

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the correlation between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction in married individuals. Conducted between September 2020 to July 2021 in National University of Modern Languages Islamabad, Pakistan. The research employed a correlational design to explore the relationship between these two variables. A sample of 50 married individuals from various regions in Pakistan participated in the study. The data was analyzed using SPSS software. The sampling method used was convenient sampling, facilitated through Google Forms, and the age range of the participants was between 20 to 40 years. The survey consisted of two standardized tools: the Cognitive Distortions Scale (CDS) developed by Covin and Dozois (2006) and the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) formulated by Locke and Wallace (1959). The reliability of the scales was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The findings revealed a negative correlation between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction among the participants ($r = -0.106$). Moreover, no significant differences were observed between males and females in terms of marital satisfaction and cognitive distortions ($p > 0.05$). The results suggest that as cognitive distortions increase, marital satisfaction tends to decrease among married individuals.

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive Distortions referred to as 'impractical thinking styles' are methods that can distort our thought process. As a conscious being we always interpret and make perception of what is happening around us. Sometimes our mind straightaway jumps to the conclusion that are worst and incorrect and sometimes we criticize and take responsibility on our ourselves for things

that are entirely not our own fault. Cognitive distortions occur spontaneously. They can bring about strong and unseen impacts on our temperament and our existence. Due to these cognitive distortions, an individual perceives the reality inaccurately. In the 'Cognitive model' Arron Beck highlighted that, a pessimistic perspective on reality which is sometimes referred

to as negative schema is an element in indicators of emotional malfunctioning and poorer experience and evaluation of a person's overall life. More specifically it was seen that a person's negative thought pattern can contribute to the development of negative emotions. During challenging situations these distorted thinking patterns can act as a contributor and create an overall pessimistic perception on the society and an anxious or depressive mindset (Beck, 1976).

According to Schoen et al., Marital satisfaction is considered to be a comprehensive assessment of the condition of an individual's marriage and the contemplation of marital functioning and contentment. From the developmental perspective marital satisfaction can be considered as a psychological condition of a particular regulated system that basically analyze the cost and benefit of getting married to a specific individual (Zainah & Nasir, 2012).

The main objective of marriage is the preference to achieve satisfaction in marital relationship (Heshmati et al., 2016). Marital satisfaction is defined as is a condition of gratification, fulfillment, and joy that married individuals enjoys collectively when all characteristics of their coexistence are considered (Tavoni & Anisi, 2005). It delineates the overall condition of both members of the married couple. The notion of marital satisfaction falls in several dimensions: getting support from spouse, involvement in decision making activities, the quality of relationship that you have with your spouse's family, the amount of social support you receive, as well as your psychological health and contentment with life (Wong & Goodwin, 2009). Marital satisfaction is a frame of mind that is not attained spontaneously or automatically, but it voluntarily requires the strive of both couples, specifically in the initial years of marriage because this is the time period where marital satisfaction and marital relationship is considered inconsistent. A married couple experience satisfaction in marriage when their relationship is in consistent with their expectations. Marriage is the connection between two different individuals holding varying personalities. According to Claxton, an absolute and everlasting romantic

relationship demands that, in evaluation of their partners, individuals are required to undervalue physical attributes and selectively pay attention to the personality traits. Different elements such as: social economic status, age, education, ethnic identity, IQ, religiosity, attitudes, and personal merits, can affect and predict marital contentment among couples (Sayehmiri et al., 2020).

Sample: The study employed convenience sampling, with a sample size of 50 participants aged between 20 and 40 years. A research study focusing on married individuals was conducted over a period from September 16, 2020, to July 15, 2021. The data collection process utilized Google Forms, and the gathered data was subsequently analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Instruments: Two instruments were used after the authors permission. The Cognitive Distortions Scale (CDS) was developed by (Covin & Dozois, 2006). This scale measure 10 kinds of cognitive distortions including: Mindreading, All-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, Emotional reasoning, Mental filter, labeling, Overgeneralization, should statements, Personalization, and minimizing or disqualifying the positives. It utilizes 7-point Likert scale starting from 1= Never to 7= all the times. The reliability of this scale is .69 and Marital Adjustment test' (MAT) was formulated by (Locke & Wallace, 1959). This scale examines relationship satisfaction among married individuals. It consists of 15 items, that were answered on a variety of responses. Higher score indicates greater satisfaction. Reliability coefficient is 0.84.

Procedure: Convenient sampling was used. Sample size was ($p > 50$), of 20-40 years old married individuals were targeted, research carried from September 16, 2020, to July 15, 2021. Google form was the source of obtaining data. Permission letters was signed by Head of department prior to the research. The scales used in this study was used after the permission of the authors. Each participants signed an informed consent form, and their personal information was kept confidential. They had the right to quite

participating any time. After data collection, debriefing was given to the participants whose scores were higher. The collected data was analyzed by using 'Statistical package for Social Sciences' (SPSS). Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was done to examine the relationship between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction. T-test was conducted to compare cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction among males and females.

Inclusion Criteria: Both male and female adults who are married and willing to participate in the study were included. The required age range for sample was 20-40. A representative sample of willing individuals from different areas in Lahore was asked to fill the questionnaire.

Exclusion Criteria: Both males and females who are unmarried are excluded. Single parents, divorced and widows are also excluded. Adults with significant personality difficulties were excluded.

Results: The study was conducted on 50 married individuals, in which 25 were married females and 25 were married males. The relationship between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction among married individuals shows negative correlation, ($r = -.106$). Non-significant difference was found between males and females on marital satisfaction and cognitive distortions scale $p = .733 (> 0.05)$.

Table 1

Relationship between cognitive distortion and marital satisfaction (N=50) n=F=25, n=M=25

	MAT	CDS
MAT	1	-.106
CDS	-.106	1

MAT=Marital Adjustment Test, CDS=Cognitive Distortions Scale.

Table 1 shows that Cognitive Distortions are negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. ($r = -.106$)

Table 2

Mean, Standard deviation and t. test for MAT and CDS Male and Female (N=50)

Variable	Male n=25		Female n=25		Cohen's d		p	95%CI		
	M	S. D	M	S. D	T	df		LL	UL	
MAT	105.61	32.98	113.10	38.19	-.629	48	.733	-31.45	16.46	.532
CDS	51.23	16.61	61.94	28.35	-1.282	48	.002	-24.00	6.092	.206

MAT=Marital Adjustment Test, CDS=Cognitive Distortions Scale.

Discussion:

Cognitive distortions can have a powerful influence on an individual's mental health, which leads to an increased level of stress, dejection, and anxiety. If these negative thought patterns are left unchecked, then they can negatively influence an

individual's ability to make rational and logical decisions. These distorted thinking patterns can convince your mind to focus on negatives about yourself and the world.

The present study was directed to analyze the relationship between cognitive distortions and

marital satisfaction. 'Cognitive distortions scale' (CDS) developed by (Covin & Dozois, 2006) that measure 10 types of cognitive distortions was used. These distortions are likely to occur in accomplishment and interpersonal domains.

These are: Mind reading (assuming that other people anticipate or believe awful about you), Catastrophizing (make poor approximation about future prospects without any confirmation), All-or-nothing thinking (interpreting events with regard to extremes, as either tremendous (good) or awful (bad)), Emotional reasoning (accepting one's feelings as reality, i.e., it is likely to be true because I feel that way), Labeling (marking oneself as bad or unfortunate formerly when the negative happening occurs), Mental filter (concentrating on negative information while depreciating the positive), Overgeneralization (accepting the fact that the occurrence of unfavorable incident indicates that more awful things will happen), Personalization (criticizing one's own self to be the reason of all the negative or bad incidents), Should statements (believing that events have to be or should be in a definite manner), Minimizing or discounting positivity (eliminating positivity from incidents that have occurred). 'Marital adjustment test' (MAT) formulated by (Locke & Wallace, 1959) were also used to assess the relationship satisfaction among married individuals.

Cognitive distortions are considered to be the fundamental cause of many marital disputes. As these distorted thoughts can lead an individual to belief on the negatives, therefore, if one partner is having misinterpreted or biased thought patterns, he can ultimately perceive his/her partner as negative which leads to frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction in a marital relationship.

It was hypothesized that when cognitive distortion increase, marital satisfaction will decrease (hypothesis 2). According to the cognitive model, the illogical beliefs and distorted thoughts are considered to be the most important factors in the formation and prolongation of illogical behavior (Mousavi, 2004). The analysis in this dimension is specified and mainly focused on inefficacious belief in marital relationship (Koohsarahadi, 2011).

The article that reviews the treatment of discomfort or distress in marriage with the implementation of cognitive therapy describes three groups of cognitive happenings that can reduce marital satisfaction and can bring about maladjusted relationship between couples. First are, 'Spontaneous thoughts' that contains a person's erroneous attributions about the basis of complications in marriage. Second is, the behavior of the individual in relation to their companion, are affected by their anticipation about the expectations of the companion's successive responses, and these anticipations are also responsive to standardized distortion. Third is an individual's impractical or illogical beliefs about quality of interpersonal relationships can give rise to maladjusted and deteriorated physiological responses in regard to the partner (Epstein, 1986). Cognitively oriented therapy declares that basic ideology and schema constituents are the fundamental source for innumerable cognitive, behavioral, and emotional interactions, between them some may be deteriorated. The deteriorated or dysfunctional mental processes, which may lead to the symptoms that rise to the extent of scientific implication, include cognitive distortions and maladjusted assumptions, other secondary credence and rules (Beck & Freeman, 1990; Beck et al., 2004).

Additionally, cognitive distortions anticipate that those who were involved in the poorly organized methods of cognitive coping suffered from the higher level of stress as opposed to those who were involved in organized methods of cognitive coping (Lazarus, 1993). Holding negative thoughts about one's own self, making poor approximation about future prospects and criticizing others are associated to emotional agony (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

It was hypothesized that there is a significant gender difference with respect to cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction. The results indicate that non-significant gender difference was found between male and female on cognitive distortion and marital satisfaction scale.

Furthermore, these results demonstrated that cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction were

not based upon gender to be experienced by the individuals. The research administered by (Nyarko et al., 2014) to investigate the consequence of individual's attribute (e.g., age, gender, and education) on cognitive distortions depict that no differentiation was distinguished in term of gender regarding cognitive distortions.

Conclusion

Present study was carried out to establish the relationship between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction. Pearson correlation was administered through SPSS to find out the relationship among variables used in the study, the results of which indicates that there exists a negative correlation between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction which means that with the increase in distorted or illogical thinking, marital satisfaction decreases. The purpose of our study is to increase the awareness that distorted thought pattern not only cause chronic psychological illness but it can also become the cause of many marital conflicts as well.

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