OBESITY AND MARITAL RELATIONSHIP: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF COPING

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INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a state that is associated with having overindulgence of body fat, defined by genetic and environmental factors that are hard to control with dieting. By definition, obesity is classified according to body mass index (BMI), with levels greater than 30 being obese (class I), with level greater than 35 (class II) and with level greater than or equal to 40 (class III). The association of obesity with marriage has been an important topic of interest in studies to date. Marital relationship its quality and relation to health and wellbeing is important. Satisfaction of the couples in their marital life is very much linked with physical health, including decreased physical illness, decreased cortisol level and increased recovery after illness. Liao, et al (2018) suggests that marital status is closely associated with weight changes, with married individuals reported to gain more bodyweight than never-married individuals. When people with different personality traits marry, their marital relationships can be affected by their personality traits. In Pakistan, more than half (52%) of the

RESULTS: Majority (n=213/400; 53.25%) of participants were working in private-sector, 216/400 (54%) were teachers and 46% (n=184/400) were doctors. Participants ranged in age from 25-50 years. Forty-five percent (n=180) had 1-5 years’ duration of marriage. Path analysis revealed that the structural path from reappraisal coping to openness to experience and from extraversion to the marital relationship has a positive direct effect. It can also be seen that the structural path from emotional, psychological, and cognitive factors to marital relationship and from disengagement coping to the marital relationship have direct significant negative, whereas from reappraisal coping to marital relationship show a direct positive effect. Coping showed two indirect paths to marital relationship: the path mediated by reappraisal coping to marital relationship and disengagement coping marital relationship.

CONCLUSION: Mediating effect of coping revealed that women who use reappraisal coping enjoy better marital life as compared to the women who use disengagement type of coping.

KEYWORDS: Obesity (MeSH); Employed women (Non-MeSH); Women, Working (MeSH); Reappraisal coping (Non-MeSH); Disengagement coping (Non-MeSH); Marital Relationship (MeSH); Marriage (MeSH)

OBJECTIVE: To find out the mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship in women with obesity.

METHODS: This analytical cross-sectional study was conducted from May to November 2019 at various universities (Lahore College for Women University, Riphah International University, and University of Central Punjab) and hospitals (Services Hospital, Jinnah Hospital and Shalimar Hospital) of Lahore, Pakistan. Sample (n=400) was collected through purposive sampling technique. Overeating Situations Scale, Big Five Personality Inventory, Relationship Satisfaction Inventory, Brief Coping Response Inventory along demographic form were administered on the sample. Data was analyzed through Path analysis using AMOS-20


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women are either overweight or obese. After getting married and producing children, Pakistani women lose interest in their physical appearance and healthy lifestyle, leading to increased weight gain. These married women face discrimination both at home and workplace. However, no literature has been found with reference to Pakistan regarding factors affecting the marital satisfaction in obese women and mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship. This study was planned to find out the mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship in women with obesity.

**METHODS**

This cross-sectional analytical study was conducted at various public and private universities (Lahore College for Women University, Riphah International University, and University of Central Punjab) and hospitals (Services Hospital, Jinnah Hospital and Shalimar Hospital, Lahore) after approval of Ethics and Research Committee of Lahore College for Women University from May 2019 to November 2019. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect the sample. The criterion given by Francis et al. (2010) was used to select the sample size. A sample of 400 obese (BMI > 30), working, married women who meet the criteria of obesity given by WHO was included in the study with age range of 25-50 years. The mean age of the sample was 32.28 (SD = 6.89). Only diagnosed women with obesity were included in the sample. Women with any clinical problem e.g. diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, lungs disease etc. were not included in the sample. Pregnant women were also excluded from the study. To gather sample demographic information, a form was prepared including age, height and weight etc.

Four different tools were used in the current study. Overeating Situations Scale was used to identify the factors involved in the development of obesity. It is a self-report measure consisted of 23 items with options ranges from “never” (1) to “always” (3). It has Cronbach alpha of 0.86. Ten Item Personality Inventory was used to assess correlation between personality trait and obesity. This is a ten-item scale. The scale uses seven-point scale ranging from disagree strongly (1) to agree strongly (7). Cronbach alpha of personality trait scale is 0.78.

**RESULTS**

The results of the study indicate that overweight and obese women face discrimination both at home and workplace. However, no literature has been found with reference to Pakistan regarding factors affecting the marital satisfaction in obese women and mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship. This study was planned to find out the mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship in women with obesity.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the study indicate that overweight and obese women face discrimination both at home and workplace. However, no literature has been found with reference to Pakistan regarding factors affecting the marital satisfaction in obese women and mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship. This study was planned to find out the mediating role of coping between factors of obesity and marital relationship in women with obesity.
Response Inventory was used to explore the type of coping strategies used by obese employed women. It is a self-report measure comprising of 10 items. This inventory is comprised of two subscales namely Reappraisal Coping and Disengagement coping. Each subscale has five items. This inventory uses five point rating scale ranging from Never (0) to always (4). The scale has a good reliability of 0.89.

After the permission from Advanced studies Board of Research of Lahore College for Women University, Lahore the process of data collection was started. Participants were briefly informed about the objectives of the study. A consent form was signed by the participants to show the willingness to be part of the study. Confidentiality of the information was assured by the researcher to the participants. Participants were provided with the final protocol comprising demographic form along with Overeating Situations Scale, Relationship Satisfaction Scale, Ten Item Personality Inventory and Brief Coping Response Inventory. All the scales were translated in Urdu using the standard procedure given by Sousa and Rojanasnirat (2011) to ensure fair participation. The descriptive statistics including Pearson’s correlation coefficients and alpha coefficients of reliability were computed through SPSS version 22. Path analysis was employed for examining the mediating role of coping between factors of obesity, marital satisfaction and personality traits was undertaken in Amos 20.0.

### RESULTS

Out of 400 study participants, 205 (51.25%) fall in the period of early adulthood and 195 (48.75%) were in middle adulthood. The age range of participants was 25-50 years. Duration of marriage was 1-5 years in 180 (45%) cases, 6-10 years in 120 (30%) cases, 11-20 years in 76 (19%) cases, 21-30 years in 24 (6%) cases, 31-40 years in 12 (3%) cases, and 41-50 years in 4 (1%) cases. Majority (n=213/400; 53.25%) fall in the period of early adulthood. The age range of participants was 25-50 years. Duration of marriage was 1-5 years in 180 (45%) cases, 6-10 years in 120 (30%) cases, 11-20 years in 76 (19%) cases, 21-30 years in 24 (6%) cases, 31-40 years in 12 (3%) cases, and 41-50 years in 4 (1%) cases. Majority (n=213/400; 53.25%) fall in the period of early adulthood. The age range of participants was 25-50 years. Duration of marriage was 1-5 years in 180 (45%) cases, 6-10 years in 120 (30%) cases, 11-20 years in 76 (19%) cases, 21-30 years in 24 (6%) cases, 31-40 years in 12 (3%) cases, and 41-50 years in 4 (1%) cases.

Majority (n=213/400; 53.25%) of study participants were working in private sector and 187 (46.75%) were government employees. Fifty-four percent (n=216/400) were teachers and 46% (n=184/400) were doctors. Most (n = 190; 47.5%) of the participants had 1-5 years, 123 (30.75%) had 6-10 years and 87 (21.75%) had more than 10 years of job experience. Majority (n=225; 63.75%) had class-2, 88 (22%) had class-3 and 57 (14.25%) had class-1 obesity.

Internal consistency of all the scales and subscales used in the current study was found excellent as shown in Table I. Table II shows the results of fit indices indicated for obesity, personality trait, coping strategies and marital relationship.
relationship after controlling the effect for age, marital duration and job experience. The final structural model diagram after model fit is demonstrated in Figure I. Table III indicates that results of the direct effect show the structural path from reappraisal coping to openness to experience (β =0.24, p <0.001) as positive and significant. It is further evident that structural path from extraversion to marital relationship (β =0.14, p <0.01) is significant and positive. It can also be seen that path structure from emotional factor (β = -0.15, p <0.01), Psychological factor (β =-0.20, p <0.001), and cognitive factor (β = -0.16, p <0.001) is significant and negative. From direct effect it can also be seen that structure path from disengagement coping to marital relationship (β = -0.20, p <0.01) is significant and negative and from reappraisal coping to marital relationship (β =0.44, p <0.001) was significant and positive. Table IV shows the results of indirect effect through reappraisal coping is found to be significant mediator between openness to experience and marital relationship (β = 0.10, p < 0.001). Whereas reappraisal coping is also found to be a significant mediator between cognitive factor of obesity and marital relationship (β = -0.05, p < 0.01). The results of indirect effect show that disengagement coping is found to be non-significant mediator between factors of obesity (psychological, emotional and cognitive), personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, emotional stability, conscientiousness and openness to experience) and marital relationship as shown in Table V.

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to find out the role of coping as mediator between factors of obesity and marital relationship in obese employed women of Lahore, Pakistan. The result of the study showed the relationship between openness to experience and reappraisal coping shows significant effect size. This suggests that openness to experience is more important predictor in comparison with other personality traits in marital relationship. Openness to experience was found significant (direct effect) in mediation model. This finding is relevant as openness to experience involves tendency to be curious, creative, inclined towards new ideas and activities, and are flexible. Openness to experience and extraversion were found to be positively correlated with reappraisal type of coping. Results are also consistent with the studies conducted in past. In order to deal with the stressful life situation, openness to experience lead an individual to restructure the stressful life situation. It is directly associated with reappraisal style of coping. Extraversion was found to be the positive predictor of marital relationship. The results of the study also revealed that women’s extraversion is one of the important predictors of healthy marital relationship. This means that women who have extravert qualities more likely to have better marital relationship as compared to others. The results are also consistent with the studies conducted in past. These studies support that the women who have aspects of sociality prefer gatherings and large groups. These tendencies facilitate reappraisal style of coping such as problem solving and cognitive restructuring. Canzi, et al. found that there is a significant positive relationship between marital satisfaction and coping styles. The individual who use more convenient and positive coping strategies enjoy better marital relations. The results are consistent with the previously conducted significant study. These findings state that the women who are more satisfied with their marital life use more convenient positive strategies of coping. They enjoy and experience deeper emotions. They enjoy and try to adjust in their marital life. By using reappraisal coping techniques women become more compatible and satisfied with their marital life.

Furthermore, the path from disengagement coping to marital relationship is also significantly negative. Tegegne et al. found interesting relationship between disengagement coping and marital relationship. Findings of the Richter et al. show that disengagement coping strategies such as escape, avoidance, and denial increase conflict and reduce effective communication. As a result of this reduced communication women do not share their problems and did not get the solution either. These women use disengagement style of coping that is less effective way of coping.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted with employed women only future research with the sample including unemployed would provide a better comparison and more generalizability of the results. With better control and larger sample, longitudinal study would provide a better understanding of the relationship between obesity and marital relationship. In studies, where the subjects know that their experiences are evaluated and read, they usually give less private, less intense, accepted and approved responses.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes obesity is a major health problem that is affecting marriage and marital life. It is observed that people with different personality traits show different quality of marital relationship. Further it is observed that two different styles of coping are used by women having different kinds of personality traits. Mediation effect of coping revealed women who use reappraisal coping enjoy better marital life as compared to the women who use disengagement type of coping. The study also proposes that there is a strong need to educate general public about causes of obesity so that prevalence of obesity can be controlled. This would help women and men to lead a healthy and happy life and would prevent them from complications that arise as a result of obesity.

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28. Mirabzadeh A, Eftekhar MB,


Author's Contribution

Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under:

SA: Concept and study design, acquisition of data, drafting the manuscript, approval of the final version to be published.

AM: Analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the manuscript, critical review, approval of the final version to be published

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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