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Cognitive Distortions and its Relationship to Marital Future Anxiety Among University Students

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Summary of the study

First: Introduction

The university stage is one of the most important stages that individuals go through due to its contribution to building their personality and qualifying them to face the changes that occur in their future. Therefore, caring for university students and their problems is considered a necessity for the individual and society and one of their most prominent problems is the constant preoccupation and thinking about the professional and marital future, especially in an era full of rapid and sudden changes in various aspects of life, which create a future filled with anxiety.

Anxiety about the future is triggered in an individual when his or her personal future becomes exposed to danger or a place for thought and contemplation such as moments of marital choice (Mousa Zaki, 2021). Marriage is a source of anxiety for young people of marriageable age in addition to the problems associated with it whether the psychological, economic or social aspects. Those individuals with marital future anxiety have a feeling of low self-esteem, a low level of self-confidence, loss of interest in general, and feelings of despair and worthlessness (Nabil El-Guindy, Doaa Desouky, 2017; Ossai & Chujor, 2023; Obeid et al. al., 2020; Tiaraa, et al., 2023).

An individual's reluctance to get married may be due to many factors and reasons related to the individual or the world surrounding him. Among the factors that may negatively affect an individual's attitude toward marriage is the way he/she thinks and interprets things around him in an inaccurate way. This is the maladaptive behaviors and emotions are the result of distorted ideas (Aron Beck, 2000), and then cognitive distortions cause the individual to distort the facts to agree with the perceptions that dominate his thinking. An individual who feels anxious or afraid of a specific thing anticipates the occurrence of a danger that threatens his/ her personal space (Aron-Beck, 2000).

Second: The statement of the problem

The researcher noticed the problem of the study through her observation of some students who suffer from anxiety about their marital future. They show many symptoms that include: their inability to make the decision to marry easily, a feeling of loss of security regarding engagement or marriage, and the expectation of failure in marital life, in addition to feelings of fear and anxiety about marriage in the future and the responsibilities and obligations associated with it. Feelings of fear of marriage may be due to distortion thinking patterns, by which some students may be characterized who reject the idea of marriage by adopting many distorted ideas and beliefs, which in turn leads to anxiety about their marital future, such as the belief that marriage is a violation

of privacy and a restriction of freedom. Consequently, the aim was to study cognitive distortions and their relationship to marital future anxiety among university students.

Third: Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between scores on cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety among university students?
2. What are the differences in cognitive distortions among university students that are attributed to (gender, place of residence, economic, social and cultural level of the family, academic group, academic grade, specialization)?
3. What are the differences in marital future anxiety among university students that are attributed to (gender, place of residence, economic, social and cultural level of the family, academic group, academic grade, specialization)?
4. What is the contribution of cognitive distortions in predicting marital future anxiety among university students?

Fourth: Study Aims

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between cognitive distortions and the marital future anxiety among university students, identifying the differences in cognitive distortions and anxiety the marital future anxiety among university students that are attributed to (gender, place of residence, economic, social, and cultural level of the family, academic group, academic grade, specialization), and exploring the possibility of cognitive distortions contribution in predicting future marital anxiety among university students.

Fifth: Study Importance:

The current study may result in the following theoretical and practical importance:

A- Theoretical importance:

1. addressing one of the important research topics, which is marital future anxiety among university students, and attempting to identify the relationship between it and cognitive distortions, in addition to shedding light on the differences in some demographic variables among university students.
2. Contributing to shedding light on the topic of "cognitive distortions and their relationship with marital future anxiety" to reveal its various aspects and dimensions associated.

B- Practical importance:

1. Providing a set of recommendations and educational applications related to both cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety in the light of the study results, which contributes to designing preventive counseling programs to reduce this problem and its negative effects on individuals and their mental health.
2. using the study results in the field of family counseling, especially for individuals who are about to marry and have negative attitudes towards marriage, by making them aware of their negative ways of thinking towards marriage.

Sixth: Operational Definitions of study terms

A- Cognitive Distortions:

It is defined operationally as “inaccurate and distorted ways of thinking about oneself, the world, and the future; resulting from a group of automatic and negative thoughts, formed since childhood, and reflected in the individual’s inappropriate emotional and behavioral responses to various situations,” and it is measured by the grade that the student obtains; a high score indicates a high level of cognitive distortions, while a low score indicates a low level of cognitive distortions.

B- Marital Future Anxiety:

It is defined operationally as “a negative emotional state related to the individual’s marital future resulting from a combination of wrong perceptions and feelings of discomfort associated with the control of fear and tension around the idea of marriage, which leads to undesirable behaviors towards marriage,” and it is measured by the grade the student obtains; a high score indicates a high level of marital future anxiety, while a low score indicates a low level of marital future anxiety.

Seventh: Study delimitations:

A- Objective delimitations

1. Method delimitations:

The current study used the descriptive method to determine the nature of the relationship between cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety among the study sample.

2. population delimitations

The study population consisted of unmarried students at Fayoum University. While the study sample consisted of unmarried university students enrolled in the four years of study at some Fayoum University faculties.

3. Tools delimitation:

The researcher used tools that were consistent with the study aims. They included:

- Cognitive distortions scale. (Prepared by the researcher)
- Marital future anxiety scale. (Prepared by the researcher)
- A scale for assessing the socio-economic and cultural level of the Egyptian family. (Ayman Salem Abdullah, 2018).

4. Statistical delimitations:

- Percentages, averages, and standard deviations.
- Alpha coefficient.
- Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

Levene's test for homogeneity of variance.

- Pearson's linear correlation coefficient.
- T-Test; to measure the significance of differences.
- One Way ANOVA.
- Regression analysis to determine the possibility of predicting the study variables.

B - Spatial delimitations: represented by the place where the study was conducted. They included the various colleges at Fayoum University.

C- Time delimitations: they included the time periods in which the study was conducted, which were the academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024

Eighth: Study Hypotheses

1. There is a statistically significant relationship between scores on cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety among university students.
2. There are no statistically significant differences in the cognitive distortions patterns among university students attributed to demographic variables (gender, place of residence, economic, social and cultural level of the family, academic group, academic grade, specialization).
3. There are no statistically significant differences in marital future anxiety among university students attributed to demographic variables (gender, place of

- residence, economic, social and cultural level of the family, academic group, academic grade, specialization).
4. There is statistically significant contribution of patterns of cognitive distortions in predicting marital future anxiety among university students.

Ninth: Study Results

The study results revealed a positive correlation between the combination of patterns of cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety, with the exception of four patterns, which are (mind reading , minimization, emotional reasoning, and obligatory thinking). In addition, the results revealed that there was no correlation between the “minimization” pattern of cognitive distortions and all dimensions of marital future anxiety and the overall grade among university students, and between three types of cognitive distortions (emotional reasoning, mind-reading, obligatory thinking) and the “cognitive” dimension of marital future anxiety among university students, and between two types of cognitive distortions (taking an external source, unfair comparisons) and the “emotional” dimension of marital future anxiety among university students. Moreover, there was no relationship among four types of distortions (catastrophizing , mind reading, taking an external source, unfair comparisons) and the “behavioral” dimension of marital future anxiety among university students as well as the lack of a relationship between five types of cognitive distortions (emotional reasoning, mind reading, obligatory thinking, taking an external source, unfair comparisons) and the “general” dimension of marital future anxiety among university students.

Tenth: Study Recommendations

In light of the study results, several recommendations were introduced:

1. Activating psychological counseling centers in universities, because they play an effective role in educating students about their distorted ways of thinking, as well as their fears regarding marriage. This is based on the individual’s guidance need at the university level.
2. Increasing community awareness, especially university youth, of the negative effects of both cognitive distortions and marital future anxiety, and the resulting psychological, behavioral and social problems.
3. Holding seminars in schools and universities to educate students about the psychological problems they may be exposed to at this age, and to provide them with how to confront them, which contributes to improving their self esteem, and their attitude towards the world and the future.
4. Providing therapeutic programs for students who suffer from various types of cognitive distortions, as well as feelings of anxiety about the marital future to get rid of their fear and regain their self-confidence.

Eleventh: Suggestions for further research

In light of the study procedures, the difficulties the researcher found while conducting the study, and based on the characteristics and features that distinguish university students, many proposed research were be suggested

1. Cognitive distortions and their relationship to fear of love among university students.
2. The effect of an integrative therapeutic program in reducing and modifying cognitive distortions among university students.
3. Perceived self stigma and its relationship to marital future anxiety among blind students.
4. The effectiveness of dialectical behavioral therapy in reducing marital future anxiety among post graduate students.
5. The effectiveness of a counseling program based on acceptance and commitment therapy in reducing marital future anxiety among postgraduate students.