

Relationship between Irrational Beliefs and Marital Conflicts in Couples Based on Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Original Article</p> <hr/> <p>Article history: Received: 24-Dec-2016 Accepted: 21-Jan-2017</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Irrational beliefs Marital conflicts Rational Emotive Behavior therapy</p>	<p>Introduction: The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between irrational beliefs and marital conflicts.</p> <p>Materials and Methods: The research method was correlation and regression analysis. A total of 150 couples (150 females, 150 males) who were selected through available sampling method participated in this study. Participants were asked to complete the Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS), and the Survey of Personal Beliefs (SPB). Comparative data analysis was performed using SPSS Version 19.</p> <p>Results: The result showed a significant positive association between irrational beliefs and its subscales awfulzini ($r=0/157$, $p<0.01$) self directed should ($r=0/354$, $p<0.01$) other directed should ($r=0/196$, $p<0.01$) self worth ($r=0/116$, $p<0.05$) (except for low frustration tolerance subscale($r=0/106$) and marital conflicts. The results also revealed that self-directed should significantly predicts marital problems.</p> <p>Conclusion: In conclusion, the present study offers support for a relationship between the irrational beliefs postulated by Rational-Emotive Behavior therapy and marital conflict and indicates that couples with high irrational beliefs had a great number and frequency of conflicts and felt themselves more tense. Findings of this research can be used in marital consultation.</p>

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Introduction

Marital conflicts is defined as a process of interaction in which one or both partners feel discomfort about some aspect of their relationship and try to resolve it in some manner (1). Rice (2) identified two types of marital conflict: instructive conflict and destructive conflict. In instructive conflict, spouses focus on problem solving, where there is intimacy with respect and little verbal responses and negative emotions between them. In contrast, destructive conflict occurs when one or both spouses blame and criticize each other. These responses give rise to negative emotions which contribute to a vicious cycle of disturbances. Marital problems can cause many types of physical and psychological disorders such as depression, eating, drug and alcohol abuse, cancer, heart disease (3-4) and consequently increasing rate of divorce.

The researchers began to pay attention to subjective factors such as thoughts and attributions (5). Ellis was the first person who emphasizes the role of cognitive factors in distressed marital relationships. Based on his

works rational emotive behavior therapy proposed that the cause of disturbed marital is unrealistic expectation that spouses hold not only about themselves and other but also about the marital relationships (6).

Indeed irrational beliefs are unrealistic expectations and self-defeating attitudes about self, others and the relationships. They are inflexible and extremist. These distorted beliefs are often seen as the basis of much dissension in relationships and they develop as a result of faulty thought pattern that become a part of the individual's common thought processes (7). Ellis listed eleven of the most common cognitive distortions experienced by couples which are categorized in five groups and stated that couples in distress have one or more of them. Five categories are as follow: damnation, demandingness, low frustration tolerance, Awfulizing, damning (of self and others) (7-8). Research findings show that irrational beliefs are associated with depression, anxiety and stress (3-9-10) negative perfectionism (11-12). While there is also some

findings which investigated irrational cognitions and the association of that with marital dissatisfaction generally (13-14-15-16-17-18). However there are considerably fewer studies concerning the association between marital conflicts and the distorted components postulated by Rational-Emotive Behavior therapy.

As cognition and beliefs are important construct in marital life and they have an important function in marriage maintenance, stability and health, lack of them cause marriage break and weakens family foundation and at last leads to the divorce. Therefore obtaining proper cognition of these important construct and effective factors for marital relationship satisfaction and stability is necessary to increase couples happiness. With regard to above issues, the objective of the present study was to investigate the association of the irrational beliefs postulated by Rational-Emotive behavior therapy and marital conflict. It was hypothesized that irrational beliefs are associated with marital conflicts significantly and also hypothesized that irrational beliefs predict marital conflicts significantly.

Materials and Methods

This research is descriptive-correlational study. The statistical population includes all married people in Kerman province in 2011-2012 years. Population size (300) composed of 150 wives and 150 husbands were selected through available sampling method among available couples in the city. In this study data was collected using the following instrument: Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS): this scale has 28 items. The scale measures nine factors of sensitivity to each other's needs, commitment, loyalty, cooperation, sympathy, internal consistency, expression of love, trust, intimacy in 4-point Likert spectrum. Rust (19) cronbache's alpha for this scale has been reported 0.89 for husbands and 0.85 for wives. Similarly, after a period of twelve month, the test-retest reliability of the scale was reported as 0.80. In Persian form of this scale the cronbach's alpha were evaluated 0.92 for wives and 0.94 for husbands which showed the high internal consistency (20). Correlation coefficients of scores on two occasions within 2 weeks, was total score participants: $r = 0.94$ females: $r = 0.93$ males: $r = 0.95$ which reports high test-retest reliability.

Survey of personal beliefs: Survey of personal beliefs (21) contains 50 items. This scale evaluate personal beliefs in 6-point Likert spectrum with five subscales of awfulizing, self-directed shoulds, other-directed shoulds, low frustration tolerance, self-worth. The statistical characteristics of this scale were evaluated by a sample of 762 people (387 females, 375 males). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of subscales obtained as following: awfulizing: 0.89, self-directed shoulds: 0.90, other-directed shoulds: 0.91, low frustration tolerance: 0.83, self-worth: 0.87 and total score of personal beliefs: 0.93 that indicates high internal consistency.

Correlation coefficients of scores of 156 people on two occasions within 2 to 4 weeks was as follows: total

score of personal beliefs: $r = 0.85$, awfulizing: $r = 0.78$, self-directed shoulds: $r = 0.81$, other-directed shoulds: $r = 0.83$, low frustration tolerance: $r = 0.73$, self-worth: $r = 0.77$. These coefficients indicate good test-retest reliability.

Construct, convergent and discriminate validity were calculated by simultaneous performance of Beck Depression Inventory, Beck Anxiety Scale, Positive, Negative Affect Schedule and Mental Health Inventory. Results of the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that there is negative significant correlation 0.41 to 0.56 ($p < 0.001$) between the participant's scores in irrational beliefs with positive emotions and psychological well-being. There is also positive significant correlation 0.47 to 0.63 ($p < 0.001$) between irrational beliefs with depression, anxiety, negative emotions and psychological distress. These findings confirm high construct and discriminate validity. The results of exploratory factor analysis confirm also five factors for survey of personal beliefs (22).

To analyze data, index like mean standard deviation, T test, Pearson's correlation test and multiple regression analysis were used. Data was analyzed by SPSS Version¹⁹.

Results

The results showed mean and standard deviation of their age was 31.3 and 6.2 years. Age range of the participant's was between 19 and 49 years (age range of the women and men were between 19 and 45 was and between 23 and 49 years, respectively). In terms of education 40% of participants had diploma, 50.3% had a bachelor degree and 9.7% had an education of above bachelor. Based on job status 55.3% were employee and 44.7% were unemployed. Also 16.7% of participants had no child and 83.3% of them had one to three children.

Table 1 indicates the mean and standard deviation of marital conflicts and the dimensions of irrational beliefs (awfulizing, self-directed should, other-directed should, low frustration tolerance and self-worth).

Table1: Mean and standard deviation of marital conflicts and irrational beliefs

Variable	Dimensions	mean	SD
Marital conflict		25.74	13.54
	Awfulizing	28.23	5.57
Irrational beliefs	Self-directed shoulds	25.63	5.60
	Other-directed shoulds	29.32	5.65
	Low frustration tolerance	29.97	5.81
	Self-worth	29.47	5.81
	Total score of irrational beliefs	142.64	21.27

Before analyzing the hypothesis, we must decide if there is significant difference between men and women

participants. For this purpose the average scores of variables of men and women compared by two sample T-test. As presented in Table 2 the results of T-test show that there is no significant difference between men and women's group in variables of the investigation.

Table2: Two sample T-test of average of variables score in terms of gender

Variables	group	Mean	SD	T	df	P
Marital conflicts	Female	14.77	2.92	-1.88	298	0.061
	Males	15.45	3.33			
Irrational beliefs	Female	140.91	22.10	-1.411	298	0.159
	Male	144.37	22.33			

Table3: The correlation matrix of research variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Marital conflicts	1						
2 Awfulizing	0.157**	1					
3 Self-directed shoulds	0.354**	0.349**	1				
4 Other-directed should	0.196**	0.416**	0.371**	1			
5 Low frustration tolerance	0.106	0.473**	0.320**	0.445**	1		
6 Self-worth	0.116*	0.417**	0.375**	0.359**	0.418**	1	
7 Total score of irrational beliefs	0.252**	0.75**	0.67**	0.713**	0.756**	0.711**	1

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table4: Step by step multiple regression analysis of marital conflicts and irrational belief

	Self-directed shoulds	Other-directed shoulds	Awfulizing	Low frustration tolerance	Self-worth	β	Adjusted R ²	ΔR^2	F
	β	β	β	β	β				
Marital conflicts	0.35***	0.7	0.02	-0.00	-0.01	0.02	0.12	0.12	42.66

0.00<p***

Discussion & Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between irrational beliefs and marital conflict in married women and men based on Rational-Emotive Behavior therapy.

As a result of this research, a positive relationship was found between irrational beliefs and marital conflicts. Positive correlation between marital problems and irrational beliefs in accordance with previous researches (13-15-16-18) states that consideration of irrational beliefs increase marital conflicts among couples. Hemamci (18) studied on 182 people and found that married people with high irrational and distorted beliefs experience more distress than those who have low irrational beliefs. By investigating the distressed and non-distressed married individuals Moller et al (15) indicated that distressed individuals use more irrational beliefs in comparison with none-distressed individuals and also there was more positive thought in healthy and none-distressed couples.

Ellis believes that marital conflicts occur when one or both couple thinks irrationally (23). Indeed irrational cognitions as exaggerated, inflexible, improper and absolutistic thoughts can create insensitivity to the needs of the other, indifference to the desire of the

Table 3 indicates correlation coefficient between marital conflicts and irrational beliefs. As observed marital conflicts has positive association significantly with all subscales of irrational beliefs (except low frustration tolerance).

To investigate how irrational beliefs predict marital conflicts we used step by step multiple regression analysis which are demonstrated in Table 4. Other directed shoulds ($\beta=0.7$), awfulizing ($\beta=0.02$), low frustration tolerance ($\beta=-0.00$), self worth ($\beta=-0.01$). As can be observed, the only subscale of self-directed shoulds could not predicts marital problems ($\beta=0.35$).

other, condemnation of each other in front of people and more negative feelings in spouses (24). On the other hand studies indicate irrational beliefs by creation of psychological disorders like anxiety; depression (9-10) elicited negative emotions, misunderstanding and negative cognitions which cause conflicts in relationships. Also the result of the present study implies that self-directed shoulds subscale could not predict marital conflicts positively. This subject can express these shoulds with regard to autonomy theory (25). In fact self-directed shoulds such as projected values in autonomy theory are standards and criterion according to which individuals feel confident and valuable. Therefore irrationality of these values can have enormous damage on interpersonal life (26-27).

This correlation and findings between marital conflicts dysfunctional beliefs can be rooted in cross cultural differences.

Irrational beliefs and the degree of conflict between spouses vary in different society.

Therefore culture plays an important role in definition of both marital conflicts and irrational beliefs.

So it can be the first caution about generalization of these findings.

The other limitations of the study were as follows; using self-report instruments for collecting data which may cause self-enhancement behavior, utilizing correlation method which can only show the relationships between variables and not casual relations and also using available targeted sampling method which restrict the generalization of the finding of research to statistical population.

From the result of this study some suggestion can be made for further practices. Removing the limitation of research and investigating the cultural differences in relation to irrational beliefs and also practicing on different sample which are not necessarily limited to couples alone are among recommendations for the future researches.

In conclusion, the present study offers support for a relationship between the irrational beliefs postulated by Rational-Emotive Behavior therapy and marital conflict and indicated that couples with high irrational beliefs

had a great number and frequency of conflicts and felt a higher degree of tension in themselves.

However using self-report tools for collecting data can cause self-enhancement behavior in individuals and prevents them from responding correctly. Also the method of the study did not allow for an assessment of the cause and reason. These limitations will have to be taken into consideration in future studies on the relationship between marital conflicts and irrational beliefs. Future studies also need to investigate the relationship between marital conflict and irrational beliefs in different cultures, gender, religions, etc). Also future studies will have to take possible gender differences in relationship beliefs into account, as well as the consequences such differences may have on marital dissatisfaction and break up.

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