The Relationship between Coping Strategies and Life Styles with Marital Satisfaction of Employee Couples

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Abstract This study investigates the relationship between coping strategies and life styles with marital satisfaction of Bandar Abbas employee couples. Accordingly, 292 married employees of Bandar Abbas offices were selected by multistage random sampling. Research hypotheses were as follows: 1. coping strategies and lifestyle can predict marital satisfaction. 2. Lifestyle factors can predict marital satisfaction. 3. Emotion-focused and problem-focused Strategy can predict marital satisfaction. Lifestyle questionnaire, Bellinger and Mouse coping styles questionnaire and Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire were used to collect the data. Multiple regression analysis was used in order to analyze data. The results showed that the life style and coping styles factors explain 48.5% of the marital satisfaction variance. Lifestyle factors alone are able to predict 14% of marital satisfaction variance and problem-focused style explains marital satisfaction in a positive and significant way while emotion-focused style has not presented any significant explanation of marital satisfaction.
Keywords: coping strategies, lifestyle, marital satisfaction

Introduction

Forming a marriage and a warm and intimate family in which husband and wife are the main pillars, should be built upon an internal and emotional connection (the love and passion they have for each other) added to the necessities that encourage couples to get married. Lack of interest and intimacy in a family, is like building a house that there is no connection between its components (bricks) and they are indispensably (Ahmadi et al, 2010). Therefore, interest, affection and intimacy are the most important foundations of a family.

Several factors lead to the survival of family's strength and permanency the most important of which in strengthening this social institution is couple's satisfaction of each other. Since any type of disorder, confusion or dissatisfaction between the couple not only affects their lives, but also the whole family and children and even their parents. In fact, marriage and divorce are not only individual matters, but are considered as social issues and namely are relevant to the families of the couple (Cox and Klinger, 2004).

Marital satisfaction is the adaptation between the expectations of married life and what is experienced in the life. Winch believes that marital satisfaction is the adaptation between the present status and the expected situation. Some experts define marital satisfaction as a function of the stages of the life cycle. There are different ways to define the marital satisfaction and the best definition is by Hawkins. He defines the marital satisfaction as: gratification, satisfaction and enjoyment by the husband or wife when they consider all aspects of their marriage (Mahoney, 2003). Satisfaction is an attitudinal variable, so it is considered as couple's personal attributes.

According to the mentioned definition, marital satisfaction is actually a positive and enjoyable attitude that couple has of different aspects of their marital relationship (Kluwer, 2000). It should be noted that several factors have been identified as affecting factors on marital satisfaction and some of these factors include: 1. Marriage age, 2. Marriage duration, 3. Children, 4. Academic harmony, 5.financial issues, 6.sexual issues, 7.relatives and friends, 8.religious beliefs, 9. Personality traits, 10. Understanding each other, 11.Communication skills, 12.Leisure time, 13.Responsibility (Hoffman, 2002).

Marital satisfaction is effective on mental health, physical health, success in work and social relationships and is one of the most important indicators of life satisfaction. Researches related to the family areas have always been focused on knowing different variables affecting the marital satisfaction and literature reviews indicate that various individual, cultural, social and economic factors can predict the marital satisfaction. Among the individual factors of marital satisfaction, lifestyle variable and stress coping strategies have been paid attention to but they require further investigation.

Lifestyle concept is derived from the individual psychology theory of Audler. He called lifestyle as the specified practices and procedures by the person in the life. He has used this concept as different interpretations like, self, personality, individuality, shaper of the creative activities of individual and the methods to deal with problems (Gouin et al, 2009). About the emergence of lifestyle, he believed that all human beings have an inferior feeling that try to come over it in an especial way. This unique method for the elimination and compensation of inferiority feeling creates people's lifestyle. Lifestyle reaches perfection in three periods and childhood is the time of forming five basic root of lifestyle. Lifestyle's roots include: health and appearance, social and economic status of the family, parental attitudes, family system and gender roles. The second dimension of lifestyle is attitudes toward responsibilities which evolutes in adolescence. These attitudes include: attitude towards the self, attitude towards others, attitude towards the opposite sex and attitude towards life. The third dimension of lifestyle is life responsibilities. Audler emphasizes three fundamental assignments in life that are: others, love and sexuality (Stein, 2003). In general, research in the field of cognitive-behavioral psychology about stress, consider coping strategies as a mental adjustment. Since selecting the appropriate response to stress reduces the effects of stress on mental health and leads to mental adjustment (Brown et al, 2002). Therefore, people use different strategies to cope with stress. Choosing appropriate coping strategy against stress can reduce the effects of mental pressures on mental health and consequently lead to individual and interpersonal adjustment (Gouin et al, 2009). Accordingly, coping strategies can directly affect the interactions of couples and their level of satisfaction in interpersonal communication, especially in the family and in relationships between couples.

It must be understood that couples are different in various situations in terms of perception and encountering with a variety of events and conflicts which is related to their personality traits (Stein, 2003).

With regard to the above points, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between lifestyle and coping strategies with marital satisfaction.

Methodology

This research was conducted in a manner of correlation. The statistical population of the study included Bandar Abbas employee couples. In this study, the multistage sampling was used that is

one of the probable sampling methods. The sample size for this study was considered 300 people due to the Cochran formula.

In this study, the following tools were used to collect data related to the variables.

Life Style Questionnaire (LSQ)

The questionnaire was created to evaluate lifestyle. Life Style Questionnaire (LSQ) has 70 Likert scale questions that are scored as always (3), often (2) sometimes (1), and never (0). The questionnaire consists of 10 items including: 1. Physical health, 2. Sports and wellbeing, 3.nutrition and weight control, 4. disease prevention, 5. Mental health, 6. spiritual health, 7. social health, 8. avoid drugs, narcotics, and Alcohol, 9. Accidents' prevention, 10. environmental health. The high score in each component and the total lifestyle questionnaire is the indicative of appropriate lifestyle.

Based on the results of the implementation of factor analysis, 10 factors were extracted with equity greater than one that altogether determines 46.22% of the total variance of lifestyle. The correlation of lifestyle questionnaire's factors was calculated with a scale of psychological well-being and all the studies have shown that there is a significant positive correlation between the lifestyle and psychological well-being of people. These results have confirmed the construct validity of lifestyle questionnaire as a multi-dimensional means for assessing and measuring the lifestyle.

Test-retest and internal consistency methods were used in order to test the reliability of the questionnaire. In the internal consistency method, Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated between lifestyle factors and the whole questionnaire which are ranged from 0.76 to 0.89. Retest reliability coefficients are ranged from 0.84 to 0.94. In the present study, the reliability of lifestyle questionnaire was 0.72 based on Cronbach alpha.

Coping Response Inventory (CRI)

Coping Response Inventory (CRI) was made by Bellinger and Mouse (1981) to study the way people respond to stressful events. This scale consists of 19 questions. While completing the questionnaire, the people were asked to remind a stressful event or crisis which they have faced recently and answer the questions based on how they came over it. Options for each of the test questions were adjusted based on a Likert scale from zero (never) to three (always). In other words, a four-point scale of always, often, sometimes and never is been used and the subject will be scored based on the option that he chooses between zero to 3. The questionnaire includes two methods of problem-focused coping with 8 sentences and   with 11 sentences. The maximum score for a subject is 57 including a maximum of 33 scores for problem-focused coping and the maximum of 24 scores for emotion-focused coping methods.

External reliability of the questionnaire was reported as 0.78. In Iran, the reliability of the test was calculated by Poorshahbaz (1993) using classification and the Spearman - Brown method and the reliability coefficient was reported as 0.78. Also, Husseini Ghadamgahi (1997) has reported 0.79 for the total score of reliability. The reliability of the subscale of problem-focused coping is 0.93 and for the subscale of emotion-focused coping is 0.65. In the present study, Cronbach alpha for subscale of problem-focused and emotion-focused were 0.79 and 0.78 respectively and total score of the scale was 0.71.

Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire

Enrich scale includes a general measurements of marital relationship including ideal distortion, marital satisfaction, personal issues, relationships, conflict resolution, financial management,

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leisure activities, sexual relations, children, parenting, family and friends, egalitarian roles for women and man, religious orientation, couples' solidarity and marital changes. The original version of the test has 115 questions that many of its shorter forms were extracted due to its length. In the present study, 47-question form was used. Scoring the questionnaire is in the form of quite disagree, disagree, no idea, agree and completely agree that is given a score of 1 to 5. Scoring some of the questions is done in reverse order. The maximum score of the subjects in the questionnaire is 235 and a high score in the questionnaire is the sign of marital satisfaction. This questionnaire has been standardized in Iran. The average of the obtained scores is 50 and standard deviation is 10.

Olson et al. (1992) calculated the reliability of the questionnaire in the range from 0.48 to 0.90. the reliability of the questionnaire 0.94 for men and 0.94 for women and also 0.94 for the entire sample and for its subscales in a range from 0.50 to 0.87 by retest method. In this study, marital satisfaction questionnaire reliability was obtained 0.88 based on Cronbach alpha. The statistical method of this survey was multivariate for the calculation of Pearson correlation coefficient and regression.

Results

In this part, descriptive information related to demographic variables of the subjects is presented in the form of tables and graphs. The above table represents statistical indices for the obtained values from the variables used in the study, the average and the standard deviation of which is presented.

Multivariate regression tests were used to see whether the components of coping styles can predict marital satisfaction. Regression analysis showed that about 36% of the criterion variance was explained by the general studied model. Statistical variance analysis test was used to determine the significance of the calculated R^2 and F value equals to 25.75 which is meaningful in 0.05. As it can be seen from the table 2, this model explains 36% of the marital satisfaction variance. As it can be seen in the table 3, the presented model is significant due to the F=25.75 and P<0.05.

As it can be seen in the table 4, T-test was used to test the significance of the calculated β coefficients. The results show that the problem-focused style predicts marital satisfaction in a significant and positive way. But emotion-focused style is not significant.

Multivariate regression tests were used to see whether the predicting components of the study can predict marital satisfaction. Regression analysis showed that about 14% of the criterion variance was explained by the general studied model. Statistical variance analysis test was used to determine the significance of the calculated R^2 and F value equals to 2.117 which is meaningful in 0.05. As it can be seen from the table 5, this model explains 14% of the marital satisfaction variance. As it can be seen in the table 6, the presented model is significant due to the F=2.117 and P<0.05.

As it can be seen in the table 7, T-test was used to test the significance of the calculated β coefficients. The results show that mental health and spirituality predict marital satisfaction in a significant and positive way. But other components do not present a significant predict.

Multivariate regression tests were used to see whether the predicting components of the study can predict marital satisfaction. Regression analysis showed that about 48.5% of the criterion variance was explained by the general studied model. Statistical variance analysis test was used to determine the significance of the calculated R^2 and F value equals to 6.089 which is meaningful in

0.05.

As it can be seen from the table 8, this model explains 48.5% of the marital satisfaction variance. As it can be seen in the table 9, the presented model is significant due to the F=6.089 and P<0.05. As it can be seen in the table 10, T-test was used to test the significance of the calculated β coefficients. The results show that mental health and spirituality components related to lifestyle and problem-focused style predict marital satisfaction in a significant and positive way and emotion-focused style predicts it in a significant and negative way. Other components are not significant.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for scores of criterion and predicting variables

variable	number	mean	Standard deviation
Marital satisfaction	292	148.15	13.45
problem-focused coping	292	22.48	4.66
emotion-focused coping	292	15.76	3.55
lifestyle	292	148.10	24.41

Table 2: the summary of regression model for the predicting variables of the research

	R	R square	adjusted R square
model	0.609	0.371	0.364

Table 3. The statistical results of variance analysis to test the significance of the presented model

model	Sum of squares	df	The mean square	F	Sig.
regression	154130.316	2	77065.157	25.75	0.001
remained	261539.764	290	1327.613		
total	415670.080	292			

Table4. B coefficients and t values and significance level for the coping styles variable in the marital satisfaction model (multivariate regression by simultaneous entry method)

sources	B	β	t	Level of significance
fixed	164.276		5.518	0.001
problem-focused coping	2.416	0.631	9.241	0.001
emotion-focused coping	0.225	0.042	0.611	0.542

Table 5. The summary of the regression model for the lifestyle components

	R	R square	adjusted R square
model	0.445	0.198	0.142

Table 6. The statistical results of variance analysis to test the significance of the presented model

model	Sum of squares	df	The mean square	F	Sig.
regression	3687.340	10	368.734	2.117	0.023
remained	48954.725	281	174.216		
total	52642.065	291			

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Table 7. B coefficients and t values and significance level for the lifestyles components in the marital satisfaction model (multivariate regression by simultaneous entry method)

sources	B	β	t	Level of significance
Fix value	130.361		26.612	0.001
Physical health	0.114	0.026	0.323	0.747
exercise	-0.352	-0.105	-1.365	0.173
nutrition	0.388	0.097	1.264	0.207
prevention	0.355	0.085	0.820	0.413
Mental health	0.160	0.338	3.358	0.004
spirituality	0.198	0.447	3.465	0.002
Social health	0.490	0.133	1.325	0.186
Avoid narcotics	-0.074	-0.020	-0.664	0.831
Preventing accidents	-0.236	-0.061	-0.664	0.507
Environmental health	0.493	0.112	1.264	0.207

Table 8. The summary of the regression model for the lifestyle components

	R	R square	adjusted R square
model	0.813	0.661	0.485

Table 9. The statistical results of variance analysis to test the significance of the presented model

model	Sum of squares	df	The mean square	F	Sig.
regression	12387.776	12	884.841	6.089	0.001
remained	40254.289	279	145.322		
total	52642.065	291			

Table 10. B coefficients and t values and significance level for the predicting component variables in the marital satisfaction model (multivariate regression by simultaneous entry method)

sources	B	β	t	Level of significance
Fix value	150.667		18.165	0.000
Physical health	0.708	0.160	1.337	0.182
exercise	0.398	0.119	1.742	0.458
nutrition	0. 818	0.204	1.434	0.153
prevention	0.822	0.197	0.507	0.133
Mental health	0.218	0.152	2.399	0.003
spirituality	0.556	0.133	3.977	0.001
Social health	0.830	0.266	1.549	0.123
Avoid narcotics	-0.010	-0.003	-0.020	0.984
Preventing accidents	0.412	0.107	0.742	0.459
Environmental health	0.771	0.175	1.369	0.172
problem-focused style	8.324	0.409	6.988	*0.001
Emotion-focused style	-2.747	-0.110	-1.969	*0.05

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between coping styles and lifestyle with marital satisfaction. Coping styles can predict marital satisfaction. Multivariate regression was

used to test the hypothesis and the results showed that coping styles can predict 36% of the marital satisfaction variance and problem-focused coping style is able to explain marital satisfaction positively and significantly. Lifestyle factors can predict marital satisfaction. Multivariate regression was used to test the hypothesis and the results showed that lifestyles can predict 14% of the marital satisfaction variance and mental health and spirituality components are able to explain marital satisfaction in a positive and significant way. Stein (2003) believes that lifestyle changes are the move to a new purpose in life. Accepting spouse's tastes and behaviors and in other words, showing acceptable behavior from him can provide the ground for reconciliation between the spouses. The Improvement of interpersonal attitudes can lead to personal satisfaction and improvement of social relations. This is the goal that personal psychology and lifestyle changes method Follow. Stein (2003) showed that the couple's appropriate lifestyle based on cooperation and common goals can guide to a satisfying life. Lifestyle based on common goals causes the couples to put aside their selfish and unreasonable desires and develop the ability of mutual understanding by setting goals with high social tendencies and consequently increase their marital satisfaction and improve their relationship. Therefore, the consistency of the results of this study with previous researches show that lifestyle is one of the influencing factors on marital satisfaction.

Coping styles and lifestyle factors can predict marital satisfaction. Multivariate regression was used to test the hypothesis, and the results showed that the predicting variables can predict the 48.5% of the marital satisfaction variance and problem-focused coping style, mental health and spirituality explain marital satisfaction in a positive significant way while emotion-focused style explains it in a negative significant manner. Marital satisfaction is related to the joy, intimacy and pleasure of the relationship between the couples and indicates the desirability and happiness of marriage and marital life. Marital satisfaction is the personal experiences of marriage that can only be assessed and affected by the person's own self in response to the marital relationship pleasure as well as the needs and expectations which they acquired from the main families. Differences in the way of showing feelings in the main families form the marital expectations of intimacy and love differently in the couples. The results show that coping styles and lifestyles can predict marital satisfaction. Coping strategies are a set of cognitive and behavioral attempts of a person that is used to construe, interpret and modify a stressful situation and reduce the caused suffering. In the field of marital satisfaction and coping strategies, on the one hand marital satisfaction is considered as the result of choosing and using effective and appropriate coping strategies with change and stress in a mutual interaction and on the other hand, is the provider of a healthy environment in which the true cognition and assessment of the stressful situation is possible for choosing the effective and practical coping strategy. The field of family counseling has great importance in the role of coping strategies in the health of marital life. The individual uses cognitive skills with the use of problem-focused styles to solve the challenges of married life. Dynamism is known as the common characteristics of problem-focused coping strategies. Dynamism provides the person with the necessary facilities to deal with the stressful situation actively. This situation increases all a person's potential for positive coping and problem-solving and the likelihood of success.

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