over the emotions they experience, as well as when they experience it and how they experience and express it (Gross, 2015). Many emotion regulation processes are common among humans, but it seems that each person tends to use certain patterns. These patterns are called emotion regulation strategies and their cognitive domain is called cognitive emotion regulation strategies (Harwood & Anglim, 2021). The strategies that people use to regulate their emotions have been investigated in many theoretical and practical researches (Aldau et al., 2010; Appleton et al., 2013; Thomas et al., 2019). Being aware of verbal and non-verbal emotions and evaluating them in oneself or others can lead to a desire to respond voluntarily in order to adjust and use emotions (Rayo et al., 2013). Regulation of emotions requires the management of positive and negative emotions in oneself and in others based on existing conditions (Apiala et al., 2015). Troy and Maus (2011) also assume cognitive reappraisal as an adaptive strategy and believe that since it has a direct impact on evaluations, people can use it to change their emotional reaction to stressful events in order to improve performance. Kalten (2021) emphasizes the role of emotion regulation on marital conflicts.

Among individual factors, irrational beliefs are important sources of influence on marital commitment (Topkaya et al., 2021). Irrational beliefs are desires and goals that become necessary and mandatory preferences and become mandatory and definite goals, so that if they are not fulfilled, it leads to confusion and anxiety.

According to Ellis (2001), humans have a strong tendency to make themselves emotionally uncomfortable by internalizing self-defeating thoughts, and this is why it is really difficult to achieve and maintain mental health.

Beck and Vishar (1995) state that emotional and behavioral problems arise from distortions of reality based on faulty assumptions and logic. These types of distorted evaluations lead to certain emotions. Therefore, one's emotional responses are aligned with one's distorted self-evaluation and not with reality.

Another variable investigated in the present study is marital justice. Justice reflects a fundamental concern in interactions with others and can affect people's identity, motivations, and behavior (Rena & Guleria, 2022). According to De Kramer and Van Dyck (2009), justice as a social concern is an important regulatory tool in social life. From the point of view of some researchers, the importance of perceptual phenomena such as justice can only be investigated by examining their consequences.

Therefore, it can be assumed that marital justice is important in a couple's relationship and has a positive effect on marital quality. The current research sought to answer the following questions:

1- Is the structural model of marital commitment based on irrational beliefs and marital justice with the mediation of cognitive regulation of emotion suitable?

Method

The research method was correlation and structural equation modeling. The statistical population in this research included all couples who referred to Tehran counseling centers in 2021. Purposive sampling method was used to select the research sample, so that 300 couples were selected as the sample group based on the criteria for entering and exiting the research. The research tools included the Jones Irrational Beliefs Questionnaire (1968), the Marital Commitment Questionnaire of Adams and Jones (1997), the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire of Garnefski and Kraaij (2006), and the Marital Justice Scale of Ghaffari et al. (2018). Structural equation modeling method was used for data analysis.

Results

The correlation coefficients between the scales of irrational beliefs, marital justice, positive emotion regulation, and marital commitment were statistically significant ($P \leq 0.05$). One of the assumptions of structural equation modeling is the normality of multivariate distribution. For this purpose, Mardia's multivariate elongation coefficient is used in AMOS software. The value of Mardia's coefficient for the data of the present study is equal to 2.76, which shows that the assumption of multivariate normality is valid.

Factors of irrational beliefs and marital justice have a direct effect on marital commitment. Also, the hypothesis raised in connection with the existence of an indirect effect of irrational beliefs on the marital commitment of couples referring to counseling centers through positive emotion regulation has been confirmed with 95% confidence. Negative emotion regulation and positive emotion regulation had a significant mediating role in the relationship between irrational beliefs and marital commitment ($P < 0.05$). Finally, negative emotion regulation had a significant mediating role in the relationship between marital justice and marital commitment ($P < 0.05$).

The results of each of the obtained indicators alone are not the reason for the suitability or lack of suitability of the model and these indicators should be interpreted together. The obtained values for these indicators show that overall the model has a good condition in terms of explanation and fitting.

Conclusion

The aim of the current research is to investigate the structural model of marital commitment based on irrational beliefs and marital justice with the mediation of cognitive emotion regulation. Undoubtedly, many psychological problems are rooted in irrational and unrealistic beliefs and thoughts about oneself, others and the surrounding world. These beliefs have goals or desires that are expressed in the form of essential priorities and preferences, and if they are not fulfilled, they cause mental confusion.

A large number of adverse reactions and disorders are caused by irrational beliefs and thoughts, and as long as such thoughts continue, problems related to communication, acceptance and companionship with others will continue. In this way, many human problems can be considered the birth of man's imaginary and meaningless beliefs and thoughts.

Various classifications of ineffective and illogical thoughts and beliefs have been presented in various fields of personal relationships (such as marital relationships) and social relationships. This diversity shows that various biological, social, cultural and psychological factors and backgrounds can lead to many irrational beliefs and thoughts. For example, Ellis (2001) believes that humans have the ability to acquire irrational beliefs and ways of thinking from parents or cultural factors.

Based on this, it can be said that one of the main areas of emergence and influence of illogical and ineffective thoughts is married life. Despite the fact that, according to many experts, marriage is considered one of the universal foundations and affects the lives of human beings in a narrow way, but it is not safe from various harms. In general, it can be said that dysfunctional beliefs are the main cause of many social differences, especially in couples' relationships.

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