

Effect of Social Capital on Marital Aggression among Married Pakistani Students

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Abstract

Social capital plays an important role in maintaining a balanced life and promoting effective family functioning. On the other hand, marital aggression is the frequency of aggressive behaviors in marital relationship, consisting of simple verbal threats to more intimidating psychological and physical abuses. The major objectives of the current study were to find out the effect of social capital on marital aggression among married students and to find out the demographic differences (age, gender, socioeconomic status) in social capital and marital aggression among married students. Two instruments, Social Capital Scale (SCS) and Aggression Questionnaire (AQ), were individually distributed among 300 married students recruited through convenient sampling technique. Current study revealed that social capital is negatively correlated with marital aggression. The results also revealed that social capital is a significant predictor of marital aggression. It caused a 5.1% variation in the dependent variable. Current study also suggests that age is negatively related to marital aggression. Age has a non-significant negative relationship with the social capital. The data analysis further revealed that males scored significantly higher on social capital and aggression.

Key words: *Social Capital, Marital Aggression, Gender Differences, Age*

Introduction

Social capital is a complex, multidimensional concept that encompasses a reservoir of value systems, both cultural and social (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009). Social capital is characterized by a network based on shared values, assumptions, norms, and understandings within or between groups. Social capital can be used for the relationship between spouses (Saz-Gil et al., 2021). It is evident that social capital plays a crucial role in maintaining a balanced life comprising financial independence and effective family functioning. Social capital also serves as a buffer against difficulties such as depression, prolonged household conflicts, and divorce (Sztaudynger, 2014).

Social capital not only predicts the success or failure of a marital relationship, it is also one of the determinants of the quality of marriage (Dewi et al., 2018). Dewi and colleagues pointed out that if spouses use social capital to their advantage in solving problems, they optimize the interaction in turn and result in a higher marital quality relationship. Simons et al. (2023) found negative relationship between age and social capital. They insisted that in order to live a healthy life, social capital needs to be built around older adults. Wrzus et al. (2013) pointed out that social capital tends to decrease as age increases.

Research indicated that gender differences existed with reference to social capital, and males reported higher social capital as compared to females (Wrzus et al., 2013). Similarly, Simons and colleagues (2023) reported that males have higher levels of social capital as compared to females.

It is argued that social capital regulates aggressive behavior. The majority of social relationships facilitate the control of physical aggression from early childhood to adulthood (Gatti et al., 2007).

Marital aggression is characterized by threats, insults, and throwing objects at the partner. Verbal threats and insults constitute psychological abuses; on the other hand, throwing objects, hitting the partner refer to physical violence or physical assault (El-Sheikh et al., 2008). Richardson (2014) defined marital aggression as intentionally harmful behavior committed against the partner. The intended behavior can be harmful directly or indirectly. Woodin et al. (2014) reported that the prevalence of physical marital aggression was as high as 30% compared to psychological marital aggression. According to Woodin and colleagues, psychological aggression had a higher prevalence of 89%. Bookwala et al. (2005) reported that there is a negative relationship between age and marital aggression. They found that marital aggression tends to decrease as age increases. Coll et al. (2023) found that reported marital aggression decreases with the age of perpetrators. Vickerman and Margolin (2008) found that trajectories of physical aggression decrease over time. Bookwala and colleagues pointed out that males have higher levels of marital aggression as compared to females.

Rationale of the Study

The major aim of conducting the present study was to examine the effect of social capital on marital aggression among married students. It also aimed to find out the demographic differences of age and gender in social capital on marital aggression among married students. The study on the effect of social capital on marital aggression among married students has not been studied before; therefore, importance of current study can't be neglected in the present scenario.

The current research will be beneficial for fulfilling the gaps in existing literature by providing detailed information about social capital and marital status. The current research will be beneficial for married students by providing information on how to cope with marital aggression in relation to others. The recent research can be helpful for developing strategies for improving social capital and reducing marital aggression.

Methods

Objectives

The current study included the following objectives.

1. To investigate the effect of social capital on marital aggression among married students.
2. To find out the demographic differences of age and gender in social capital and marital aggression among married students.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the current study are given below:

1. Social capital is negatively related to marital aggression among married students.
2. Social capital is a significant predictor of marital aggression among married students.
3. Males have high social capital, and marital aggression as compared to females.
4. Age is negatively related to marital aggression and social capital.

Operational Definitions of Variables

The variables included in the present study are Social Capital and Marital Aggression. Conceptual and operational definitions of the variables are mentioned below:

Social Capital

Social capital is characterized as a beneficial relationship that is reciprocal in nature. Social capital helps individuals to utilize external resources to maximize the impact of resources through sharing information and knowledge (Xu et al., 2022). Social capital is operationally defined as scores of individuals on Personal Social Capital scale (SCS; Chen et al., 2009). A high score will predict high social capital level in the individuals and vice versa.

Marital Aggression

Marital aggression comprises acts ranging from threats to insults, to more life-threatening situations. It may consist of throwing objects or initiating physical aggression against the spouse (El-Sheikh et al., 2008). Marital aggression is operationally defined as scores of individuals on Aggression Questionnaire (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992). High scores will indicate higher aggression and vice versa.

Research Design

The current study is quantitative in nature and survey method was used for selection of sample that is correlational and cross-sectional.

Sample

300 students were selected from different universities of the Hazara division of Pakistan. Current research was done by keeping in view age, gender and marital

status system. This Sample was further divided on basis of gender (females = 200, males = 200). Sample was selected by using convenient sampling technique.

Research Instruments

Research Instruments used in current study are Social Capital scale (SCS), Aggression Questionnaire (AQ).

Personal Social Capital Scale (PSCS)

Personal Social Capital Scale was developed by Chen et al. (2009). PSCS consists of 10 composite items calculated based on 42 sub-items measured by a five-point Likert scale with 1 = 'none or a few' to 5 = 'all or a lot'. The response scale for questions assessing participants' rating of their "network size" was: 1 (a few), 2 (less than Average), 3 (average), 4 (more than average), and 5 (a lot). PSCS scores have demonstrated good internal consistency of .87.

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)

Buss and Perry (1992) developed Aggression Questionnaire comprising of 29 items. Each item has a 5-point Likert scale to assess aggression. It can be used to assess marital aggression. Overall scores are obtained by adding individual items to get total aggression score. Higher scores indicate higher levels of aggression. The aggression questionnaire scores have demonstrated good internal consistency of .078.

Procedure

For data collection, Hazara University was accessed after obtaining permission from the head/ administrative body of the institute. Potential subject of the study was personally approached by researchers. Subjects were briefed about the nature and objective of the study. They were assured about the confidentiality of their data. After

obtaining informed consent, the questionnaires with clear instructions were distributed among subjects of study with a request to respond to each questionnaire with full sensitivity.

The language used in the questionnaire was English. The questionnaire was circulated for a week in November and the final sample collected was 300 individuals.

Data Analysis

In order to address the objective of the study and to test the hypotheses of study according to nature of data, appropriate statistical analyses were performed with the help of SPSS.

Results

In the current study, the analyses were done on the sample of married students. The statistical method used for the analyses of the current study are the alpha reliability coefficient, Pearson product-moment correlation, independent t-test and prediction. The alpha coefficients for personal social capital scale and aggression questionnaire are .714 and .752 respectively indicating that both scales are reliable measure to tap social capital and aggression among married students.

Table 1

Correlation matrix among Social Capital scale, Aggression Scale and Life satisfaction scale (N = 300)

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3
PSCS	300	158.80	23.37	-	-.226***	-.034
AQ	300	58.82	12.36		-	-.118*

Age	300	35.32	11.56	-
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Note. PSCS= Personal Social Capital Scale; AQ= Aggression Questionnaire.
 $p > .05$. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 1 indicates that social capital is negatively correlated with marital aggression ($r = -.226$, $p < .001$). The age is non-significantly related to social capital and is significantly negatively related to aggression.

Table 2

Linear Regression Analysis of Social Capital as a Predictor of Marital Aggression among Married Individuals (N = 300).

Predictor	R	R ²	B	B	F	SE
Sadism	.226	.054	-.119	.226***	15.989***	.030

Note. SE = Standard error.

The results in Table 2 indicates that social capital is a significant predictor of marital aggression ($R^2 = .054$, $p < .001$). Social capital accounted for a 5.4% variation in marital aggression. The results demonstrated that increased social capital accounted for increased marital aggression.

Table 3

Mean Standard Deviation and t-value of Males and Females on Social Capital scale (SCS) and Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) (N = 300)

Variables	Male (n = 87)		Female (n = 212)		t(298)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
PSCS	165.74	17.66	155.78	24.73	3.41	.001	0.34

AQ	60.38	12.50	58.20	12.31	2.86	.016	0.28
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Note. PSCS= Personal Social Capital Scale; AQ= Aggression Questionnaire.

Table 3 indicates that there exists significant gender difference in social capital and marital aggression. Males scored higher on social capital and marital aggression scale.

Discussion

The present study explored the relationship between marital aggression and social capital. The current study is also intended to find out the predictive role of social capital in marital aggression, and to investigate the demographic differences of age and gender on marital aggression, social capital.

The alpha coefficients for Personal Social Capital Scale (SCS) and Aggression Questionnaire (AQ) .714, .752, respectively (see Table 1), indicating that both scales are reliable measures of social capital and aggression.

The results of the current study revealed that the social capital is negatively related to marital aggression, that confirms the first hypothesis of study stating the relationship between social capital and marital aggression. These findings are similar to the previous research, in which researchers examine the relationship between social capital and marital aggression. Studies by Voith et al. (2021) and Tong et al. (2019) suggested that there is negative relationship between marital aggression and social capital.

The results indicated that there is no significant relationship between social capital and age. However, Cao et al. (2015) reported that young individuals have higher levels of social capital (see also, Lyu et al., 2022). The results indicated that age of the participants is negatively related to marital aggression and correlation is significant. Bookwala et al. (2015) found that younger individuals have higher levels of marital aggression.

The result also demonstrated impact of social capital on aggression. Finding indicated that social capital accounted for 5.4% variation in aggression and social capital significantly decreased the marital aggression. These results are supported by

research conducted by Abiétar et al. (2023). According to them social capital predicts marital aggression.

The present study suggested that significant gender difference exist with reference to social capital. Cao et al. (2015) found similar results with reference to gender differences. They found a higher level of social capital in males as compared to females.

The present study found that significant gender difference exists with reference to aggression indicating that males have higher marital aggression as compared to females. Joo et al. (2016) reported that marital aggression tends to differ according to gender of the perpetrator. Males show more marital aggression as compared to females. Similarly, Li et al. (2015) found that males report higher marital aggression as compared to females.

Conclusion

It is concluded in the current study that social capital is negatively related to aggression. Age was significantly negatively related to aggression, whereas non-significantly related to social capital. Social capital was the significant predictor of the marital aggression. Males scored significantly higher on both marital aggression and social capital as compared to females.

Limitations and Suggestions

The present research has following shortfall and possible suggestions are provided for delimitation of future research;

1. The current study was conducted in three districts of Hazara division only.

Future studies should be conducted on large scale accross Pakistan to get diversified sample and generalize the data.

2. The current research included gender and age of the participants only, while excluding some other demographic variables due to lack of time and resources. For future research it is suggested that in order to depth understand the impact as well as relationship among psychological capital and marital aggression other important demographics such as work status, sleep pattern and family system etc should be taken.
3. In the present research, the variable were assessed through self reported questionnaire, future research should include more robust techniques to minimize the social desirability.

Implications

The current study provided important information in the field of psychology. The results are very useful in understanding the role of social capital that can predicts marital aggression. The findings of the current study are helpful to understand the phenomenon of social capital and its role in order to regulation the marital aggression. These results have implications for psychologist and therapist, who are striving to understand the personal factors that influence marital aggression and performance in medical setting and also to introduce such training setups where they can cope with mental health issues related to their aggression.

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