



Research Paper: Causal Model of the Relationship between Cognitive Emotion Regulation and the Quality of Couples' Committed Relationships Mediated by Mindfulness



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Citation: Abbaspour, K., Maleki Pirbazari, M., Ashournejad, F. (2023). Causal Model of the Relationship between Cognitive Emotion Regulation and the Quality of Couples' Committed Relationships Mediated by Mindfulness. *Journal of Modern Psychology*, 3(2), 22-32. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jmp.2023.398456.1058>

<https://doi.org/10.22034/JMP.2023.398456.1058>

Article info:

Received date:

23 Jan 2023

Accepted date:

13 March 2023

Keywords:

Causal model, cognitive emotion regulation, mindfulness, quality of couples' committed relationships

Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the causal model of the relationship between cognitive regulation of emotion and the quality of couples' committed relationships with the mediation of mindfulness. The methodological design of the present research was descriptive and correlational. The statistical population of the study included married women in Bandar Ganaveh in 2022, of which 263 were selected by convenience sampling method. The data collection tools included Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ), Dimensions of Commitment Inventory (DCI) and Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory-Short Form (FMI) which were completed online. Structural equation modeling method was used to test the hypotheses using SPSS-22 and SmartPLS-3 software. The obtained findings indicated that the research data has a goodness of fit with the proposed model. The results of data analysis showed that the cognitive emotion regulation has a positive and direct effect on the quality of committed relationships of couples ($p < 0.05$). Also, there is a positive and direct effect mindfulness on the quality of couples' committed relationships ($p < 0.05$). There is an indirect and positive effect the cognitive emotion regulation through mindfulness on the quality of couples' committed relationships ($p < 0.05$). We conclude from this research that strengthening the cognitive regulation skills of emotion and mindfulness is related to more committed relationships in married women, and counselors of counseling centers can benefit from the results of this research.

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1. Introduction

In order to continue their lives, humans need their fellow humans from the moment they are born, and they spend their first life experience in the family, and therefore, the foundation of the family is the first committed social bond that it is formed in the form of marriage, and has become the basis of the mental health of human society (Mohammadi & Musavi Moqaddam, 2021). Therefore, the central core of the family system is the marital relationship (Ghezelsefloo et al., 2016), which is based on the commitment of the couple to each other, and without the commitment of the couple, the relationship will be very superficial. What makes a marriage last is the committed relationship of the couple. Commitment is a type of cognitive assessment that reflects psychological dependence that requires couples to maintain their relationship (Leonhardt et al., 2022). The quality of couples' committed relationships is one of the most important factors in the peace of the family and society. According to Ho et al. (2019), the existence of commitment in the couple's relationship has a very high relationship with life satisfaction. Therefore, with the reduction of commitment in marital relations, the probability of divorce increases and divorce leaves negative effects on the overall quality of life and mental well-being of people (Shafiee & Mohammadi, 2018). Therefore, one of the things that a healthy family does is to feel commitment towards other family members (Shahsiah et al., 2009).

In marital relationships, if attention is paid to the way of managing and recognizing emotions, it can play its role well in the committed relationship of couples. Therefore, the correct regulation of emotions such as anger and fear is another effective factor in the relationship of couples (Bloch et al., 2014). The cognitive emotion regulation as a personality trait in the emotional range is a

very important issue that has obvious effects and undeniable results on interpersonal relationships and it can fully clarify some of the issues related to family relationships, which exist in the form of emotional relationships between men and women (Vafaei & Ghasemi Motlagh, 2020). Emotional regulation processes are generally reactions that are necessary to adapt to various environmental demands and needs (Kohn et al., 2014) and help people to manage their emotions and feelings and not be defeated by them (Hasani, 2010). Improper regulation of emotions is related to mood and anxiety disorders (Picó-Pérez et al., 2017), low mental health of a person (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and decreased well-being of people (Kraiss et al., 2020). Since positive and negative emotions can have a high value in adjusting the physical and mental health consequences of people and acting according to their moods, in this case, cognitive emotion regulation is one of the most important tasks for physical and psychological health, especially in couples' relationships (Zare & Rezaei, 2016). Any defects in the regulation of emotions can make a person vulnerable to emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, mental pressure and physical problems (Vafaei & Ghasemi Motlagh, 2020; Tahamtan et al., 2021). The research of Najafloo and Sayyar (2021) showed that the ability to regulate emotions in life can have an effective role on the quality of committed relationships of couples.

Also, based on the research conducted for the continuation of committed relationships of couples, mindfulness is also another important factor. Mindfulness allows a person to observe his cognitions and emotions from the perspective of an external observer, separate from the outside world and himself. Also, to have a closer sensory contact with the moment-to-moment experiences of his life and by making his mental smoothness more

flexible, he can improve his mental health directly and faster and show less reaction to threatening emotional stimuli. Increasing awareness and being present in the present moment, accepting experiences and refraining from avoidance, creates a greater ability to deal with stressful situations for a person. Mindfulness leads to an increase in the quality of a couple's conscientious relationship. Mindfulness leads to the reduction of negative thoughts, tensions, frustrations and marital conflicts and emotional control, increasing the high level of self-control, adaptability, positive view of one's spouse and communication with people, thereby increasing satisfaction and peace in life (Mahmoudpour et al., 2020). The research of SedaghatKhah and BehzadiPoor (2017) showed that mindfulness leads to non-judgmental observation of thoughts and feelings and is a barrier against negative thoughts in the rumination pattern and plays a role in predicting the quality of couples' relationships. Also, the results of the Barnes et al (2007) research showed that mindfulness is related to couples' satisfaction. Lucas-Thompson et al (2020) showed that mindfulness leads to the reduction of marital conflicts and destructive emotions by creating mechanisms such as regulating attention, strengthening self-compassion, non-judgment and strengthening the relationship. In the same context, Laurent et al (2016) showed that mindfulness reduces the effect of spouses' negative beliefs through the correct regulation of emotions in couples' conflicts.

The conducted research also shows the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and mindfulness. For example, in the research of Ebrahimi et al (2018), the component of suppression (conscious repression of emotions) as one of the components of emotional dysregulation had a negative correlation with mindfulness, but there was a positive correlation between the positive strategies of cognitive emotion

regulation (such as reappraisal) and mindfulness (Babaei Nadinluye et al., 2017).

According to what was said, the general purpose of this research is to determine the causal model of the relationship between cognitive regulation of emotion and the quality of committed relationships of couples with the mediation of mindfulness.

2. Method

The current research is a descriptive and correlational research using the structural equation modeling method. The statistical population of the current study includes all married women in Bandar Ganaveh city in 2022, based on which, 263 people were selected from the population using convenience sampling method.

2.1. Instruments

Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ): The cognitive emotion regulation questionnaire was compiled by Garnefski et al (2001), which has several dimensions and 36 items. This questionnaire has two forms for adults and children, and the form for adults is used in this research. Cognitive emotion regulation scale evaluates 9 strategies including self-blaming, others-blaming, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive re-evaluation, and catastrophizing. The scoring of the questionnaire is based on the Likert scale (never = 1, rarely = 2, sometimes = 3, often = 4, always = 5). This questionnaire has been used in Iranian researches. Garnefski et al (2002) have also expressed a favorable validity and reliability for this scale. The alpha coefficient for the subscales of this questionnaire has been reported by Garnefski et al. (2002), in the range of 0.71 to 0.81, Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire in the present study was 0.837.

Dimensions of Commitment Inventory

(DCI): This inventory was compiled by Adams and Jones (1997) and has 36 items that are set on a Likert scale (I completely disagree to completely agree) with a score of 1 to 5, and it measures the level of commitment and loyalty of people to their spouse and marriage and its dimensions. The dimensions of this inventory are: personal commitment, moral commitment and structural commitment. Adams and Jones (1997) in six different studies to obtain the reliability and validity of this inventory, they implemented it on 417 married people, 347 single people and 46 divorced people, in their study the reliability of the whole inventory was reported as 0.89. Adams and Jones (1997) reported the reliability of the scale of personal commitment 0.91%, moral commitment 89.0%, and structural commitment 0.86%. Also, the validity and reliability of the inventory was examined in the study of Abbasi Molid et al (2013) on Iranian couples. In this regard, the Kappa index of 0.90 (measurement of the agreement coefficient between experts) was obtained. The construct validity of the test, which is calculated by the correlation coefficient between the subscales and the total score of the test, varied between 0.66 and 0.81 percent, and all the coefficients were significant at the 0.001 level. Cronbach's alpha of the inventory in the present study was 0.854.

Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory-Short Form (FMI):

This inventory was developed by Walach et al (2006) which have 14 items and in its long form it has 30 items. The items of this inventory are graded on a five-point Likert scale; each of these options has 1 to 5 points. If a person gets a high score, i.e. close to 56, then he has high mindfulness, and if he gets a low score, close to 14. It will have low mindfulness. There is evidence that this inventory was two-factor in some researches, but it was single-factor in the Iranian norm. Walach et al (2006) reported its alpha coefficient as 0.86. Also, Ghasemi Jobaneh et al (2015) investigated the psychometric properties of this inventory in Iran and estimated the Cronbach's alpha of this inventory to be around 0.92. The Cronbach coefficient of the inventory in this research was 0.753.

3. Results

Based on the results, it was determined that most of the studied subjects were adult women between the ages of 41 and 50 years old, most of them had a bachelor's degree. Also, most of the studied women were housewives and unemployed. Descriptive indices of the investigated variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Descriptive indices of the investigated variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Quality of couples' committed relationships	135.26	14.69	215.87	0.02	0.26
Cognitive emotion regulation	11.57	14.58	212.56	-0.04	0.45
Mindfulness	38.48	6.94	48.15	-0.31	0.27

Path coefficients and Student's t-test results are presented in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

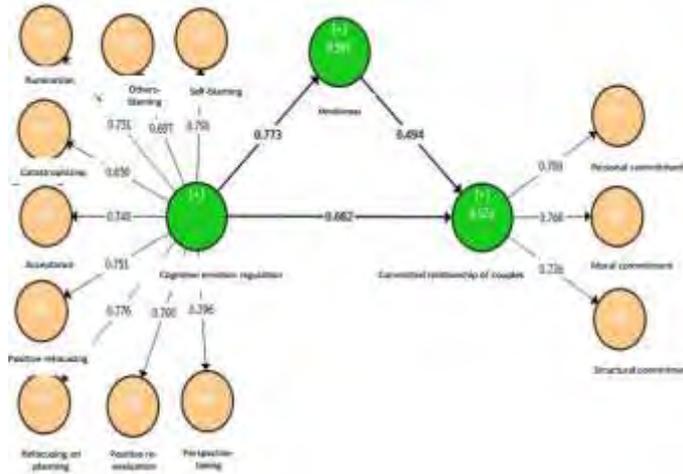


Figure 1. Standard path coefficients of the research conceptual model

The significance test of the path coefficients was calculated using the bootstrap method of Student's t-test values.

If the values of the Student's t-test are greater than 1.96, the path coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level.

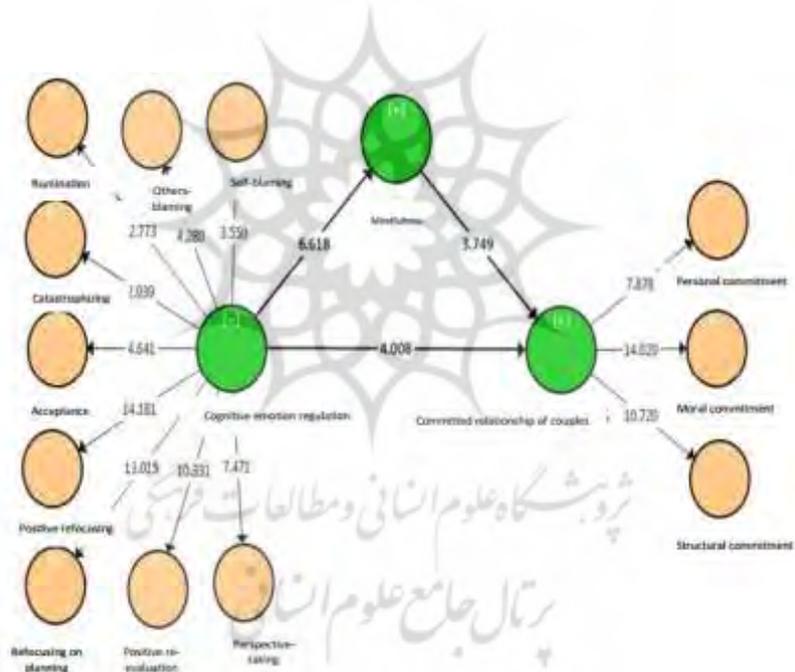


Figure 2. Student's t-test results to check the significance of path coefficients

Path coefficients and their significance results are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2
The results of structural model evaluation

Path	Path coefficient (β)	T-value	Test result
Cognitive emotion regulation \rightarrow couples' committed relationships	0.68	4	confirm
Cognitive emotion regulation \rightarrow mindfulness	0.49	3.74	confirm

The result of the test is confirmed due to the fact that the statistical significance between the variable of cognitive emotion regulation and the quality of couples' committed relationships, as well as mindfulness and the quality of couples' committed relationships is equal to the value of 4 and 3.74, respectively, and greater than the value of 96. Also the path coefficient between the mentioned variables is equal to 0.68 and 0.49, respectively, which means that the cognitive emotion regulation with a value of 0.62 and mindfulness with a value of 0.49 affect the quality of couples' committed relationships.

Also, to check the goodness of fit of the research model, the R^2 , Q^2 , GOF and SRMR criteria were used, all of which were acceptable compared to the criterion value; Based on this, the value obtained from the

criterion in the variables of mindfulness and the quality of couples' committed relationships is 0.59 and 0.57, respectively, and is acceptable compared to the criterion values; And in the measure of mindfulness and the quality of couples' committed relationships, it is 0.23 and 0.25, respectively, and it is acceptable compared to the criterion values; And in the GOF criterion equal to 0.44, which is greater than the criterion value of 0.3, and the SRMR index, which is equal to the value of 0.05 and lower than the criterion value of 0.08. In this way, was confirmed the goodness of the fit of the structural model.

In the following, the bootstrap method was used to investigate the indirect effect of cognitive motion regulation through mindfulness on the quality of couples' committed relationships, the result of which is presented in [Table 3](#).

Table 3

The results of the bootstrap method to check the significance of the indirect effect

Path			Indirect effect	Bootstrap value		T-value	Estimation error	P
Independent variable	Mediating variable	Dependent variable		Upper limit	Lower limit			
Cognitive emotion regulation	Mindfulness	Quality of couples' committed relationships	0.38	0.45	0.30	7.15	0.05	0.00

According to [Table 3](#), the significance level is equal to 0.00 and smaller than 0.05 and the confidence interval does not include zero. Therefore, the cognitive emotion regulation through mindfulness has an indirect effect on the quality of couples' committed relationships.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this research is to determine the causal model of the relationship between cognitive cognitive emotion

regulation and the quality of couples' committed relationships with the mediation of mindfulness in married women of Bandar Ganaveh in 2022. In this way, one of the obtained results indicated that the cognitive emotion regulation has a positive and direct effect on the quality of couples' committed relationships. The obtained result is consistent with the research findings of [Kelein et al \(2016\)](#). They concluded that hostile criticism is greater when couples have more difficulty

regulating their emotions. In the explanation of the obtained result, it is stated that one of the important structures of psychological sciences is regulating the expression of feelings and emotions in the situation. Therefore, the cognitive emotion regulation is based on self-blaming, others-blaming, rumination, catastrophic perception, acceptance, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning and positive evaluation refers to the perceptive ability of a person to express his emotions and how to express his emotions. In married life, there are many ups and downs to which each couple reacts or express their emotions and feelings, however, if the expression of emotions is calculated and expressed from awareness and knowledge, the commitment between the couple will be established and its quality level will also increase. If the expression of the couple's emotions towards each other in different situations of life is without recognition and awareness, the commitment between the couple weakens, and as a result, its quality level also decreases. Because according to [Mahmoudpour et al \(2020\)](#), commitment is associated with better interaction, happier and more constructive behavior in the path of problems. Based on this, the studied women showed in their answers that the cognitive emotion regulation can affect the quality of committed relationships of couples, so that the more the emotional regulation is cognitive and based on the understanding of the affairs and awareness of the existing conditions, the couples will have stronger and more committed relationships.

Among other findings, there was a positive and direct effect of mindfulness on the quality of couples' committed relationships. The result obtained is consistent with the research findings of [Barnes et al \(2007\)](#), they found that

mindfulness is related to the satisfaction of couples' relationship. Also, mindfulness predicts less emotional stress reactions and positive change in the relationship. In this regard, [Atkinson \(2013\)](#) concluded that mindfulness can automatically improve the processing and organization of cognition and behavior related to couples' relationships, and [Pepping & Halford \(2016\)](#) found that mindfulness can be useful for couples' romantic relationships and it can facilitate healthy marital relationships, including increasing emotion regulation. In the explanation of the obtained result, it is stated that mindfulness is one of the cognitive qualities and alertness of people towards current affairs and conditions, which causes a person to act consciously and prudently. [Kabat-Zinn \(2003\)](#) has stated in this context that mindfulness is a type of consciousness or a quality of consciousness that arises as a result of paying attention to the goal in the present moment and without moment-to-moment evaluation. In mindfulness, a person is well aware of the existing situation and always tries to show a behavior that ends in a positive and pleasant result. This is important not only to manage existing problems (in the present time), but also to reduce stress and tension. This is very important in married life. A series of important obligations and responsibilities have been established between couples, however, in case of any possible issues and problems during the married life, if the couple has mindfulness, they can resolve the current issues in a committed manner without harming their married life. Because one of the factors that threaten the strength of the committed interaction of couples is harmful and irrational beliefs. Based on this, the studied women showed in their answers that mindfulness, due to focusing the mind on the issues of the present and not on the issues of the past, and reducing stress

and calming the mind to solve the problems, it can positively and directly affect the quality of committed relationships of couples. On the other hand, the reduction of mindfulness in couples causes the couple's relationship to be damaged and its quality to be lost.

The indirect effect of cognitive emotion regulation through mindfulness on the quality of couples' committed relationships was one of the other findings obtained in this research. The obtained result is consistent with the research findings of [Rimsky \(2020\)](#). He came to the conclusion that people with higher mindfulness experience less rejection and depression in couples' relationships. In addition, mindfulness had a significant effect on marital satisfaction among 64 couples. In the explanation of the obtained result, it is stated that the couples' committed relationships is one of the strong bases in maintaining the life of married life. Relationships with love, passion and dedication of couples show that they have high quality relationships. Therefore, paying attention to the quality of couples' committed relationships in married life - which is based on personal, moral and structural commitment-, is very important. Therefore, when couples face difficult events and situations in their lives and try to adjust their emotions and feelings according to the conditions and issues that arise - that is, when and where and how to express their feelings - and also regardless of the issues that happened in the past, they deal with the issues of the present with full knowledge and awareness, the expectation is created that their committed relationships are of quality and not only they can well overcome existing problems, but also increase the durability and survival of their married life. In this way, the women in the present study showed in their answers that their committed relationships with their

husbands can be improved due to the reduction of tensions and stresses, lack of attention to past events, reduction of anger and greater mindfulness. That is, the stronger the cognitive emotion regulation along with mindfulness is in the couples, their committed relationships will be of higher quality.

Considering that the conduct of this research was not excluded from the limitations, therefore, the most important limitations of the present research are the gender limitation of the study subjects, the cross-sectional nature of the research and the impossibility of examining the relationships of the variables over time, the selection of the sample in an convenience manner and the lack of interaction between the researcher and the participants during the implementation of the questionnaire was due to the online implementation in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Conclusion

According to the obtained results, is suggested to strengthening women's logical and critical thinking following the events in their married life, helping to control behaviors such as self-blaming, others-blaming, rumination, etc. and strengthening acceptance, positive refocus, refocus on planning and a broader view of issues through training sessions for couples, providing training workshops and pre-marriage counseling for people on the verge of marriage in order to teach mindfulness skills and include programs based on focus on mindfulness and emotion regulation to increase all types of commitment (personal, moral, structural) in relevant educational programs.

Acknowledgment

The researchers appreciate all the people who contributed to this research.

Conflict of interest

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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