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Role of Positive Metacognitions and Meta-Emotions in Marital Satisfaction

Rani Rashmi and Jaiswal Arun Kumar*

Department of Psychology, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith,
Varanasi 221005, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to examine the effect of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction. The study was conducted on purposively sampled 318 married couples (159 husbands and 159 wives) from the Chowk area of Varanasi city of India. The subjects were individually administered Hindi versions of: (1) Positive Metacognitions and Meta-emotions Questionnaire (PMCEQ-H) and (2) Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS). To elucidate the predictability of marital satisfaction by facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions and causative effects of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction. The data were analyzed by stepwise regression analysis with marital satisfaction as criterion and facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions as predictors variables, followed by 2 X 2 analysis of variance [2 gender (husband and wife) X 2 levels of facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions (high and low)] to delineate the main and interaction effects of 'gender' and 'levels of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions' on marital satisfaction. The results indicated PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2 substantiality predicted marital satisfaction. The ANOVA revealed significant main effects of 'levels' of PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2 on marital satisfaction. High than low scorer participants on PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2, displayed significantly higher indices on marital satisfaction. The findings indicated that positive metacognitions and meta-emotions assist marital satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Positive metacognitions and meta-emotions, PMCEQ, PMCEQ-H, Marital satisfaction.

***Corresponding author**

Arun Kumar Jaiswal

Professor, Department of Psychology, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith,

Varanasi 221002, India

Email; arunjais@gmail.com Mobile: 9415685860

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is the basic structure of life and it plays an important and dynamic role in maintaining an individual's psychological well-being⁶. One aspect of marital adjustment is marital satisfaction, is a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs of marriage to couple¹⁵. Marital satisfaction has been defined as a global evaluation of the state of one's marriage and a reflection of marital happiness and functioning¹⁰. Adaptive metacognitions play important role in self-regulatory functions². The adaptive use of object and metacognitive modes requires metacognitive beliefs of an agentic type that support identification of alternative pathways and flexible goal restructuring¹. Marital satisfaction affects many facets of human life as such as physical, psychological and emotional health. Numerous studies explored that trustworthiness, cooperativeness, agreeableness, extraversion, attractiveness, intelligence, wellbeing, adoptive coping, communication styles, humor and wealth^{3,12} and various cognitive processes like emotion, thinking process, cognition, coping as important predictors of marital interpersonal relations. Metacognitions and meta-emotions are one of the higher order cognitive process which directly and indirectly affect behaviour. Positive metacognitions and meta-emotions negatively correlated with perceived stress, maladaptive coping, maladaptive metacognitions, anxiety and depression and positively correlated with adaptive coping¹. Recently we have reported that positive metacognitions and meta-emotions lead to better marital adjustment in married Indian couples⁵. As such, it is expected that positive metacognitions and meta-emotions would also improve marital satisfaction in married couples. Following this perspective, (i) objective of the present study is to check the predictability of marital satisfaction as criterion (dependent variable) by 'PMCEQ-H1, PMCEQ-H2 and PMCEQ-H3' of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions' as predictors (independent variables) among married couples in addition to the correlational inferences the study is aims to examine (i) the independent and interaction effects of 'gender' (men and women) and 'levels of PMCEQ-H1' (low and high) of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction (ii) the independent and interaction effects of 'gender' (men and women) and 'levels of PMCEQ-2' (low and high) of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction, and (iii) the independent and interaction effects of 'gender' (men and women) and 'levels of PMCEQ-3' (low and high) of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction.

EXPERIMENTAL

Participants

A total of 318 married couples (mean age = 38.40 years, SD = 9.82 years) (159 husbands; mean age = 40.33 years, SD = 10.03 years; 159 wives; mean age = 36.47 years, SD = 9.24 years)

with at least Graduation Qualification from Chowk area of Varanasi city were purposively sampled for the study. The length of marriage varied from 2 to 40 years with average 12.55 years of married life.

Behavioral Measures

*Positive metacognitions and meta-emotions questionnaire-Hindi version*⁵.

Positive metacognitions and meta-emotions were measured by PMCEQ-H⁵, the Hindi version of Positive Metacognition and Meta-emotions Questionnaire (PMCEQ¹) was individually administered on the participants. PMCEQ is an instrument that assesses three factors of adaptive metacognitive beliefs: (i) Confidence in Extinguishing Perseverative Thoughts and Emotions; (ii) Confidence in Interpreting Own Emotions as Cues, Restraining from Immediate Reaction, and Mind Setting for Problem Solving; and (iii) Confidence in Setting Flexible and Feasible Hierarchies of Goals. PMCEQ-H is a 18 item instrument and it also measures above mentioned three factors but in a different order of factor loadings in the factor analysis i.e., (i) Confidence in Setting Flexible and Feasible Hierarchies of Goals (PMCEQ-H1), (ii) Confidence in Interpreting Own Emotions as Cues, Restraining from Immediate Reaction, and Mind Setting for Problem Solving (PMCEQ-H2); and (iii) Confidence in Extinguishing Perseverative Thoughts and Emotions (PMCEQ-H3). Each factor is measured by six items on a four-point response scale: 1 = *do not agree*, 2 = *agree slightly*, 3 = *agree moderately*, and 4 = *agree strongly*, and the responses were scored as 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The CFA has indicated that PMCEQ-H has acceptable and adequate model fit indicating good construct validity. The reliability coefficients (split-half and Chronbach alpha) of three factors of PMCEQ-H ranged from 0.65 to 0.80⁵.

*Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS*¹¹*)*

The KMSS⁹ is Hindi version of Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS¹¹) designed to measure marital adjustment and devised three-item inventory. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their marriage with their spouses and with their relationship. The inventory has been shown to possess a reliability of 0.93, only 0.01 below that of Spanier's questionnaire, and to correlate 0.83 with it (11), depicting that short questionnaire is of high face validity (surprisingly well in the field so far available).

Statistical analyses

Initially, Pearson product moment correlations were calculated between the facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions and marital satisfaction. Thereafter, step-wise backward multiple regression analysis was used to test if the facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions (PMCEQ-H1, PMCEQ-H2 and PMCEQ-H3) predicted participants' ratings of marital satisfaction.

Secondly, to assess the causal effects of facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction, the study employed a two-way classification of variables of 2 spouse (husbands and wives) X 2 levels of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions (low and high scorers) for studies on marital satisfaction. To achieve the objectives the respondents scoring below 1SD (low scorers) and above 1SD (high scorers) on the facets of PMCEQ- H (metacognitions and meta-emotions questionnaire) separately were screened out and their corresponding scores on marital satisfaction were analyzed. These overall considerations projected Two way analysis of variances (2 spouse X 2 levels of facets of metacognitions and meta-emotions separately).

RESULTS

The correlation coefficients obtained for facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions and marital satisfaction separately for husbands, wives and for the whole sample are given in Table 1. Results revealed significant and positive relationships between PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2 facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions versus marital satisfaction while no relationship between PMCEQ-H3 factor of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions versus marital satisfaction for husbands, wives and for the whole sample.

Table – 1: Relationship between PMCEQ-H1, PMCEQ-H2,PMCEQ-H3 facets of PMCEQ-H (the independent variables) and marital satisfaction (the dependent measure)

PMCEQ-H Factors	PMCEQ-H1	PMCEQ-H2	PMCEQ-H3
Husbands	0.314**	0.316**	-0.044
Wives	0.296**	0.298**	0.096
Whole sample	0.305**	0.308**	0.020

** significant at $p < 0.01$ level (2- tailed)

The results of step-wise (backward) multiple regression analysis (vide Table - 2) positive metacognitions and meta-emotions significantly predicted marital satisfaction. The results of the regression analysis indicated the three predictors i.e., PMCEQ-H1, PMCEQ-H2 and PMCEQ-H3 facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions) predicted a total of 12.200 % of variance ($R^2 = 0.122$, $F(3, 312) = 14.478$, $p = 0.01$) of marital satisfaction. It was found that PMCEQ-H1 significantly predicted marital satisfaction ($\beta = 0.190$, $p < 0.01$) as did PMCEQ-H2 ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2 are significant predictors of marital

satisfaction and PMCEQ-H2 had more impact than PMCEQ-H1 whereas PMCEQ-H3 had virtually no impact ($\beta = -0.095, p > 0.082$).

Table – 2: Predictability of marital satisfaction as criterion (dependent variable), by PMCEQ -H’ (PMCEQ- H1, PMCEQ- H2 and PMCEQ H3)as predictors (independent variables)

Dependent variable	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	df	F-ratio
Marital satisfaction	0.350	0.122	0.114	0.010	14.478**
Predictors: (Constant), PMCEQ -H3,PMCEQ -H1, PMCEQ -H2					

** Significant at $p < 0.01$

To elucidate the causal effects of facets of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions on marital satisfaction, initially mean \pm SD values of marital satisfaction over the levels of analysis- two levels of PMCEQ-H1, PMCEQ –H2 and PMCEQ –H3 (low and high scorers) are presented in Table – 3. ANOVA was executed on the scores of marital satisfaction and results revealed: (i) significant main effects of ‘levels of PMCEQ-H1’ ($F(1/ 141) = 24.835, p < 0.01$) whereas non-significant main effect of ‘spouse’ ($F(1/141) = 0.819, p > 0.05$) and interaction effect of ‘spouse X levels of PMCEQ-H1($F(1/141) = 0.445, p > 0.05$), (ii) significant main effects ‘levels of PMCEQ –H2’ ($F(1/ 136) = 15.219, p < 0.01$) on marital satisfaction, whereas, non-significant main effects of ‘spouse’ ($F(1/136) = 2.255, p > 0.05$) and interaction effect of ‘spouse X levels of PMCEQ-H2 ($F(1/136) = 0.067, p > 0.05$), (iii) non-significant main effects of ‘spouse’($F(1/119) = 0.088, p > 0.05$), ‘levels of PMCEQ-H3’ ($F(1/119)= 0.293, p > 0.05$)and interaction effect of ‘spouse X levels of PMCEQ-H3’ ($F(1/119)= 0.399, p > 0.05$).

Table – 3: Means and SD values over the levels of 2 spouse (husbands and wives) and 2 levels of facets of PMCEQ –H (low and high) for marital satisfaction (Ns are given in parentheses)

Levels of PMCEQ –H	Husbands		Wives	
	High	Low	High	Low
PMCEQ -H1	14.06 \pm 1.69 (36)	11.93 \pm 2.63 (30)	13.47 \pm 1.88 (43)	11.84 \pm 2.67 (32)
PMCEQ -H2	14.10 \pm 1.68 (39)	12.41 \pm 2.69 (34)	13.39 \pm 2.03 (31)	11.91 \pm 2.93 (32)
PMCEQ - H3	13.21 \pm 2.37 (38)	12.96 \pm 2.36 (26)	12.80 \pm 2.36 (30)	12.84 \pm 2.43 (25)

Mean comparisons revealed high ($M = 13.73, SD = 1.81$) as compared to low scorer ($M = 11.89, SD = 2.63$) spouses on ‘confidence in setting flexible and feasible hierarchies of goals’ (PMCEQ-H1) demonstrated significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction, as well as high ($M =$

13.79, SD = 1.86) as compared to low scorer (M = 12.17, SD = 2.80) spouses on 'confidence in interpreting own emotions as cues, restraining from immediate reaction and mind setting for problem solving' (PMCEQ-H2) exhibited significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction. However, low and high scorer spouses on confidence in extinguishing perseverative thoughts and emotions (PMCEQ-H3) sub-factor of PMCEQ-H did not differ significantly from each other on 'marital satisfaction'.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the regression analyses and analyses of variance complement each other and substantiate that 'confidence in setting flexible and feasible hierarchies of goals' (PMCEQ-H1) and 'confidence in interpreting own emotions as cues, restraining from immediate reaction and mind setting for problem solving' (PMCEQ-H2) factors of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions do contribute to higher marital satisfaction, however confidence in extinguishing perseverative thoughts and emotions (PMCEQ-H3) sub-factor had no significant effect on marital satisfaction. Indirect corroborative findings are available and it has been reported that positive metacognitions and meta-emotions lead to improved marital adjustment⁸. It should be mentioned here that marital adjustment has four subscales viz., marital consensus, marital cohesion, marital satisfaction and affectional expression^{13, 14, 9} and PMCEQ-H1 and PMCEQ-H2 factors of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions caused facilitated marital satisfaction facet of marital adjustment, and PMCEQ-H3 sub-factor had no significant effect on marital satisfaction facet of marital adjustment⁸ which support the findings of the present study. When positive metacognitions and meta-emotions or in other words adaptive metacognitions correlate positively with marital adjustment reverse can be assumed with maladaptive metacognitions, and in line with this assumption, researchers have reported that maladaptive metacognition beliefs, particularly beliefs about uncontrollability and danger significantly and negatively correlated with marital satisfaction⁴. Similarly thought control and resiliency respectively correlated negatively and positively with marital satisfaction⁴. PMCEQ-H1 has been found to be one of the main predictor of satisfaction with life⁷ and positive metacognitions and meta-emotions positively correlate with adaptive coping and negatively correlate with perceived stress, maladaptive coping, and maladaptive metacognitions¹. Available studies revealed that marital adjustment involves adaptive coping, positive affect and wellbeing, etc., and therefore, it can be assumed that presence of high level of positive metacognitions and meta-emotions may equip the couples with stress coping skills leading to better adaptation and wellbeing that may reflect in increased marital satisfaction. It can be concluded that presence of positive orientation

towards life and skills in an individual help overcome the hassles of married life leading to better marital satisfaction.

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