



Life Orientation and Marital Adjustment among Parents of Exceptional Children

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A B S T R A C T

The present study seeks to examine the relationship between life orientations with marital adjustment among parents of exceptional children. This study is a correlative one. To collect data, a sample of 80 parents of exceptional children in Ghazvin was selected through random cluster sampling method. Tools used to achieve the objectives of the study were: Carver and Scheier's (1985) revised life orientation test and Locke-Wallace's (1959) marital adjustment. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were used using SPSS software. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between life orientations with the marital adjustment. As well as the factors of optimistic orientation and pessimistic orientation can predict marital adjustment up to 28%. Therefore, with an optimistic attitude to life, which is addressed in the form of life orientation, one can take steps to reduce the marital problems and increase marital adjustment.

Keywords: Life Orientation, Marital Adjustment, Parents Of Exceptional Children.

INTRODUCTION

Among all organizations and social institutions, the family has the most important, valuable and effective roles. The family is considered as the most natural unit of reproduction and the most pervasive social unit, because it covers all members of the community (Bott & Spillius, 2014; Smoley & Robinson, 2012). Family has the educational and social importance. Individuals come into existence by family, and society is also formed by individuals; so, family is the producer of human power and the passage of other social institutions and is considered as the most important principle and main institutions of every society (Becvar & Becvar, 2012; Gladding, 2014).

Marriage is the cornerstone of the family; marriage requires cooperation, empathy, love, kindness, unity, tolerance and responsibility. Even if the marriage takes place with the highest quality, it cannot guarantee its stability and consistency over time (Rasouli & FARAHBAKHS, 2009). The important things in marriage are marital adjustment and satisfaction of marriage. Marital adjustment is the harmony and integration in achieving the common goals of life between the couple that results in life satisfaction with each other (Chen et al., 2007). Rani (2013) defines marital adjustment as a status in which there is a general sense

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of happiness, satisfaction with marriage and cooperation with each other in man and woman that lead to the development of couples in various dimensions and strengthen the mutual understanding of couples from each other. So when man and women attempt to achieve harmony and balance in various areas of marital life, marital adjustment is achieved. Therefore, marital adjustment is a dynamic process that may be evaluated at any point of time on a continuum of fully compatible and incompatible(Choi, 1987). In this manner, marital adjustment is a multidimensional concept which enjoys more objective characteristics than marital satisfaction. Also, marital adjustment is posed as one of the most important factors in determining the stability and permanence of the marital relationship(Gaal, 2005).

Although social and cultural factors play an important role in marital adjustment, the personal factors or characteristics that here are known as personality have higher and special effects. Overall, the evidence suggests that personality factors are effective experimental predictors of marital adjustment and stability, and the existence of relationship between personality factors and couples' marital yield has been approved using various longitudinal and cross-sectional studies(Bala, 2015; Darto, Djoko, Sukiano, & Sugeng, 2015; Delshad, Kolouie, & Ali, 2016; Safikhani, 2017). One of the effective personality factors influencing on marital adjustment is life orientation. Orientation toward life can be optimistic which means to have positive expectations for the outcomes, or pessimistic which means to have negative expectations for the outcomes Scheier and Carver (1985), and shows the adults' expectations of life events. Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, and Gruenewald (2000) argue that if the normal human perception is accompanied with a positive sense of self, control of the person and an optimistic point of view, even false about the future, helps people not only in the management of daily life, but also in coping with stressful and threatening events of life. Research shows that a high score in the life orientation test (optimistic orientation) has a positive relationship with hard working, general reputation, academic, athletic, military, occupational, political and family success, health and even lifetime and lack of emotional trauma(Peterson, 2000).

Several researches have been done in the field of life orientation; Henry, Berg, Smith, and Florsheim (2007) about pessimism in relations between men and women argue that couples who have pessimistic views are largely exposed to be captured by the excitement, the works of their spouses make them angry, frustrated and upset, and each thinks that her/his spouse inherently has defects that cannot be changed and always leads to misery. He also adds these couples have disorders in 73.5% of their interactions; 70.4 percent are irresponsible and 67.2 percent of them are unable to solve marital differences. In this regard, a research by McNulty and Karney (2004) showed that positive expectations have a positive and significant relationship with marital satisfaction and negative expectations have negative and significant relationship with marital satisfaction, so that 86 percent of couples who had marital satisfaction have had more empathy with others and their relations with others are more flexible and vice versa. Also Lavasani, Ejei, and Mohammadi (2013) in a study under the title of "the relationship between the meaning of life and optimism with mental well-being" showed that having meaning in life and optimism effect on mental health and mental well-being of people.

Also, the a child is the agent of generation progress and the birth of each child can affect family dynamics; parents and other family members should tolerate several changes in adjustment than the presence of a new member. On the one hand, the birth and presence of a

child with mental retardation in every family can be considered as an undesirable and challenging event that is possibly followed by stress, frustration, and feelings of sadness and despair (Seligman & Darling, 2017). Of the other negative consequences of the mentally retarded children for parents, the loss of self-esteem, having conflicted and ambivalent emotions, depression, humiliation and low mental health, the sense of guilt, poisoned psychological atmosphere in family, the existence of maladjustment and low compatibility, higher stress, great sadness and self-blame, having morbid thoughts, feelings of stress and chronic depression can be mentioned that all of these factors can directly and indirectly decrease the marital adjustment. In support of these facts, researches show that the parents of such children are more at risk of contact problems which sometimes cause separation or divorce between them (Jenaabadi & Nastiezaie, 2010).

The rate of the vulnerability of life quality in families of children with chronic and severe disabilities depends on environmental factors, economic status, social support, features of child and parents and strategies for cope with the problems (Vitaliano, Zhang, & Scanlan, 2003). A family that its child has severe limitations may evaluate its quality of life much more different than that of normal families (Payot & Barrington, 2011). Therefore, according the high importance that today's families consider for their stability and survival, individuals' health and well-being, the study of the problems that lead to the collapse of family and marital relations seem necessary. However, according to the high rate of divorce and marital maladjustments, there is a need to undertake research in this area, and also the parents of children with mental disabilities because of receiving several pressures and anxieties are more susceptible of anger and aggression and the negative effects of conflicts such as anger, hatred, sadness and fear in couples' interaction are associated with aggression and violence and this destructive and negative relationship can lead to decrease marital satisfaction and increase the likelihood of divorce (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). On the one hand, whatever the researchers sought a research that deals with the relationship between these variables in the framework of the parents of exceptional children population was not found. Thus the lack of research in this field is felt and the aim of the present research is to fill a part of this gap. Therefore, the researcher is going to answer this question that is there any relationship between life orientation and marital adjustment of the parents of exceptional children?

METHODOLOGY

The present study is of correlation type. The studied population includes all the primary school teachers of exceptional children in Ghazvin (Iran) in the academic year 2014-2015. A sample of 80 people were selected as the sample size using cluster sampling method. In this study, to analyze the data, descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, graphs, calculation of the mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics such as correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software.

1. Revised life orientation test (R-LOT): It was developed by Scheier and Carver (1985). The test includes 6 items that 3 items test the optimistic manner and the other 3 items test the pessimistic manner and the respondents represent their agreement or disagreement with each of the items in a multi-degree scale. This questionnaire had good internal consistency, and

Carver and Scheier reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal to 0.76 and test-retest coefficient equal to 0.79 (for a four-week period) for a group of students. Convergent and divergent validity of the questionnaire has been confirmed using locus of control scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985). This test was standardized in Iran by Kajbaf, OREYZI, and Khodabakhshi (2006). The results obtained based on the test-retest and Cronbach's alpha indicated high reliability of the scale. Concurrent validity coefficients between this scale with depression and self-control are 0.649 and 0.725 respectively. In this study, reliability was obtained equal to 0.78 using Cronbach's alpha.

2. Locke-Wallace marital adjustment test (LWMAT): it is a short self-report questionnaire designed to measure the quality of marriage reaction and is the most common tool of measurement used in the field. The test contains 15 items, and the range of scores on this test can be 2-158. Low scores show incompatibility and high scores show adjustment, and scores below 100 indicate stress in marital relations (Sanaei, 2000). This test has shown high validity by creating a clear distinction between spouses who have been adjustment well and those who have suffered from stress (Locke & Wallace, 1959). This test was translated by Mazaheri and was applied on a sample of Iranian couples; he reported the reliability and validity of this test by split-half method as higher than 90 (Mazaheri, 2000). In the present study, reliability of this scale was obtained 0.60 by Cronbach's.

RESULTS

Descriptive findings of life orientation and marital adjustment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive findings of the subscales of the research

Statistical Indicators Scale	No.	Mean	Standard error of the mean	Standard deviation
Life orientation	200	60.72	0.50	7.18
Marital adjustment	200	127.95	1.63	23.07

Table 2. Pearson correlation test

Statistical Indicators Variables	Pearson correlation coefficient	R ²	Sig.	Significance level
Life orientation	0.41	0.16	0.001	0.05
Marital adjustment				

In accordance with the table, there is a significant positive relationship between life orientation and marital adjustment ($P < 0.05$). The correlation coefficient between life orientation and marital adjustment is equal to 0.41. The determination coefficient of this relationship shows that 16% of the variance of the marital adjustment is due to life orientation.

Table 3. Regression results of life orientation factors on marital adjustment

Model	The sum of squares	df	The mean of squares	F	R	R ²	R ² _{adj}	Sig.
Regression	29827.97	2	14913.98	38.59	0.53	0.28	0.26	0.001
Reminder	76127.52	197	386.43					
Total	105955.5	199						

As shown in Table 3, it is observed that the significance value is less than 0.05 which indicates the significance of regression model, i.e., at least one of the predictor variables has a significant effect on criterion variable. In this study, the value of R^2 is equal to 0.28 meaning that the factors (optimistic orientation and pessimistic orientation) can predict marital adjustment up to 28 percent, and the reminded 72 percent is related to other factors. Given the significance of the whole model, it should now be examined which of the coefficients is not zero or, in other words, which variable or variables have significant effects on the model. For this purpose, t-test was used.

Table 4. Standardized and non-standardized coefficients, t-test of the variables entered in the regression equation

Predictor variable	regression coefficients		t-test	Sig.	Significant level
	non-standardized	Standardized			
Constant	83.73		6.13	0.001	0.05
Optimistic orientation	1.83	0.51	8.55	0.001	0.05
Pessimistic orientation	-0.69	-0.1	1.65	0.1	0.05

As the table shows the optimistic orientation variable with $\beta=0.51$ has a significant and positive impact on marital adjustment at the level of 5%, and the positive sign of this factor, in fact, reflects that with the increase of this factor the level of marital adjustment increases. As the table shows the optimistic orientation variable with $\beta=0.51$ has a significant and positive impact on marital adjustment at the level of 5%, and the positive sign of this factor, in fact, reflects that with the increase of this factor the level of marital adjustment increases.

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to investigate the relationship between life orientation and marital adjustment of the parents of exceptional children. A sample of 80 samples was selected by random cluster sampling method and completed questionnaires. Results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between life orientation and marital adjustment. It is inferred from these findings that the more the orientation towards life increases, the more the marital adjustment increases; the above finding is consistent with previous studies, including Poursardar, Poursardar, Panahandeh, Sangari, and ABDI (2013), Alibake, Ahmady, Farahbakhsh, Abedi, and Alibake (2012) and Strassle, McKee, and Plant (1999).

Orientation towards life means to have positive and negative view about life and also to have goal and purpose in life. The people's life meaningfulness may be due to their cultural, normative and religious values that lead the people to be optimistic. In our society which is a religious one, religion and faith is likely considered as the main element of the significance of optimism. Such people believe that life is meaningful. This belief is usually driven by their values, and the meaningfulness of life and optimism improve mental health and as a result decrease maladjustments and problems and thereby increase the individuals' adjustment with increasing the positive emotional states and decreasing negative emotions (Lavasani et al., 2013).

Other finding of the research showed that the factors of optimistic orientation and pessimistic direction can predict marital adjustment up to 28%. Also the factor of optimistic orientation has a significant impact on marital adjustment and being positive the sign of this coefficient indicates the fact that when increasing this factor the marital adjustment also increases. This finding is consistent with previous researches, including Bayrami et al. (2012) and Brillhart (2005). In this regard, we appeal to this fact that the optimism of being positive is not superficial; rather the optimistic individuals are problem-solvers and have plans for their activities and then act according to them. Therefore, we can say that optimists are more successful in solving the problems of their marital life; they do not act passively against the problems and have more positive attitude towards each other and problems (Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2008). In explaining this finding, Snyder and Lopez (2009) argue that, facing with a challenge, optimists have a stable and certain state and believe that adversities can be managed in a successful way and the difference in attitude toward adversities effects on individuals' coping strategies. Optimists use the strategies of changing controllable aspects of stressful factors, searching for information, planning and positive remodeling. While pessimists choose strategies of today and tomorrow off, withdrawal, denial and evasion or substance abuse which are ineffective strategies. Accordingly, the optimists use better and more positive coping strategies than pessimists. As a result, they have higher adjustment and strength against problems.

Limitations of this study include being cross-sectional the implementation of study, self-reporting tools of research, and the studied population that in generalization of the results we must be careful. Considering the effect of life orientation on marital adjustment, counseling centers can use the training of optimistic components of life orientation to guide young people towards a healthier life; and to increase the generalizability of the findings scope, this study must be repeated in a larger sample and among different groups and in normal parents.

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