



Personality Traits, Emotion Regulation and Marital Satisfaction among Women in Commuter Marriages Sidra tul Muntaha*, Dr Afsheen Gul**

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Submitted 10.02.2022

Accepted 16.05.2022

Published 30.06.2022

Volume No. 9

Issue No. 1

ISSN (Online) 2414-8512

ISSN (Print) 2311-293X

DOI:

Keywords: Personality traits, emotion regulation, marital satisfaction, women, commuter marriages.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to determine the relationship between personality traits, emotion regulation, and marital satisfaction among women in commuter marriages. Furthermore, the study will also explore the predictors of marital satisfaction of women in such type of marital relationship. The correlational method was employed for the study and the sample of 142 women in commuter marriages (N= 142) were selected through convenience sampling technique. The age of the recruited participants was between 22-36 years (M= 28.21, SD= 3.85). The Psychological instrument were used in the study; Big Five Inventory, Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, and Marital Adjustment Test to measure personality traits, emotion regulation and marital satisfaction respectively. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed that Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness showed a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction whereas Neuroticism showed a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction. As for the second variable of emotion regulation, Cognitive reappraisal showed a significant positive relationship, and Expressive Suppression showed a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction. Regression analysis (Multiple Hierarchical Linear Regression) revealed Neuroticism and Expressive Suppression as significant negative predictors of marital satisfaction and Cognitive Reappraisal turned out to be a significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction.



Introduction

The tendency of commuter marriages has been increasing worldwide due to economic instability (Aneli et al., 2019). Different studies highlighted commuter marriages as a common phenomenon in which career stability is more important (Hammar & Tamas., 2021). Developed countries such as Austria, Germany, and Norway have the world's highest commuter marriages which are more than 30 percent from other countries (Adema, Clarke & Thevenon., 2020). The last year, the United States also showed through a survey that approximately 3,5 million couples are part of commuter marriages which is increasing with time (Gelfand., 2019). In Pakistan, the culture is opposite from the western, keeping aside from the religious icon perspective but the trend of commuter marriages has been increasing in the past few years (Lindsey., 2020). The concept of commuter marriages in Pakistan is commonly observed where the husband has a separate residence from the wife in another city or country (Ahmed., 2020). Some studies highlight that in Pakistan, usually, the wife stays at the primary residence that is with her in-laws, and manages housework and children and the husband visits either

weekly, monthly, or yearly depending upon the nature of the job (Fazal et al., 2019; Ahmed., 2020).

Marital satisfaction is a multi-dimensional concept that cannot be achieved automatically but requires excessive effort between couples (Tahan et al., 2020). Personality traits are one of the elements that affect marital satisfaction. On the other hand, it is the general expectation from marriage or our society that partners tend to impose on each other characteristics that become the cause of burden or stress (Umubyeyi & Mtapuri., 2019). According to a recent analysis, it has been indicated that the divorce rate is around 4.08 per 1000 marriages across the world (Khan et al., 2022). In Pakistan, according to a recent survey around 69 percent of the population is married and 0.58% are being divorced due to different reasons that are enhancing with the passage of time (Ahmad et al., 2020). Furthermore, In Pakistan, families have been involved in marriages as the separation of a couple endangers the survival of the whole family system (Murshid et al., 2020). Emotional attachment and bonding exist not between the couples but also between the two larger families. Similarly, emotional regulation refers to a process in which individuals invest efforts to change the environment for the sustainability of their relationship (Zulfiqar et al., 2019). It can be determined from the example that if the couple is unhappy with each other, it jiggles the family and usually the relationship ends in the form of separation also called divorce (Johnson., 2019). If the couple decides to stay together despite being dissatisfied and unhappy, then their conflicts usually impact their children which can have long-lasting effects (Johnson., 2019). Thus marriage affects the individual in a variety of ways.

Vulnerability Stress Adaptation Model

The current study has been conceptualized on this model. According to the model, individual personal characteristics such as personality traits determine marital satisfaction, its association with emotional attachment, and individuals dealing with stressful environments (Rana et al., 2020). The model helps to explore the current study variables from the perspective of commuter marriages in Pakistan while following the three factors. First, to explore the stable characteristics of the partners. Secondly, to deal with the stressful environment and support system between the couple. The third is to explore the adaptive process partners usually display in their relationship for stability (Karney et al., 2020). In the current study, personality assessment, emotional stability, and marriage satisfaction will be associated with the mentioned factors.

The rationale of the Study:

The current study aims to highlight the problems and to prepare a pathway to address the problems that arise due to physical distance among married couples. The findings of the different studies highlighted that married couples feel distressed, lack emotions, and the feeling of irritability which also affects their interpersonal or intrapersonal relationships. In a collectivistic culture like Pakistan where the concept of commuter marriages is new and commonly observed, this study can provide the need assessment of addressing the issues in the perspective of personality traits to achieve marital satisfaction to preserve the cultural perspective despite the physical distance with the spouse.

Methodology

The Quantitative research approach through a correlational method will be used to examine the relationship between personality traits, emotion regulation, and marital satisfaction among women in commuter marriages in Pakistan.

Sampling Strategy

The sample consisting of 142 women living in commuter marriages was selected through the convenience sampling technique. The participants selected for the study were aged between 22-36 years ($M= 28.21$, $SD= 3.85$).

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria have been followed for the recruitment of the study participants;

- Married women who live away from their spouses for at least five days a week were included.
- Women who have been in commuter marriage for more than 6 months.
- Women who can read and write the English language were included.

- Women living separately from their husbands and are in process of divorce were not included.
- Participants who are living in the catchment area of Pakistan were included in the study.

Psychological Instrument:

The following instruments have been used to access the variables in the current study;

Demographic Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been designed to gather the participant's basic information such as age, religion, education, occupation, monthly income, family system, the duration of the marriage, number of kids, etc.

The Big Five Inventory

(John & Srivastava., 1999) The scale has been developed to measure the personality traits of the individual. The instrument has 44 self-report items comprised on the Likert Scale. The "1" indicates "Strong disagreement" with the instrument item and the "5" indicates "Strongly agree" with the statement. The 44 items are divided into five subscales entitled; "Extraversion" (Items: 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36), "Agreeableness" (Items: 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, 42), "Conscientiousness" (Items: 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38, 43), "Neuroticism" (Items: 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39), "Openness" (Items: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 41, 44). In the instrument, there are a few of the items that were reversed scored. The Cronbach alpha for the entire scale was found to be 0.74 (*Extraversion*= 0.82, *Agreeableness*= 0.66, *Conscientiousness*= 0.71, *Neuroticism*= 0.84, *Openness*= 0.73).

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

(Gross & John., 2003) The emotion regulation questionnaire was used to assess the emotion regulation of the participants. The psychological instrument consisted of 10 items, that were designed as per the Likert scale of 1-7 scoring. The score "1" represents "Strong disagreement" whereas "7" represents "Strong agreement" with the statements. There was no reverse scoring in this scale and it was divided into two subscales named "Cognitive Reappraisal" (Items: 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10) and "Expressive Suppression" (Items: 2, 4, 6, 9). The higher scores of the subscale indicated that the participant used that very strategy to regulate their emotions. The overall Cronbach alpha for the scale turned out to be 0.78 (*Cognitive Reappraisal*= 0.87, *Expressive Suppression*= 0.74).

Marital Adjustment Test

(Locke & Wallace., 1959) The Marital Adjustment Test also known as Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT), was used to assess the level of marital satisfaction among the participants. The scale was based on 15 items that measured marital satisfaction which was based on the level of agreement and disagreement between the couple while providing them with various situations or scenarios. The options for the answers carried their scores which are added up together. The scoring of the psychological instrument is continuous. The higher scores achieved on the test indicated higher satisfaction whereas lower scores predict low satisfaction among couples' marriages. The 0.85 efficiencies of Alpha have been determined in the scale.

Procedure

The synopsis of the current study was presented to the Ethical Board of the Kinnaird College of Women's University, Lahore. After getting the permission the information sheet, written consent, and permission letters have been developed before starting the study. The demographic information sheet has been designed to fill by the participants. Due to the COVID precautions, the data was filled from the participants while utilizing the online platforms. The online form has been developed in which initial information regarding the research with the contact details of the researcher has been attached. The recruitment criteria of the study while providing the purpose of the study were also mentioned. Those participants who were willing to participate in the study on a volunteer basis and met the criteria of the study were requested to sign the consent form online. The demographic sheet and the further psychological assessment have been available online and participants easily completed the form while taking 25 to 30 minutes. There was no difficulty has been faced in the collection of the data. The data from 150 participants collected was reduced to 142 after the screening. After the collection was completed, the data was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) for further analysis.

Ethical considerations

During the whole study, ethical considerations have been followed. It has been ensured to the participants that their confidentiality has been maintained and data will be kept or published anonymously. The information sheet has been provided and a consent form was taken before participation in the study. No such information was taken from the participants that would cause distress in the individual. If necessary, professional help would have been given to the participants to manage the distress. There was no physical or emotionally harmed factor included in the study.

Results

The following results have been determined from the current study these are;

Table 1.1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables	M (SD)	f (%)
Age (years)	28.21 (3.85)	
Religion		
Muslim		142 (100)
Christian		
Hindu		
Jew		
Other		
Education		
Intermediate		3 (2.1)
Bachelors		71 (50)
Masters or equivalent		57 (40.1)
PhD		4 (2.8)
Other		7 (4.9)
Employment Status		
Working		68 (47.9)
Non-Working		74 (52.1)
Monthly Income		
Less than 50,000 pkr		8 (5.6)
50,000-100,000 pkr		32 (22.5)
100,000-150,000 pkr		41 (28.9)
150,000-200,000 pkr		27 (19.0)
200,000-300,000 pkr		19 (13.4)
More than 300,000pkr		15 (10.6)
Current family type		
Joint		80 (56.3)
Nuclear		62 (43.7)
Number of children		
0		75 (52.8)
1		47 (33.1)
2		19 (13.4)
3		1 (0.7)
Years of marriage		
6 months-1 year		54 (38.0)
1 – 3 years		53 (37.3)
3- 5 years		35 (24.6)

Note. M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation, f= Frequency

The table shows the mean, standard deviation, and frequency of the demographic information obtained from the participants. The information included age, education, employment status, monthly income, family type, number of children, and years of marriage. All of the participants were Muslims. The majority had received education to the bachelor's level and were non-working. Most of the participants had been married for 6 months- 1 year.

Table 1.2
Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N=142)

Variables	k	M	SD	Range	α	Skewness	Kurtosis
1. Extraversion	8	24.12	6.58	8-40	.82	.36	-1.70
2. Agreeableness	9	34.83	4.88	9-45	.67	-1.21	-1.08
3. Conscientiousness	9	27.45	5.03	9-45	.71	1.08	-.59
4. Neuroticism	8	28.21	6.55	8-40	.84	-1.13	-.95
5. Openness	10	31.96	4.40	10-50	.73	-.13	-1.63
6. Cognitive Reappraisal	6	28.13	7.78	6-42	.87	-1.18	-1.32
7. Expressive Suppression	4	18.57	5.80	4-28	.74	-2.55	1.17
8. Marital Adjustment Test	15	107.48	29.44	2-158	.85	0.06	-0.91

Note. k= Total no. of items, α = Cronbach's alpha, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation

Results in table 1.2 show that all the distribution of the sample has been done while using the Kurtosis and Skewness method as the results indicated the acceptability rate is ± 3.00 . This indicates the division of the results are being appropriate in determining the efficacy of the results. The values of the scale determined by Cronbach's alpha were observed in the mentioned table. All the values fall in the range of fair to good reliability except for the subscale Agreeableness which shows poor internal consistency.

Inferential Statistics

The proposed hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Hierarchical Linear Regression. The results are discussed in the section below

Table 1.3
Descriptive Statistics showed the relationship among individuals Personality Traits, Emotion Regulation, and Marital Satisfaction among women in commuter marriages.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Extraversion	-	.12	.10	-	-	.30**	-	.30**
2. Agreeableness		-	.11	3.6**	.35**	-.01	.36**	.09
3. Conscientiousness			-	-.11	.29**	.11	.07	.19*
4. Neuroticism				-.16	.32**	-	-.09	-
5. Openness					.02	.39**	-	.29**
6. Cog Reappraisal						-.02	.16*	.17*
7. Exp Suppression							.12	.33**
8. MAT								.33**
M	3.01	3.87	3.47	3.52	3.65	4.68	4.64	6.71
SD	.82	.54	.57	.81	.38	1.29	1.45	1.84

Note. Cog Reappraisal= Cognitive Reappraisal, Exp Suppression= Expressive Suppression, M= Mean, SD= Standard deviation. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was run to investigate the relationship between the variables under study. Results in table 4.2 revealed that three subscales Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and openness had a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction whereas one subscale Neuroticism had a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction among women in commuter marriages. This shows that women who possess more traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness as a part of their personality are more likely to be satisfied with their marriage. On the other hand, women who possess more traits of neuroticism as a part of their personality are less likely to be satisfied with their marital relationship.

Moreover, the Cognitive Reappraisal subscale of the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire had

a significant positive relationship with marital satisfaction whereas Expressive Suppression had a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction. This concludes that women living in commuter marriages, who use cognitive reappraisal as their emotion regulation strategy, are more likely to be satisfied in their marital relationship whereas women who regulate their emotions with the use of expressive suppression strategy are less likely to be satisfied with their marriage

In addition to that, the table above also depicts that Extraversion has a significant positive relationship with Cognitive reappraisal and a significant negative relationship with expressive suppression. This means that married women who possess more traits of extraversion are more likely to use cognitive reappraisal as a strategy to regulate their emotions and less likely to opt for expressive suppression as an emotion regulation strategy. Similarly, neuroticism had a significant negative relationship with cognitive reappraisal. This means that women who possess more traits of neuroticism are less likely to use cognitive reappraisal as a strategy to regulate their emotions. Along with that, Openness had a significant, negative relationship with expressive suppression. By that, we mean that women in commuter marriages, who possess the traits of openness in their personality are less likely to regulate their emotions by suppressing them.

For further analysis of the data, multiple hierarchical linear regression was applied to investigate the predictors of the outcome variables. The following section will cover the statistical analysis and interpretation of the data.

Table 1.4

Multiple Hierarchical Linear Regression showing Personality traits and Emotion Regulation as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction among women in commuter marriages (N= 142)

Predictors	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	ΔR ²
		LL	UL				
Step I							
Constant	4.49	.90	8.08	1.81		.15***	.15***
Extraversion	.40	-.00	.81	.21	.18		
Agreeableness	.03	-.52	.59	.28	.01		
Conscientiousness	.34	-.19	.88	.27	.11		
Neuroticism	-.48	-.87	-.09	.19	-.21*		
Openness	.37	-.51	1.26	.45	.08		
Step II							
Constant	5.33	1.64	9.01	1.86		.33***	.18***
Extraversion	-.19	-.61	.21	.21	-.08		
Agreeableness	.33	-.17	.83	.25	.09		
Conscientiousness	.38	-.09	.87	.24	.12		
Neuroticism	-.47	-.84	-.10	.18	-.21*		
Openness	.38	-.41	1.19	.40	.08		
Cognitive Reappraisal	.46	.23	.69	.11	.32***		
Expressive Suppression	-.54	-.75	-.34	.10	-		
						.43***	

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Multiple Linear regression (Hierarchical method) was run to identify the predictors of marital satisfaction among women in commuter marriages. Five subscales of personality traits and two subscales of emotion regulation were entered into the regression model. Marital satisfaction was entered as an outcome variable.

First, (Hierarchical Method) also known as regression analysis identified the predictors related to the satisfaction of marital life. A few influential cases were observed in the data which were removed. After that, the assumptions have been completed. The independent error is the value that specific between the ratio of 1 and 3 as indicated in the results. The further analysis indicated that there is no perfect multicollinearity was tested by checking the tolerance values, and the assumption was met because all the values were greater than .2. The assumptions of homoscedasticity, linearity and normally distributed errors were also met.

In model I, one predictor variable i.e., Five subscales of personality traits was entered, and the regression model was significant, $R^2 = .15$, $F(5, 136) = 4.96$, $p < .001$. In model II, two dimensions of emotion regulation were entered (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) were entered as predictor variables along with five dimensions of personality traits, and the prediction analysis

showed significance related to the results, $R^2 = .33$, $F(7, 134) = 9.73$, $p < .001$. When the effect of model I was excluded from model II, model II remained significant, $\Delta R^2 = .18$, $F(2, 134) = 18.47$, $p < .001$.

The element of neuroticism showed as a significant negative association of marital satisfaction among women in commuter marriages. This implies that women who possess the traits of neuroticism as a part of their personality are less likely to be satisfied in their commuter marriage. Along with that cognitive reappraisal turned out to be a significant positive predictor of marital satisfaction and expressive suppression turned out to be a significant negative predictor of marital satisfaction. This means that women in commuter marriage, who regulate their emotions using cognitive reappraisal as a strategy are more likely to be satisfied in their marital relationship. On the other hand, women in commuter marriages who regulate their emotions by using the strategy of expressive suppression are less likely to be satisfied with their marriage.

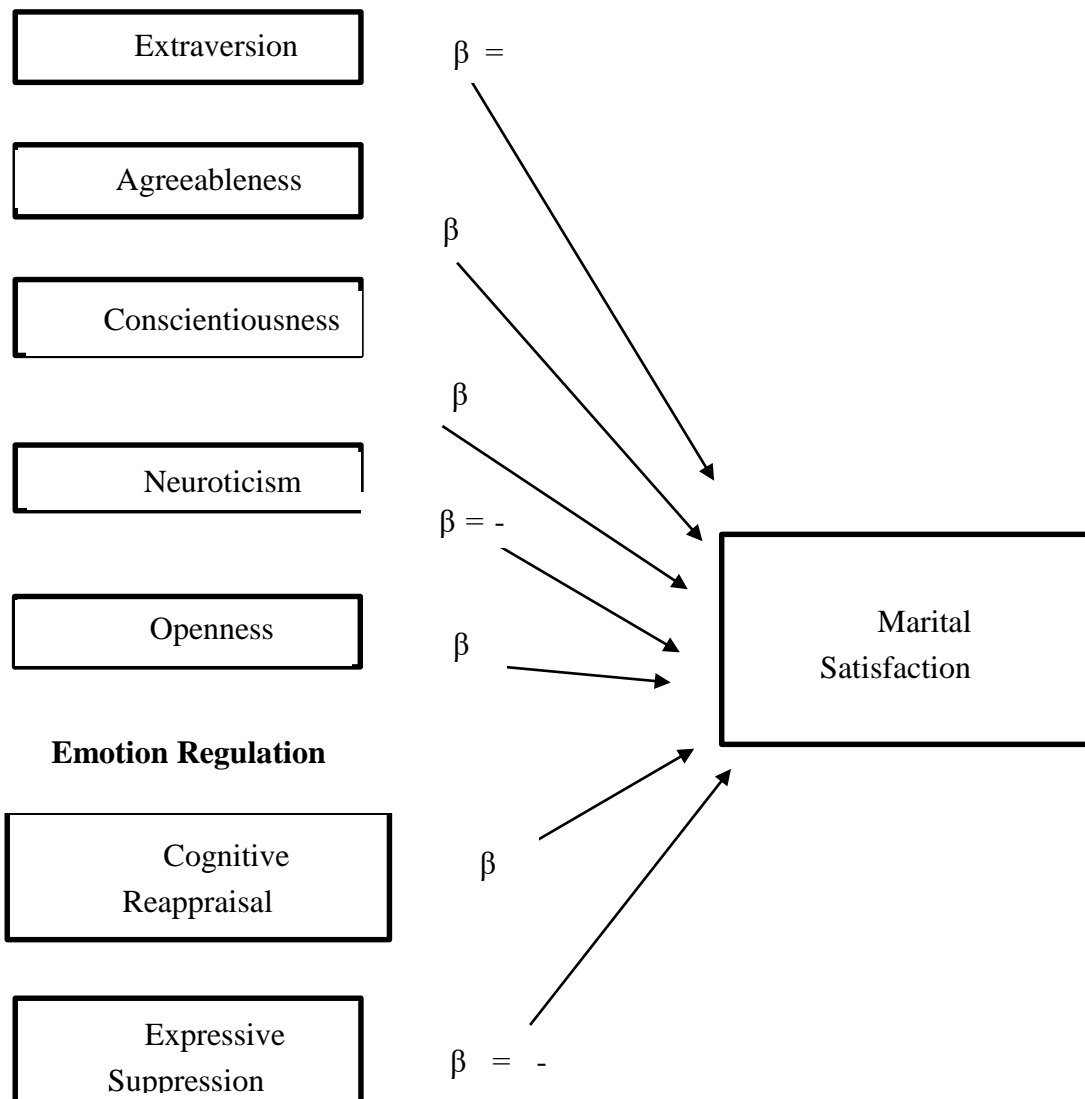
Emerged Model

Figure 1.1

Emerged model for predictors of marital satisfactions in women in commuter marriage

Predictors outcomes

Personality Traits



Discussion

The study aimed to assess personality traits, emotion regulation, and marital satisfaction in women in the context of commuter marriages in Pakistan. With rising inflation and global development, the trend of commuter marriages has been on a rise. Some research studies have been found on marital satisfaction in Pakistan, but none was found in the context of commuter marriages which have been quite common in our culture.

Marriage has its significance in every culture and religion. It is one of the social relationships that holds immense importance and affects not only the people in the relationship but also other people as well. In a collectivistic culture like Pakistan, its importance is magnified starting from gender to the process of selection of a spouse, the role of in-laws, post-marriage traditions, etc. Previous literature has stated that in comparison to men, women are less likely to be satisfied with their marriage (Jackson et al., 2014). In South-Asian culture, especially in Pakistan, the difference could be because of the meaning that women attach to marriage. That meaning is amplified due to the religious factors associated with it which make women's perspectives different from men's (Bilal & Rasool, 2020).

In the current study, it has been indicated that the people who are defined as extroverts are more likely to manage their emotions by changing the way they interpret their emotions. Since they are emotionally expressive, they do not let their emotions get bottled up inside them. Instead, they consciously use cognitive strategies to change the way they feel about encountered situation (Scheffel et al., 2019). Similarly, neuroticism has negative relationship with cognitive reappraisal. This means that people who possess higher traits of neuroticism are less likely to use cognitive reappraisal as a strategy to regulate their emotions. They usually stay within their shell and come off as socially withdrawn (Widiger, 2017).

Previously reviewed literature supported our current study. As marriage is a union of two personalities, it serves as one of the key ingredients in making or breaking a relationship. Since extraversion is a blend of positive emotions, being social, being expressive etc., they are more likely to be satisfied with their marriage. Since extroverts have high positive affectivity in terms of emotions and expressions and they have the ability to communicate effectively, they are more content with their life and their relationships (Jain & Singh, 2019). This shows that women who show more positive affect are more likely to be happy in their marital relationships.

This result is supported by previous literature that cognitive reappraisal is significantly related to marital satisfaction (Mazzuca et al., 2018). The result of the current study revealed that cognitive reappraisal was a significant predictor of marital satisfaction. Despite the difficulties related to commuter marriages and marriages in general, if women put conscious effort into managing their emotions by redirecting thought processes and interpreting the situation in a different way, they are more likely to be satisfied with their relationship.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study suggested that women in commuter marriages with more traits of extraversion and openness are more satisfied with their marriages and relationships. Whereas women in commuter marriages scoring high on neuroticism are less likely to be satisfied with their marriages. Furthermore, females in commuter marriages, who regulate their emotions using cognitive reappraisal are more satisfied in their marriage whereas women who use expressive suppression are less likely to be satisfied with their marriage.

Future Implications

- This study can serve as a gateway for coming research in exploring the field of commuter marriages in our culture
- The results can contribute to the field of clinical psychology in marital counseling where women can be advised to focus on intrapersonal factors to improve their marital life.
- Since commuter marriages are prevalent in our society, awareness programs can be conducted to teach women daily cognitive exercises to actively redirect their emotions.
- This study can aid in studying the phenomenon of unhappy marriages and divorces in our culture.

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