

Self-Esteem as the Mediator Between Marital Satisfaction and Depression

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Abstract— The present study investigated whether self-esteem mediates the relationship of marital satisfaction with depression in married couples. Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm, Scanlon, Crow, Green, & Buckler, 1983), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), and Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD; Radloff, 1977) were administered on a sample of 100 couples. Linear and Stepwise Regression analyses were applied to analyze the data. The analyses reveal a significant predictive relationship of Marital Satisfaction with Self-Esteem ($R^2 = 0.062$, $F = 13.004$, $p < .05$) and of Self-Esteem with Depression ($R^2 = 0.256$, $F = 68.076$, $p < .05$). Moreover, Self-esteem significantly mediated the relationship of Marital Satisfaction with Depression ($F = 37.699$, $df = 2, 97$, $p < .05$).

Keywords- marital satisfaction, self-Esteem and depression

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present study, the mediating role of self-esteem between marital satisfaction and depression is studied. Self-esteem plays a vital role with either marital satisfaction or depression individually. Theories of self-esteem have highlighted the process of self-evaluation which refers to the value and fundamental enduring constructive and unconstructive stance for the self. This concept of self-esteem linking with marital satisfaction and depression has led researchers to study its mediating and buffering role between these two variables. Meditational role of self-esteem was studied and it was discovered that self-esteem plays a buffering role in the association between marital satisfaction and depression [6]. Receiving affirmation in a marital relationship has been related to higher levels of self-esteem [18]. Thus, healthy marital functioning can result in higher levels of self-esteem. It was found that individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to take the emotional risks in maintaining the relationship [12]. High self-esteem is also reported to have a significant association with interpersonal skills [2]. Researches show that self-esteem and depression varies inversely in a way that lowered self-esteem operates as a determinant in the onset of depression. Conversely, empirical evidences posit that depression is revealed to be the etiological factor behind low self-esteem. Relationship between depression and self-esteem in married population was investigated in detail in which they interact interchangeably [7].

To sum it up, marital satisfaction appears to be a very important factor in maintaining a healthy relationship between

the married couple. This can have a profound impact on either increasing or decreasing their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. However, few researchers are still trying to investigate whether marital satisfaction leads to self-esteem or vice versa.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a predictive association between marital satisfaction and self-esteem
2. There will be a predictive association between self-esteem and depression
3. Self-Esteem would mediate the relationship of marital satisfaction with depression.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample

Purposive sampling technique was applied on a sample of 100 couples (100 husbands and 100 wives) from various community settings of Karachi, Pakistan. Their ages ranged from 25-45 years with mean age of 33.37 years ($SD = 5.419$) for total sample; 31.05 years ($SD = 4.565$) for wives; and 35.69 years ($SD = 5.228$) for husbands, with a minimum educational qualification till High School. Couples who were married for less than two years, had no children, had a history of medical and psychological problems were discarded.

B. Measures

Semi-Structured Interview Form held information pertaining to Personal characteristics, Academics, Family history, and presence of Psychological and Medical problems. It was the first form to be administered.

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMMS) is a 3-item, 7-point likert scale. Each item ranges from 1 to 7, highest score indicates high level of marital satisfaction while lowest score indicates low level of marital satisfaction [17]. Total score ranges from 3 to 21. Cronbach's alpha for the KMSS as .84 with test-retest reliability as .71 [16].

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a 10-item, 4-point likert-type response format. The scores can range from 0 to 30, with the higher scores indicating high level of self-esteem and lower score indicating low level of self-esteem. The RSES has a two week test-retest reliability correlation of .85 and .88 [15].

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD) comprised of 20 items. Items 4, 8, 12 and 16 have reversed scoring. Subjects are asked to rate all the 20 items on a 4-point likert scale. The scores ranged from 0 to 60; higher scores elicit severe depressive symptoms. A score of 16 or higher in the early studies is identified as a cut-off point [13].

C. Procedure

Couples were approached by taking an appointment through telephone calls. Each couple was approached on the appointment date at their residential localities. Whole procedure was explained to them and confidentiality of their personal data was assured. The administration of research measures is done in the following sequence: Semi- Structured Interview Form, KMSS, RSES followed by a break of 10 minutes and lastly CESD. At the end, participants were thanked for their time and cooperation.

D. Scoring and Statistical Analysis

After data collection, KMSS [16]; RSES [15]; and CESD [13] were scored according to the standard scoring procedures. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, V-20.0) was employed to analyze the data. To test the hypotheses of the present study, Linear and Stepwise Regression Analyses were computed.

III. RESULTS

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF LINEAR REGRESSION WITH MARITAL SATISFACTION (MS) AS A PREDICTOR SELF-ESTEEM

Predictors	R	R ²	Adj R ²
MS	.248	.062	.057

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF LINEAR REGRESSION WITH SELF-ESTEEM (SE) AS PREDICTOR OF DEPRESSION

Predictors	R	R ²	Adj R ²
SE	.506	.256	.252

TABLE 3: STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS PREDICTING DEPRESSION FROM VARIABLES OF MARITAL SATISFACTION AND SELF-ESTEEM ON ENTIRE SAMPLE

Variable	Model Summary		ANOVA			Coefficient			t	Sig.
	R	R ²	F	Sig.	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient	Sig.			
Step I	R	R ²	Adj R ²	F	Sig.	B	SE	B	t	Sig.
Constant						23.628	3.03		7.808	.000
MS	.266	.071	.066	15.046	.000	-.648	.167	-.266	-3.88	.000
Step II										
Constant						37.662	3.26		11.53	.000
MS	.526	.277	.269	37.699	.000	-.364	.153	-.149	-2.38	.018
SE						-.905	.121	-.469	-7.49	.000

IV. DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis revealed that marital satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of self-esteem ($R^2 = .062$, $F = 13.004$, $p < .05$); self-esteem significantly predicts depression ($R^2 = .256$, $F = 68.076$, $p < .05$); when marital satisfaction was investigated in isolation explains 7.1% variation in depression, however this disparity augmented to 27.7% ($F = 37.699$, $df = 2, 197$) when self-esteem was inserted at step II in the equation. The results of the present study thus, reveal that self-esteem significantly mediated the relationship of marital satisfaction with depression. The partners, in our culture are expected to work on improving their marital quality. If the amount of love a couple expects from their partner doesn't fulfill their need of love and acceptance, their level of confidence will shake and their self-esteem would automatically decline. Such partners will find it difficult to maintain a harmonious marital bond.

With respect to marital satisfaction as the predictor of self-esteem, interpersonal relationships are of great significance in strengthening self-esteem [10]. Congruently, socio-meter theory [10] explained that self-esteem is a product of our interpersonal relationships and that it can be termed as a gauge or a meter that could examine the quality of people's interpersonal relationship. In a way that in a marital interaction, interpersonal communication plays a vital role in predicting self-esteem. Both self-esteem and depression has been studied extensively [9, 14]. Decreased self-esteem operates as a detrimental in the etiology of depression [3, 5, 11, 14, 19]. However, the direction of the relationship is observed to be cited interchangeably. Cognitive theories of depression [4] and learned helplessness theory [1] bestow negative self-evaluations as a root cause of susceptibility to depressed mood.

Hence, once self-esteem shakes, automatic negative thoughts about self-doubts flow in abundance. This can further give fuel to the depressive affect and self-worthlessness. Moreover, the mediating role of self-esteem can be further explained with reference to the Harter's two factor theory which argues that self-esteem originates from the interaction between the self-competence and social approval [8]. A dissatisfied spouse will have doubtful thoughts on his/her self-competence which reveals that depression is linked with the

negative evaluation of self-potential. If a person is surrounded with negative thoughts, this will lead to shadow his self-competencies with a darker tone, thus fueling depressive thoughts in him. This would lead to a lower level of self-esteem and would further damage the marital quality.

V. CONCLUSION

Self-esteem can play a vital role in strengthening the marital satisfaction in couples. These findings have implications for clinical interventions, especially for mental health professionals in our own Pakistani society. It would help them to formulate effective strategies by incorporating self-esteem enhancing interventions so that depressive symptoms could be eliminated in married couples.

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