

Model of predicting women's marital satisfaction based on the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies mediated by marital adjustment

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was to test the model of predicting women's marital satisfaction based on cognitive emotion regulation strategies mediated by marital adjustment.

Method: The research plan was correlation and the statistical population included all women in Mashhad in 2019. From this population a sample of 200 people with convenience sampling, was selected who completed the online form of Garnefski and Kraaij shortened form of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), Marital Adjustment questionnaire (DAS; Spanier, and Enrich Marital Satisfaction questionnaire. Data were analysed by using descriptive statistics and path analysis.

Results: The results of path analysis to examine the proposed model, showed that marital adjustment has a significant mediating role in the relationship between adaptive and maladaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation with marital satisfaction ($\chi^2/df= 1.56$, RSMEA =0.06, GFI = 0.99, AGFI =0.93, CFI=0.99).

Conclusion: Considering the results, it can be acknowledged that marital adjustment as a component affecting marital satisfaction is influenced by a variety of strategies that couples use to cognitively regulate their emotions.

Keywords: cognitive emotion regulation strategies" marital satisfaction" marital adjustment

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Introduction:

Family is the main structure of any society and as a social-emotional unit, the place of growth, development and change; Therefore, the effect of family on psychological, emotional and social balance would not be ignored (1). In fact, one of the most important goals of marriage and starting a family, is gaining marital satisfaction; Because this satisfaction leads to family stability (2). In other word, marital satisfaction has an undeniable role in the quality, continuity and survival of the family, and marital satisfaction refers to the state during which men and women feel happy and satisfied after being married (3). In addition, marital satisfaction is a sense associated with satisfaction and the pleasure experienced by a spouse (4). considering marital processes, provide valuable data in the field of the main nature of successful marriages. In successful marriages, the quality level of the relationship is high and people are satisfied and pleased with their marriage (5). However, the quality of the couple's relationship and marital adjustment are affected by various factors (6) and many research has been done in the field of marital satisfaction and the stability of couple's relationships; However, there are still many unanswered questions in this regard and no coherent research has been done on them (7,8).

The results of studies in the field of marital satisfaction have emphasized the role of cognitive emotion regulation in this field (9) and researchers with a different approach have focused on obvious intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in the daily interactions of satisfied and happy couples. These researchers acknowledge factors such as emotional awareness (10), emotional expression, cognitive emotion regulation (11) has a positive effect on couples and the quality of their marriage (12).

The existence of challenges, crises, problems and obstacles in married life has always been a place to practice emotion regulation (13) and Inability to control and regulate emotion leads to marital problems (14). Accordingly, emotion regulation is considered as one of the Social skills (15,16) and effective factors in intimate relationships (17,18). Cognitive emotion regulation strategies are methods of cognitive emotion management that helps people regulate their emotion and feeling (19). Therefore, cognitive emotion regulation is a fundamental principle in initiating, evaluating, and organizing adaptive behavior as well as negative emotion prevention and inconsistent behaviors (20) and are divided into two categories of adaptive and maladaptive strategies. Adaptive strategies include: positive reappraisal, reception, putting into perspective, and positive refocusing and focus on planning. Strategies such as self-blame, rumination, other-blame, catastrophizing are in the category of maladaptive strategies that each of these strategies has consequences (21). Cognitive emotion regulation strategies seem to be mediated by some variables such as marital adjustment also affect marital satisfaction; but so far little coherent research has been carried out about the efficiency of cognitive emotion regulation on the level of marital satisfaction (13).

The results of studies on marital adjustment also have confirmed the role of emotions in the cohesion of this bond and reduce marital conflict (22,23,24) and therefore, the relationship between adaptive and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation is one of this research concerns that directly and indirectly affects marital satisfaction. Marital adjustment as one of quality indicators of the couple's relationship have attracted a lot of attention in the field of

family (25). In research it has shown that psychological adjustment largely depends on emotion regulation (26). So, considering the theoretical foundations, the mediating role of marital adjustment in marital satisfaction and emotion regulation can be examined. Marital adjustment is an evolutionary process in a relationship of couples that is related to the correspondence of different areas in which the couple may be in conflict (27). Adjusted couples are who have a lot of agreement with each other, in type and extent of the relationship. They are satisfied with themselves and the quality of their leisure time (28). Accordingly, marital adjustment is one of the effective components in the stability and resistance of marital life (29).

According to research, variables such as sensation seeking (30), quality of marital relationships (31), interdependence (32) Social support (3) as mediating variables in marital satisfaction of couples but in the field of marital adjustment and in the form of structural studies, no research has been done so far. According to what was stated, the relationship between adaptive strategies and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation with marital satisfaction needs to be investigated and to perform effective interventions to increase marital satisfaction and Contributing to the strength of the family, the process of direct and indirect effects of cognitive emotion regulation on marital satisfaction is also needed to be studied. On the other hand, in Iran, due to cultural issues, the position of the family has a high value and status (33). However, in recent years, for various reasons, the marriage rate in Iran has fallen sharply, and at the same time the divorce statistics shows a significant increase (34). Therefore, one of the most important goals in the context of research on Couples relationships have been studied, predicting marital satisfaction and identifying factors that affect the quality of couple interactions (35). However, the role of mediating variables has been neglected. On the other hand, according to the theoretical foundations of research, Cognitive emotion regulation of couples have an undeniable role in the quality of marital relationships and by examining and recognizing psychological variables which directly and indirectly affect their relationships, in addition to developing empirical knowledge in the field of relationships marriage also helped reduce marital conflicts. Therefore, the present study aims to test the predictive model of women's marital satisfaction based on cognitive emotion regulation strategies mediated by marital adjustment. The main question is whether marital adjustment has a mediating role in relation of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction?

Method:

This research was a descriptive type of correlation in terms of method. The statistical population of this study is all women in Mashhad in 1398. For path analysis, according to Guilford (36) a minimum sample size of 200 people is required and defensible. Therefore, according to the research method, the sample size of 200 people was considered by available sampling method. Among the criteria for entering the study were being married and having been married for a maximum of two years. More than two years of marriage, no Willingness to complete questionnaires and failure to provide demographic information were also considered as exclusion criteria. After designing questionnaires electronically, the link to complete the questionnaires was forwarded to groups and telegram channels of women and completion of questionnaires to the desired size (200 people) last about a period of 3 months.

It should be noted the test link includes explanation of research objectives, confidentiality of individuals' information, no need to provide identity information, group analysis the responses and characteristics were demographic. The following tools were used in this study.

Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire: To assess cognitive emotion regulation strategies, the short form of the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire was used which was designed by Garnefski and Kraaij in 2006 (37). The short form of this scale has 18 items and 9 cognitive Emotion regulation strategies in two general categories of adaptive strategies and maladaptive strategies that measures in five-point Likert scale (never = 1 to always =5). Adaptive strategies include: positive reappraisal, reception, putting into perspective, and positive refocusing and focus on planning. Strategies such as self-blame, rumination, other-blame, catastrophizing are in the category of maladaptive strategies. Both items evaluate one of the nine strategies. The minimum and maximum scores in each subscale are 2 and 10, respectively. A higher score indicates more use of that cognitive strategy (38). Garnefski and Kraaij (37), have been confirmed the questionnaire performance, validity and reliability among the Dutch examples. In the study of Garnefski and Kraaij (2006), the results showed that the reliability of retesting cognitive coping strategies is relatively stable and the internal consistency of most scales have approved with alpha Cronbach 0/80. Based on the results of Besharat and Bazazian (39) 18-item form of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire has sufficient reliability and validity to measure cognitive coping strategies in Iranian samples and Cronbach's alpha

Reported between 0.78 and 0.93. In the present study, the reliability of this tool using Cronbach's alpha for adaptive and maladaptive strategies were measured 0.79 and 0.82, respectively.

Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire: In order to measure marital satisfaction, the Enrich questionnaire developed by Fowers and Olson (40) was used. This tool with 47 questions in the range of five options "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree" is designed. In some questions the scoring is direct and in some questions the scoring is done in reverse. This questionnaire includes 12 subscales of ideal distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sex relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles for men and women and religious orientation. A high score in this tool means more satisfaction in marital relationship. The lowest score in this questionnaire 47 and the highest score is 235. Validity of this questionnaire in Fowers and Olson report (40) has been confirmed and alpha coefficient of sub-components was between 0.81 0.48. Soleimanian (41) in his research has examined the validity of this tool in Iranian society and the alpha coefficient was 0.93. In the present study, the reliability of this tool, Cronbach's alpha was scored 0.85.

Marital Adjustment Questionnaire: In this study, Marital Adjustment Questionnaire by Spanier (42) was used. This questionnaire has 32 questions and grading based on a 6-point Likert scale from (we always disagree 0) to (we have permanent agreements 5). The tool measured four dimensions: marital satisfaction, marital solidarity, marital agreement and expression of love in relationship between husband and wife. This questionnaire has 4 points gives for these dimensions and an overall score that indicates overall satisfaction with the relationship. The highest score in this questionnaire is 160 and the minimum score is 0. Higher

scores in this scale indicate a better and more consistent relationship. Spanier (42) has confirmed reliability of this questionnaire in his study and reported Cronbach's alpha 0.96. Hosseinnjad (43) have standardized this questionnaire and with content validation has a reliability of 0.96. In the present study, the reliability of this tool was examined Cronbach's alpha 0.93.

Finally, the data was analyzed by descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and analysis indices the path and software of SPSS 24 and LISREL 80/8.

Results:

The subjects of this study were 200 people whose demographic information is recorded in Table 1

Table1. Demographic information

variable		Frequency	percentage
Education	High school	5	2/5
	Diploma	43	21/5
	Associate Degree	20	10
	Bachelor	89	44/5
	M.A	38	19
	P.H.D	5	2/5
Employment status	Housewife	102	51
	Employed	98	49
Age	Under 20	6	3
	20-30	156	78
	Upper 30	38	19

In Table 2, descriptive statistics indices (mean and standard deviation) of subjects' scores in cognitive emotion regulation strategies, marital adjustment and marital satisfaction are provided. Also, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient in the table show there is a significant relationship between all research variables.

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of subjects' scores in research variables

Variables	Descriptive indicators					
	Mean	standard deviation	1	2	3	4
Adaptive strategies	33/80	7/19	1			
Maladaptive strategies	23/13	5/90	-0/18*	1		
Marital adjustment	108/82	21/60	0/27***	0/38***	1	
Marital satisfaction	144/38	11/32	0/24***	0/41***	0/47***	1

*** p<0/001,

*p<0/05

Checking the default of data normality by skew and elongation values in the range 2 and -2 showed normality

the presence of data from all research variables. In addition, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values for all research variables was between 0.04 and 0.06. All of these values were insignificant ($p > 0.05$) and indicated that the data of these variables were normal. Inflation variance values for predictor variables, adaptive and maladaptive strategies, cognitive emotion regulation and marital adjustment was not greater than (1/08-1/25). Also, all tolerance values for these variables were in the range of zero and one (0/80-0/92). Therefore, there is no multiple line between predictor variables. Also Durbin-Watson statistic values for forecasting marital satisfaction (1/85) were assessed less than 4 through the variables in the proposed model, which indicates the establishment of hypothesis, error independence for the above variables.

To examine whether marital adjustment plays a mediating role in the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction in women, a pattern was designed. Because the general indicators showed that the original proposed model did not fit, it was decided to make reforms of initial pattern and re-examine its fit.

Finally, the pattern in Figure 1 was approved with a good fit. General indicators of the revised proposed model have the desired standards and their values indicated a good fit of this pattern (Table 3).

Table 3. Goodness-of-Fit index the proposed model

CFI	AGFI	GFI	RMSEA	χ^2/df
0/99	0/93	0/99	0/06	1/56

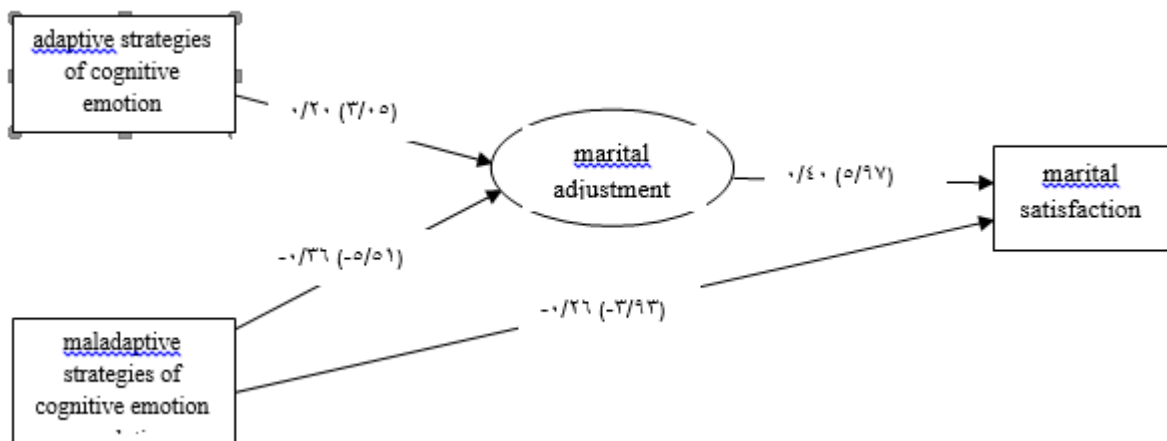


Figure (1) Final modified and approved template

(Path coefficients and values -t in brackets-)

All these coefficients are significant at the level of 0.05

In the diagram 1, there are values of the path coefficient and their corresponding t for each of the causal paths from the exogenous variables to the mediating variable and endogenous, and from the mediating variable to the endogenous variable. These coefficients indicate the relative strength of each path. Based on the information presented in the diagram 1 coefficient of path of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies to marital adjustment is 0.20. coefficient of

path is positive and weak, but according to statistical test (t) is significant ($t= 3/05$, $p<0/05$). Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies to marital adjustment is -0.36 which is a negative and moderate path coefficient, and is statistically significant based on t-test ($t=-5/51$, $p<0/05$). The coefficient of marital adjustment to marital satisfaction is 0.40, which is a positive and moderate path coefficient and is significant based on t-test ($t=-5/97$, $p<0/05$). Path coefficient of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies to marital satisfaction is -0 / 26, which is a negative and weak path coefficient, but is also significant based on t-test ($t=-3/93$, $p<0/05$).

Table 4. Path coefficients of direct and indirect effects and total in the approved pattern

Variables	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect	Variance explained
On marital satisfaction from:				0/31
Adaptive Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies	-	0/08	0/08	
Maladaptive Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies	-0/26	-0/14	-0/40	
Marital adjustment	0/40	-	0/40	
On marital adjustment from:				0/20
Adaptive Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies	0/20	-	0/20	
Maladaptive Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies	-0/36	-	-0/36	

* All coefficients are significant at the level of 0.05

Overall, based on the results of table 4, it can be said that one of the exogenous variables, maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies has both direct and indirect effects on the endogenous variable (marital satisfaction). But the other exogenous variable is adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies has only an indirect effect on marital satisfaction. In other words, the results of the above table indicate that marital adjustment has played a significant mediating role for the relationship between both exogenous variables and marital satisfaction. But from two exogenous variables, maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies have a stronger effect on marital satisfaction.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The aim of this study was to test the predictive model of female marital satisfaction based on the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies with mediation of marital adjustment. The first finding of this study showed that adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies with marital adjustment has a positive and significant relationship and maladaptive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation with marital adjustment has a negative and significant relationship. This finding is similar to the results of the Wilson et al. (22), Frankel et al. (23)

and Rostami et al' (24) studies. Criss, Morris, Ponce-Garcia, Cui and Silk (44), Cordova, Gee and Warren (45), Afshar, A, Aman Elahi (46), Valipoursheikhi and Mirederikvand (29) and saemi, Basharat and AsgharnejadFarid (47) also showed in their research that the ability to express emotions and using them in interpersonal relationships can lead to a greater degree of adaptation. When individuals have complete control over regulation process of emotion, the beginning of an emotion, maintaining, modifying and expressing different types of emotion, their adjustment in the interpersonal relationships will increase. In fact, the ability to regulate emotion helps people cope more easily with stress and problems come to terms with everyday life and experience more adjustment in marital relationship (15). Couples have different emotions in their relationships. When emotion is expressed positively between spouses, emotion regulation also occurs correctly and the intimacy that develops in interpersonal relationships strengthens the relationship (48,35). Cordova, Gee and Warren (45) also believed that the ability to recognize and use different emotions plays a big role in maintaining marital adjustment and this effectiveness happened through the impact of emotions over intimate relationships. People who constantly blame themselves or their spouse unrealistically, experience less marital adjustment. These people are constantly review negative emotions because of mental rumination and catastrophe. Constant attention to negative points causes negative emotions in individual and this reduces marital adjustment. In intimate relationships, the ability to explain and express emotions easily are very important (49). This is while many couples ignore the importance of feelings and emotions they experienced in their life together (50). Therefore, when couples have a higher power of acceptance and understanding each other, when they can focus on the positives, evaluate the negatives and problems and take action to solve them, have a plan, can control and change their thoughts, and as a result, they will experience more marital adjustment. So, it can be said that the use of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies, reduces the experience of negative emotions and as a result, marital adjustment increases.

In the second sub-finding of the study, it was shown that adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies are positively and significantly related to marital satisfaction and maladaptive strategies have a negative and significant relationship with marital satisfaction. This finding is different with the results of the study of Damankeshan and Sheikholeslami (51). But along with this finding, Najjari Al-Mouti, Tizdast and Farhangi (52)

showed in their research that there is a significant negative relationship between rumination, catastrophe and blaming others with marital satisfaction and people with these strategies experience less satisfaction. Undoubtedly in everyday life there is considerable potential for difficulty in emotion regulation (53) and in unstable and insecure relationships, couples used more controversial and avoidant strategies (54). Mazzuca, Kafetsios, Livi and Presaghi (55) cited to if spouses experience less negative emotions in their relationships, the more satisfaction couples will experience in their relationship. Other researchers have also stated couples who do not have the ability to communicate effectively experience a lot of dissatisfaction in their marital relationship. Lack of regulating and expressing emotions and establishing an effective relationship causes difficulties for couples, which is a factor in predicting marital dissatisfaction in the future (6). In fact, using less maladaptive strategies can reduce the risk of negative emotions in a relationship and increases marital satisfaction.

The third finding of the study also showed a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and marital adjustment. This finding is consistent with the results of Ahmadi and Dadashi (56) and Arefi, Rahimi and Sheikh esmaili' studies (57). Also Mahdipour Bazkiaei and Sedaghati Fard (58) Showed that there is a significant relationship between marital satisfaction and adjustment at home. Many experts believe adaptive couple processes such as behavior exchange, active expression of love and other positive emotions, communication to resolve conflict and aggression, being responsible about core tasks, mutual support, sexual satisfaction, shared beliefs and expectations, strong communication skills through Life events, by creating the ground for marital adjustment lead to marital satisfaction (59). Adjustment is a kind of impulses and stresses control in life to answer many complex and wide-ranging problems of life (60). In fact, adjustment in marital situation has an important role in the emotional and social life of couples and the lack of adjustment leads to marital dissatisfaction and affects all aspects of cohabitation (61).

The main finding of the study indicated that the overall research model fits. Maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies on marital satisfaction had both direct and indirect effects. But adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies only have an indirect effect on marital satisfaction. In fact, the lack of direct effect of strategies on marital satisfaction shows this relationship is established through marital adjustment. Consistent with this finding, Damankshan and Sheikholeslami (51) also in a similar study showed that adaptive and maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies do not have a direct effect on marital satisfaction. In Easazadeh's study (62), Najjari Al-Mouti B, Tizdast T, Farhangi (52) and Rick, Falconier and Wittenborn (17) showed that reception, positive reappraisal, positive refocusing and focus on planning have a significant ability to predict marital satisfaction but, in this study, the findings confirm the direct relationship between adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital satisfaction. In fact, these strategies can only affect marital satisfaction in indirect ways and by influencing and increasing adjustment. However, the findings of the present study showed maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies on marital satisfaction has a direct effect and less use of maladaptive strategies leads to a higher experience of marital satisfaction and more use of these strategies lead to a reduction in marital satisfaction. In other words, people with adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies will experience higher marital satisfaction by having more marital adjustment. According to the theoretically basis, the use of cognitive emotion regulation strategies by couples is one of the ways that can prevent the occurrence of any dissatisfaction in the relationship. On the other hand, less use of maladaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies leads to a reduction of experiencing negative emotions and increase the experience of marital adjustment in the individual and with the reduction of conflicts in relationships, the level of marital satisfaction increases (22). In fact, in relationships that couples are compatible with each other, control of negative emotion in one person leads to the prevention of negative emotions on the other side. In this regard, Abbott (63) acknowledges people who have maladaptive cognitive emotional regulation and are unable to maintain relationships with their spouses. These people in their married life experience less intimacy and more crises. Therefore, often when couples experience difficulties in their relationship lead the situation to more challenges by maladaptive strategies.

Overall, it can be concluded that more use of adaptive cognitive emotion regulation methods and less use of maladaptive strategies both increase the marital adjustment, which indirectly affects the experience of marital satisfaction. In fact, people who experience more adjustment and alignment with their spouse in life, they also experience higher satisfaction in the relationship. The results of this study showed that how much people have marital adjustment, they will be just as satisfied with their married life.

Ethical considerations

In this study, the ethical considerations are as follows: No need to register last name for participants, confidentiality of information and reporting results as a group, voluntary participation in research.

Research Limitations

Despite the practical results that can be deduced from the present study; This research also had some limitations. One of the limitations of this study is that the subjects were only women and it is better for both couples to participate in future research. Thus, the effect of gender on the variables of cognitive emotion regulation, satisfaction and marital adjustment would be considered.

Application of research

The findings of this study have important implications in the field of couple therapy and family therapy for therapists and counselors and could be used in specialized couples and family clinics, also premarital and divorce counseling would be benefited from these results. In addition, by training adaptive cognitive emotion regulation strategies could help couples to increase marital satisfaction.

Conflict of interest:

There is no conflict of interest between the authors of the study.

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This study been done by the authors in order to obtain richer information in the field of marital satisfaction as one of the important pillars in maintaining the family structure has. We thank all married women who accompanied us in this study and answered the questionnaires with Patience.

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