



Relationship between Communication Skills and Deterministic Thinking with Marital Satisfaction

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(Received 01 October, 2015, Accepted 18 November, 2015)

(Published by Research Trend, Website: www.researchtrend.net)

ABSTRACT: This study investigated the relationship between communication skills and deterministic thinking with marital satisfaction in Jahrom married in the years 2009-2015. This study is a correlation. A sample size was 122 subjects (61 couples) who were selected by simple random sampling. Using Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire, deterministic thinking and communication skills, the required data were collected and finally, were analyzed by Pearson correlation and regression test using SPSS-18 at a significance level of 0.05. Results showed that a negative correlation exists between marital satisfaction and overall deterministic factors, determinism in interaction with others, philosophical absolutism, determinism in relation to predicting the future, determinism in negative events and only, the third factors (philosophical determinism) and fourth (determinism with respect to predicting the future) were significantly able to predict marital satisfaction. As a result, deterministic thinking has been able to explain the marital satisfaction variance as 59% based on using all factors of deterministic thinking and 51% based on the total score. The deterministic thinking has also managed to explain the variance in communication skills as 29%. In addition, the communication skills has been also able to significantly explain the variance in marital satisfaction as 36%.

Keywords: communication skills, deterministic thinking, marital satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Emotional and mental health of the population depend on family health and family health depends on the health and continuity of relations between husband and wife. Psychologists and all those who do research in the field of family, considered marital satisfaction as the main cause of mental peace and development of the family members and care for factors effective in marital satisfaction. For example, Bradbury *et al.*, in his article, with the aim of studying the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction, examined the research conducted over a decade. They summed up the results of the investigation, and discussed the role of marital satisfaction in individual and family health and also the relationship between marital dissatisfaction and the high rate of divorce in America and several other countries.

Ellis believes that marital satisfaction is the feeling of happiness, satisfaction and pleasure experienced by the husband or wife, taking into account all aspects of their lives. Many studies have shown that the quality of the married relationship is the most powerful predictor of marital satisfaction. This studies has helped the development of communicational and behavioral theory. The sample can refer to theories by Gottman and

Markman. Also, research has shown that one of the most important problem making factors between husband and wife is impaired communication. Communicational problems are the most common ones among couples and more than 93% of troubled couples have expressed these problems as their main problem in their relations. Jacobson *et al.*, states that, according to the reports of a family counseling agency, 37% of couples had stated their main problem as a communication problem. It is obvious that when two unfamiliar people with various tastes come to live together, the durability and quality of their relationship depends on knowledge, skill and art of each of them in the consolidation of this relationship: this is truer about the marital life which is considered as the most intimate human relationship. Systematic family therapists refer to agreements and mutual externalizing as a condition of married life lasting. These theorists consider the subset of marital relationship as the first and foremost family system. In terms of them, communication patterns are created based on invisible agreements and rule over their mutual relations. Violation of communication patterns create a sense of disloyalty in the opposite side. The communication patterns has a little flexibility while being specified.

Communication problems are the central issue in the communicational approach to the family. These approaches analyze the conflict between the couple, not in the form of the problem of two, but as a dysfunctional relationship. Communicational family therapy theorists often believe that conflicts often pass a vicious cycle where trying to find a starting point in it is useless, because both parties believe what they say or do is due to what is done or said by other party. On the other hand, behavioral approaches to the relationship between marital stress and have communication skills and a useful research findings in this field have offered. On the other hand, behavioral approaches have emphasized the relationship between communicational skills and marital adjustment and studies presented useful findings on it. Rezazadeh research showed that a significant correlation exists between couple communication skills. In other words, we can say that the couples are similar in communication skills. Also, his research showed that the marital adjustment of couples with strong communication skills is more than couples with poor communication skills. Therapists following this approach use communication training as the main intervention. Research also shows the role of communication skills training on increasing marital satisfaction and raising a family performance in problem solving, communication, roles, emotional support, emotional involvement, behavior control and general family function. However, according to Feeney, in general results of therapy show that behavioral interventions, including training communication skills were useful in only 53% of agitated couples and could alter the quality of their marital relationship.

Cognitive perspective attribute the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of couples to their different way of thinking to actions and behaviors of their spouses. From the perspective of cognitive psychology, including Beck and Ellis, the root of many misunderstandings in marital life is in the couple's fanatical and irrational thoughts. Cognitive perspective considers the mental health or disorder to how people receive and interpret the world or in particular, the dependent environment. According to this vision, how experiencing reality is determined through perception. As the people perception of the environment and its reflection in the mind is closer to reality, relationships of people with the environment and how they react to events are more rational and closer to mental health. Without considering optimism or pessimism, attitude of people toward the world or themselves play a significant role in their vulnerability to mental stress. Knowledge through cognitive distortions can lead to bias in the evaluation and judgment on matters and events. Man's relationship with the world is not always straight and away from the influence of subjective factors, but the mental structures, the laws of perception as well as borders and limitations governing the mental interactions are involved in the process of mind

communication with the outside world and will lead to one of the common consequences in the social dimension, i.e. misunderstandings in interpersonal relationships. In addition, it leads to psychological disorders and problems in the mental aspect which manifests as most common disorders, such as depression and anxiety. These factors can interfere in meta-cognitive level, in the level of awareness and cold understanding (subjective belief) and in the hot understanding (heart beliefs) and emotions. Deterministic thinking is a kind of distortion that knows an incident equal to something else with certainty, it can be considered as the mother of cognitive distortions. Based on cognitive perspective, cognitive patterns determine the marital satisfaction rate. Some researchers consider one of the causes of marital satisfaction as the cognitive styles of couples and marital stability on their cognitive bias. According to Gottman *et al.*, perception (recognition), physiology and behavior are three basic foundations of continuity of married life and understanding of each other is very important. Buehlman and Gottman believe that couples' perception to each other can predict the future and their marital relationships.

Karney *et al.*, and Hornefer *et al.*, suggested that cognitive changes of each spouse could change the cognitive attributions, and increase marital satisfaction and feeling better of spouses. Marital relationship quality depends on cognitive triangle (general - sustainable - internal) of couples and exacerbating cognitive distortions before marriage and changing them into core beliefs has a negative impact on the relationship with spouse. So, how to process information determines how couples experience events and is effective on marital compatibility. Interventional research in Iran has shown that after changes in cognitive style, marital satisfaction will be increased. According to experimental and clinical research in the field of communication and communication skills and knowledge and cognitive distortions on marital satisfaction, this study aimed to examine the relationship between communication skills and deterministic thinking with marital satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is correlational research. The present study are all couples of Jahrom city married in the years 2009-2015. 61 couples were selected (122 people) as samples through simple random sampling from among couples who married at this interval in marriage registration office of the city.

Research tools

1. Deterministic thinking questionnaire: The questionnaire is made by Younesi *et al.*, and has 36 questions which is scored by a 4-point Likert scale method.

Thus, the higher the individual score on this scale, his rate of determinism is more. Scores range between 36 and 144. Also, this questionnaire has 5 factors, which include: 1) general determinism, 2) determinism in interaction with others, 3) philosophical absolutism, 4) determinism in predicting the future, 5) determinism in negative events. The questionnaire has an acceptable validity and reliability. Correlation of Beck Depression Inventory and deterministic thinking and convergent validity is equal to $r = 0.33$. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.82 to measure internal reliability of questionnaire and for reliability over time through a test-retest in a week ($P = 0.05$) equal to $r = 0.87$.

2. The scale of Enrich marital satisfaction: This questionnaire has been prepared by Salmanian in Farsi and has 47 closed questions. Answer to the questions is as 4 options (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). The basic form of this questionnaire has 115 questions and 12 factors. This tool can be used as a diagnostic tool for couples who seek advice and strengthen their ties. The questionnaire was first executed in Iran by Salmanian and its reliability was equal to 0.93. He reduced the number of questions to 47 in his study and its reliability was obtained to be 0.95 that include the dimensions and personality and communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationships, marriage and children, relatives and friends, religious and spiritual orientation.

3. Communication skills questionnaire: The questionnaire is presented by Navaran (1987) which was validated in Iranian society by Rezazadeh. The test

consists of two parts: verbal (18 questions) and nonverbal (7 questions). Scoring each question is based on choosing options never, rarely, sometimes, often or always and assigning scores is done from 1 to 5. Concurrent validity of this questionnaire is evaluated based on its comparison with two questionnaires of Locke marital relationship and fundamental communication questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted on 30 couples of students in Tehran University. Mean and standard deviation of the pilot study for men (mean 89.7 and standard deviation 10.3) and women (mean 90.7 and standard deviation 10.8) that if we assume a higher and lower standard deviation than mean as strong and poor, provided mean by Navaran is less than 5 scores higher than the obtained mean in this study. Notably, the mean and standard deviation of the final implementation of the test in the main sample is also very close to the results of the pilot study (mean 91.55, standard deviation 10.24). In this study, the internal consistency reliability according to Cronbach's alpha is obtained based on a sample of 32 couples as 0.79. Also, the test-retest reliability was obtained 0.84 within 6 weeks on 25 couples.

RESULTS

To test the hypothesis that the deterministic thinking significantly predicted marital satisfaction, multivariate regression analysis was used. To obtain more and accurate information and to determine the role of five factors of deterministic thinking to predict marital satisfaction, two regression models were implemented.

Table 1: Statistical characteristics and the coefficient of correlation between marital satisfaction and deterministic thinking factors.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Satisfaction	55.58	10.45	0					
First	21.97	6.63	-622 **	0				
Second	18.64	6.04	-656 **	893 **	0			
Third	18.28	5.26	-731 **	643 **	718 **	0		
Fourth	18.55	4.79	-599 **	595 **	566 **	714 **	0	
Fifth	18.39	4.61	-597 **	561 **	603 **	711 **	783 **	0

$P = 0.01$ **

Table 2: Regression coefficients of first model of marital satisfaction prediction based on deterministic thinking factors.

Variable	T	Beta	
First	-0.26	-0.18	1.12
Second	-0.13	-0.74	-0.51
Third	-0.78	-0.44	-3.56**
Fourth	-0.41	-0.21	2.74
Fifth	-0.55	-0.26	-0.25

$P = 0.01$ **

In the first model, table 1 used the score of five factors of deterministic thinking and in the second model of Table 2, as predictor variables. For this purpose, the correlation between the aspects of deterministic thinking and marital satisfaction score is calculated and shown in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, after controlling age, education, occupation, marital satisfaction and factors 1) general determinism, 2) determinism in interaction with others, 3) philosophical absolutism, 4) determinism in predicting future, 5) determinism in negative events, there is a negative correlation in determinism thinking. That is, the higher the amount of deterministic thinking in people, the lower the marital satisfaction will be. In other words, the relationship between the factors of deterministic thinking and marital satisfaction is in a way that allows multivariate regression to predict marital satisfaction from the amount of deterministic thinking.

As can be seen in Table 2, only the third factors (philosophical determinism) and fourth (determinism with respect to predicting future) are significantly able to predict marital satisfaction.

As can be seen in Table 3, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.81$) and the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.59$) based on the first model where the score of all deterministic thinking factors are used as predictor variables is used more than the same characteristics ($r = 0.83$, $r^2 = 0.51$) in the second model where deterministic thinking score is used as a predictor variables. So, the first model (prediction based on the factors) is more efficient in predicting marital

satisfaction and gives more accurate results than the second model (prediction based on the total score). As a result, deterministic thinking could significantly explain variance of marital satisfaction 59% based on the application of all deterministic thinking factors and 51% based on total score of deterministic thinking.

To predict marital satisfaction on the basis of their communication skills, regression method was used. For this purpose, first the Pearson correlation is calculated for communication skills and marital satisfaction and shown in Table 4.

As Table 4 shows, a positive correlation exists between the communication skills and marital satisfaction, which means the higher the communication skills of people, the marital satisfaction also goes up. In other words, the relationship between communication skills and marital satisfaction is in a way that allows regression analysis to predict marital satisfaction from communication skills according to Table 5.

As can be seen in Table 5, communication skills are significantly able to predict marital satisfaction and 36% could explain significantly the variance of marital satisfaction. To predict the couples' communication skills based on deterministic thinking, regression method was used. For this purpose, the Pearson correlation was calculated between the deterministic thinking and communication skills and shown in Table 6. As seen in Table 6, a negative correlation exists between the deterministic thinking and couples' communication skills.

Table 3: Characteristics of the regression fitting in two models of marital satisfaction prediction.

Model	F	R	R ²
First	25.62	0.813	0.592
Second	116.72	0.831	0.519

Table 4: Statistical characteristics and Pearson correlation coefficients between communication skills and marital satisfaction.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2
Marital satisfaction	55.73	10.43	0	
Communication skills	88.56	22.59	0.569**	0

P 0.01 **

Table 5: Regression coefficient of marital satisfaction prediction based on communication skills.

Variable	F	R	R ²	B	Beta	T
Communication skills	51.42	0.569	0.365	0.29	0.62	7.49**

P 0.01 **

Table 6: Statistical characteristics of Pearson correlation between communication skills and deterministic thinking.

Variables	Average	SD	1	2
Communication skills	88.13	22.52	0	
Deterministic thinking	92.65	23.14	0.588**	0

P 0.01 **

Table 7: Regression coefficient for predicting communication skills, based on deterministic thinking.

Variable	F	R	R2	B	Beta	T
Deterministic thinking	35.48	0.588	0.293	-0.49	-0.52	6.21

P 0.01 **

That is, the higher the deterministic thinking in people, the communication skills will be less. In other words, the relationship between deterministic thinking and communication skills is in a way that allows regression analysis to predict couple's communication skills from deterministic thinking in accordance with Table 7.

As seen in Table 7, deterministic thinking is significantly able to predict couples' communication skills. So that, couple's communication skills can be measured by the amount of deterministic thinking and therefore it could significantly explain 29% from the variance of communication skills.

DISCUSSION

The results show that the more specific the deterministic thinking is, it has more power to predict marital satisfaction. It seems that specific determinism which is related to philosophical absolutism and determinism in predicting the future are powerful predictors of marital satisfaction. So, data support the research hypothesis that prediction of marital satisfaction based on deterministic thinking. These findings are in line with results of research related to correlation of cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction with the research by Younesi and Bahrami, Klaff, Shapiro, Bradbury *et al.*, and Gottman *et al.*. The results of this study suggest that reducing the deterministic thinking in couples, it can be expected that marital satisfaction is increased.

On the assumption that the communication skills significantly predict marital satisfaction, Table 4 indicates that a correlation exists between couples' communication skills and their marital satisfaction, which means the higher the communication skills of individuals, the marital satisfaction increases and communication skills are significantly able to predict marital satisfaction that is consistent with communicational behavioral theory by Bornstein and Goldenberg, and the results of previous studies, such as Monjezi *et al.*, Yaclin and Karaban, Rezazadeh, Aslani and Moradi. The fact that communication skills are very important in marital satisfaction, shows that behavioral approach can be effective in increasing marital satisfaction and consequently, in other aspects of marital adjustment and family functions with an emphasis on training communication skills. As theoretical principles and the results of research done on the behavioral interventions notes the effectiveness of communication skills training.

The findings also suggest the Gottman opinion that believes presence a problem in marriage is not important, but how to deal with marital issues is important. Besides, a significant relationship exists

between the deterministic thinking and communication skills of couples. As Table 6 and 7 shows, a negative correlation exists between deterministic thinking and the communication skills of couples which means that the higher the determinism in people, the level of communication skills are reduced and thus marital satisfaction will be less and with defects and the rate of determinism in people is able to predict the couple's communication skills. Since, our thoughts about others determines our behavior and the same simple fact has unbelievable consequences, and since our hypotheses about our spouses and our relationship affects our life health, and if our thoughts and feelings are distorted, soon we experience marital problems. If the opinion of couple therapy experts about the root of the marital problem is investigated, many of whom have acknowledged that the roots are related to stubbornness, deterministic view to everything and too much emphasis on some subjective consolidated forms and the past behavior contracts. Since Feeney in his research showed that communication skills training increases only half of couples' marital satisfaction and has no effect on the rest, in connection with this problem it is necessary to mention two points: First, the effect of communication skills on marital satisfaction, providing the emotional bond or love between husband and wife. Otherwise, communication can have a little relationship with marital satisfaction. Second, communication skills alone cannot result in feeling pleasure and happiness in marriage and couples should be eligible for other characteristics. Klaff suggests that "if the agreement exists among experts and the general public, which the key concept of marriage is at stake of the stability of marriage and it is resulted from a good relationship, so therapists learn communication skills to strengthen married couples." But communication skills alone cannot be effective unless goodness and decisive virtues, such as limiting oneself, courage or bravery, love, true understanding, realistic expectations, right thinking and lack of cognitive biases in exist couples. Gottman *et al.*, in his longitudinal studies after 23 years of study on the incompatible and compatible couples, found that unhappy and irreconcilable couples experience differences, conflicts and serious disagreements in their interactions, but compatible couples experience ability and skills of negotiation, and conflict resolution. Therefore, such an opinion that presence of disagreement is destructive can make the natural conflicts and quite normal disagreements as a kind of stress, conflict and the fundamental problem and provide a context for dealing with problem with irrational interpretations.

The high correlation of these two variables shows when people are disagree, and this mentality is active in them that marriage is unsatisfactory and they or their spouses have serious objection, while we know disparity has always existed in all human relationships. So accepting it and correcting the false belief causes people to announce their disagreement and opposition with spouse practices, actions, decisions, thoughts and attitudes openly and without feeling guilty. Such an explicit statement without believing that it destroys the relationship makes the couple to explicitly and honestly express their views, tastes, desires and needs and inform each other about their position in lives. Then the other person with the right information and knowledge is able to take effective steps in satisfying the needs and considering others' view.

Finally, we conclude that the more specific the deterministic thinking, there will be higher power to predict marital satisfaction in couples. It seems that specific determinism related to philosophical absolutism and determinism in predicting the future are strong predictors for marital satisfaction. Also, a positive correlation exists between the communication skills and marital satisfaction, and in addition, the deterministic thinking is significantly able to predict communication skills in couples. So, to prevent family problems, it is suggested in the consultation prior to the marriage, to examine the couple deterministic thinking and communication skills and try to resolve possible problems in the field.

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