Investigating the simple and multiple correlation of emotional regulation with marital forgiveness and family efficacy in married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam

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Abstract

Introduction: Emotional regulation and marital forgiveness are among the factors that affect family efficacy. The present study was conducted to investigate the simple and multiple correlations of emotional regulation and marital forgiveness, and family efficacy in married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam.
Materials and methods: This is a descriptive correlational study. In order to conduct this research, 351 married female students were selected through convenience sampling method. For data collection, the marital forgiveness questionnaire, emotional regulation and efficacy scale were used. After collecting data, they were analyzed by SPSS software, Pearson correlation and multivariate regression.
Results: there is a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and family efficacy among married female students of Islamic Azad University ($r = 0.49$, $P = 0.001$). Also, there was a significant positive relationship between marital forgiveness and family efficiency in married female students of Islamic Azad University ($r = 0.44$, $P = 0.001$). In addition, the regression of the prediction of the efficacy of the students' family is significant regarding the variables of marital forgiveness and emotional regulation, so that the variables together predict 29% of the variance of the criterion variable (family efficacy in students).
Conclusion: Marital forgiveness and emotional regulation are effective in family efficacy in married female students. Educational authorities and activists should pay attention to the role of marital forgiveness and emotional regulation, and apply the results of the present study.

Keywords: Marital forgiveness, Emotional regulation, Family efficacy, Students, Married

Introduction

Family is the most primitive and the most comprehensive social institution in the world. This shows that family formation is one of the most basic and natural needs of man (1). In recent years, the family system has faced numerous challenges due to cultural, social, industrial, scientific and value developments (2). According to the report of the National Organization for Civil Registration (2013), the ratio of marriage and divorce in Iran was 9.8 in 2004, 8.3 in 2006, 8 in 2008, 6.5 in 2010, 5.5 in 2012 ,and 5.4 in the first 9 months of 2013. The ratio of marriage and divorcewas in France (53.2), Russia (52.6), Germany (48.8), Canada (46.3), Australia (41.2), Japan (35.8), China (21.2), Turkey and Jordan (320.3) (3).

The word emotion is used to refer to a feeling, thought, mental and biological state specific to that feeling and the range of one's desire to act upon it (4). Emotional adjustment is viewed as trying to influence the type, time and how you experience and express, change the length or intensity of

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behavioral, empirical, or physical processes of emotions. It is performed automatically or controlled, consciously or unconsciously, through the use of emotion regulation strategies including reappraisal, rumination, self-expression, avoidance, and inhibition (5). Emotion regulation is defined as the internal and external processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially intense and transient emotions, to achieve one's goals (6-8). Evidence suggests that emotional regulation is associated with success or failure in different areas of life and plays an important role in our adaptation to stressful life events (9).

Marriage is at the core of the family system and its disruption poses a serious threat to family survival (10). Forgiveness is a reaction that allows the relationship to continue despite mistakes, betrayals or failures (11). Forgiveness helps couples deal with existing problems and prevent them from happening in the future (12). Therefore, forgiving behaviors can facilitate personal and interpersonal growth by making positive changes in the dynamics of marital relationships (13). A person's satisfaction with marriage is considered as one's satisfaction with the family and satisfaction with the family is the meaning of life satisfaction, thus facilitating the growth and excellence of society and its material and spiritual development (14). Forgiveness is defined in various ways. In one of the most valid definitions, forgiveness is seen as positive interpersonal and social change versus a mistake within the interpersonal domain. This definition refers to changes that can only include a decrease in negative sensitivity or include a decrease in negative emotions along with an increase in positive emotions (15).

Family efficiency refers to the adherence of its members to religious beliefs and following Islamic rights and ethics. This provides the ground for discovering their abilities in cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions (16). Family efficacy has a wide range of psychological and spiritual factors, each of which can somehow enhance or weaken it (17). There are numerous factors affecting family efficiency. It is necessary to introduce and train the family efficiency indicators at the national and international levels and identify the areas for its enhancement or weaken its efficiency to address the traumatic factors and protect the national and religious identity of the family system. These factors address a range of psychological, social, cultural, economic, physical, and spiritual issues, each of which can somehow enhance or weaken the family's efficiency (18). The family efficiency in fulfilling its duties is a good indicator for measuring individuals' efficiency in the community. The health of a society in which an increasing number of families with disorders is under threat because family dysfunction causes problems in its system and, if the problems escalate, they lead to family collapse (19). The aimed of this study was the relationship between emotion regulation and marital forgiveness with family efficacy in married female students of Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch.

Materials and methods

Population, sample and sampling method

The statistical population included all the married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam Branch studying at college in 2017-2018. 351 students were selected using a random sampling method. Participants were assured of adhering to ethical principles regarding the confidentiality of information. Therefore, they completed the questionnaires with satisfaction in a quiet environment without mentioning personal details.

Method

The present study had a correlational design through structural equation modeling,

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which is a multivariate correlation method. This method can investigate the direct and indirect effects of variables on the assumed pattern. Structural equation modeling can investigate the causal structure between a set of variables. This model allows the researcher to determine the relationships between a set of variables and to assume the causal effect of the variables on each other and to examine the fitness of the hypothesis.

Instrumentation

Three different instruments were used in this study as follow:

Heartland forgiveness scale (HFS)

The instrument is a self-report pencil-paper scale developed by Thompson et al. (20) and has 18 items consisting of three subscales of forgiveness of self (items 1 to 6), the forgiveness of others (items 7 to 12) and forgiveness of situation (items 13 to 18). The items are scored on a 7-point scale from 1 (almost always false) to 7 (almost always correct) by the subjects. The overall forgiveness scale is also calculated from the sum of the subscale scores. Nine of these 18 items (2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17) are scored reversed. Thompson et al.'s findings for calculating test-retest reliability with a 3-week interval for the student sample (193 subjects) were reported to be 0.83, 0.72, 0.73, and 0.77, respectively. For the non-student sample (57 subjects) with a 9-month interval, the overall score was 0.77 and ranged from 0.66 to 0.70 for the subscales. The present scale also had acceptable validity.

Emotion regulation questionnaire

This questionnaire is a 36-item self-assessment tool. In this questionnaire, one is asked to respond to threatening experiences and stressful life events that they have just experienced by answering five questions that assess emotion control strategies. This questionnaire applies to the clinical and normal community. Numerous studies have been done on this questionnaire, all of which confirm the validity and reliability of this questionnaire (21). To get points for each dimension, add up the sum of the points of questions for that dimension. To get the overall score of the questionnaire, sum up the scores of all the questions. Questionnaire scoring is based on the Likert scale as follows: Never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always(5). Cronbach's alpha reliability and test-retest reliability coefficients (with 4 weeks interval) were 0.88 and 0.81 for total factor and 0.63 to 0.89 and 0.71 to 0.85 for sub-scales based on the sequence of dimension, respectively.

Family efficacy questionnaire (S.FEQI)

The questionnaire of family efficacy was developed by Safourai Parisi. The questionnaire has 79 questions that are rated as 4 items (very low, low, high and very high). The content of the questions in this questionnaire is taken from religious sources and it measures the characteristics, qualities, and ethical virtues of family members that influence the optimal functioning and efficiency of the family. This factor corresponds to the ethical index of the efficient family in religious resources. After executing an efficient Family Assessment Questionnaire and scoring it, Safourai used factor analysis method with varimax rotation principal component method. To evaluate the validity of the shortened questionnaire and its components, the correlation between the scores of the whole scale and the components in the primary and shortened forms was used. For the whole scale, the correlation between the two forms is 0.99; in other words, 98% of the variance of the initial form can be explained using the shortened form (22).

Statistical analysis

Mean and the standard deviation was used to describe the data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the distribution

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of data (normality). Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the correlation between emotion regulation variables and marital forgiveness with family efficacy. Multivariate correlation coefficients were used to investigate multivariate relationships. SPSS software was used for data analysis.

Results

The minimum and maximum age of the subjects were 24 and 47 years, respectively (mean age of 38.79 and standard deviation of 4.62). Among the subjects, 164 (46.72%) had an associate degree, 173 (49.29%) had a bachelor's degree, and 14 (3.99%) had mastered. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of each of the variables of emotion regulation, family efficacy, and marital forgiveness. As shown in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of family efficiency, marital forgiveness and emotion regulation were 189.66 ± 44.58, 89.39 ± 21.08 and 108.82 ± 35.72, respectively. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normal distribution of data. The results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 indicates that the distribution of the main variables does not deviate significantly from the normal distribution, and the distribution of the research variables can be estimated as normal or near-normal, using parametric tests. Table 3 also shows the correlation coefficients between the variables of emotion regulation, marital forgiveness and family efficacy in married female students.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and family efficacy among married female students of Islamic Azad University (r = 0.49, P = 0.001). In other words, the higher the individual's score on the emotion regulation variable, the higher the score of the family's efficiency variable. Also, there was a significant positive relationship between marital forgiveness and family efficiency in married female students of Islamic Azad University (r = 0.44, P = 0.001). In other words, the higher the individual's score on the marital forgiveness variable, the higher the score of the family efficacy variable. Table 4 shows the multiple correlation coefficients between predictor variables (emotion regulation and marital forgiveness) with family efficacy in married female students.

As seen in Table 4, the regression predictors of family performance of married female students on marital forgiveness and emotion regulation variables were significant. Together, all variables predict 29% of the variance of the criterion variable (family efficiency).

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of subjects' scores on the research variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	Lowest Score	Highest Score
Family efficacy	189.66	44.58	103	259
Marital forgiveness	89.39	21.08	35	114
Emotion regulation	108.82	35.72	65	172

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values to evaluate the normality of the variables.

Variable	Statistics	Sig.
Family efficacy	0.576	0.351
Marital forgiveness	0.689	0.338
Emotion regulation	0.765	0.321

Table 3. Correlation coefficients of emotion regulation and marital forgiveness with family efficacy.

Variable	Emotion regulation	Marital forgiveness	Family efficacy
Family efficacy	1	---	---
Marital forgiveness	0.31*	1	---
Emotion regulation	0.49*	0.44*	1

*P<0.01

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Table 4. Multiple correlation coefficients of predictor variables (marital forgiveness, emotion regulation) with family efficacy in married female students of Islamic Azad University, Ilam Branch.

Method	Predictive Variable	R	R^2	F	P value	β	T	P value
Inclusion	Marital forgiveness	0.54	0.29	25.89	0.001	0.679	5.63	0.001
	Emotion regulation					0.586	4.23	0.001

Discussion

According to the results of this study, there was a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and family efficacy among married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam. Since no research has been conducted on this topic so far, no study has been found to compare its results with the findings of the present study. However, it can be asserted that there are behaviors that trigger people's emotions, including marital conflicts and family disputes that result from responding to individual differences and sometimes, it becomes so intense that feelings of anger, violence, hatred, jealousy, and physical and verbal abuse abound in family relationships, especially in couples, and appear in destructive and destructive states (23). On the other hand, research shows that a significant proportion of couples seeking treatment for their marital disturbances, experience difficulties in regulating their emotions in their marital context or other aspects of their lives (24).

According to Azizi et al. (25), one of the factors that influence couples' lives is emotion regulation. Evidence has shown that people with emotion regulation skills, that is, those who know and regulate their emotions well and understand others' emotions, are successful and efficient in different areas of life (26). On the other hand, Block et al., (2014) showed that there is a significant inverse relationship between emotion regulation and marital satisfaction (27).

Also, there is a significant positive relationship between marital forgiveness and family efficacy among married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam. The results are in line with the findings of Fincham et al. (28), Fincham & Beach (29) and Afkhami (30). In the Fincham study, for example, researchers began to understand the relationship between forgiveness and its value for maintaining emotional health, physical health, and their intimate and healthy relationships and found that forgiveness played an important role in marital relationships (28). Afkhami investigated the effect of forgiveness training on the rate of forgiveness of couples. The sample of this study included 30 couples referring to Shahriz counseling centers in 2007. They were randomly divided into experimental (15 couples) and control (15 couples) groups. The dependent variable in this study was the rate of couples' forgiveness, which was assessed by the Innerit et al. (2000) forgiveness questionnaire. The independent variable was forgiveness training that was set in seven sessions and taught to the experimental group. The results showed that forgiveness training increases the rate of forgiveness of couples ($F = 25.18$, $P < 0.01$) and improves emotional relationships between them (30). In explaining this finding, it can be said that forgiveness therapy is effective in solving family problems. Many studies have investigated the effectiveness of forgiveness intervention on different aspects of marital relationships, including the effectiveness of forgiveness intervention on marital conflict. In a study, for example, Fincham examined the role of couple relationships in enhancing their level of forgiveness and found that there was a relationship between quality of relationships and forgiveness, and empathy predicted men's forgiveness and responsibility documents predicted women's forgiveness (31). Also, Yip and Tse (2009) showed that forgiveness factors had a significant relationship with marital

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satisfaction (32). Zehtot Najafi investigated the relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction among couples in the city of Kermanshah. The study population consisted of all Kermanshah couples who had lived together for up to five years. The sample included 100 couples (100 females and 100 males). Research findings indicated a significant relationship between forgiveness and its subscales with marital satisfaction (33).

Forgiveness is considered as an effective variable in resolving marital conflicts and increasing marital satisfaction (34). Gordon et al. suggested that forgiveness is important in situations where marital commitments or relationship standards are violated (35). Since marital conflict is one of the prerequisites of separation and divorce, if the issue is not resolved in a controlled manner, the marriage ends in separation. Conflict resolution or conflict is an integral part of a successful relationship, and it can be said that suffering from marriage problems can probably exacerbate couples' conflict and hinder successful conflict resolution. Meanwhile, forgiving the other party for his/her committed violations and offenses are a powerful means of ending a disrupted or painful relationship and creates conditions for reconciliation with the guilty person. Therefore, forgiveness can have essential applications for continuing long-term relationships and even short-term interactions (28, 30). On the other hand, given that the subjects studied in this study, students, are among the educated and mainly young class of people in the community, the forgiveness method in marital relationships is more commonly used to increase family effectiveness as an effective way of interacting. The regression results also showed that the variables of emotion regulation and marital forgiveness explained 29% of the variance of the criterion variable (family efficiency).

Given that the present study was conducted only on married female students, this should be taken into account in generalizing the results because we had limitations in comparing the results of the current study with previous research. Our study population was students including married females.

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, there was a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and family efficiency in married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam. Also, there was a significant positive relationship between marital forgiveness and family efficacy among married female students of Islamic Azad University of Ilam. On the other hand, the regression predictors of family efficacy of married female students were significantly correlated with marital forgiveness and emotion regulation variables, which together predict 29% of the variance in family efficacy.

Based on the results of the present study, it is recommended that education be provided to create an appropriate context for improving the quality of marital life as well as the development of families based on the variables of emotion regulation and marital forgiveness in family efficiency. This can prevent the formation of shaky families and eventually divorcing couples because if couples have forgiveness in their lives, family efficiency will increase directly. Couples (married girls in this study) can also help to enhance their marital life and increase family efficiency by adjusting their emotions.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exists.

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