Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of marital relationship on mental health of women in Pakistan

Version: 1 Date: 24 August 2013

Reviewer: Claire M Kamp Dush

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Discretionary Revisions
None.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. There are grammatical errors (such as in the results section of the abstract.) Please reread the manuscript carefully (out loud helps) and correct grammatical errors.
2. I would probably list “marriage” as a key word instead of “marital relationship”.
3. Clarify this sentence “This might allow a greater significant role of the social support in marital satisfaction, adjustment and interaction patterns”. Whose social support?
4. What are “practice codes”?
5. I think you need to search the manuscript for the word effects and remove all occurrences. These are associations.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. What does this mean “Although one of the amenable risk factors associated with increased prevalence is marital circumstance, it’s not clear how different aspects of this construct interact.” Clarify.
2. It is impossible to test the “effect” of the marital relationship on mental health. Mental health is associated with who selects into marriage. Perhaps marital quality is low because the woman had poor mental health when she got married. All you are able to do is examine associations.
3. Change the title so that the term “effect” does not appear.
4. You say “Factor structures of five scales investigated in the current study were similar to the structure reported in the literature.” In what literature are you discussing? The US literature?
5. I cannot tell what the results were from the abstract.
6. This sentence makes me assume you are collecting data from both members of the couple, which I do not believe is the case. “This is to say that the unit of analysis for marital satisfaction is individual and the unit of analysis for marital adjustment is couple or the relationship”.
7. These sentences (“In Pakistan conflict in marital relations is one of the
common reasons for distressed and depressed women approaching mental health care services [10] and it is one of the most frequently studied phenomena in the field of family and relationships [11].” and “In Pakistan, rates of depression and anxiety are disproportionately high among women [3, 4]. The total mean prevalence of depression and anxiety in Pakistani community is 34% (29-66% for women and 10-33% for men) [3]. Factors reported to be associated with these rates among women are middle age, low level of education, living in rural area[5,3,6] financial situation[3]; marriage related relationship difficulties[3,4]; marital satisfaction [7,8,6]; and marital adjustment [9].”) makes it seem like this issue has been studied previously. I need more details about the results of previous research in Pakistan before I can adequately judge the merits of this paper.

8. Hypotheses?

9. There was very little theory in the background section. There are several theories related to this area.

10. The sample is a select sample. The age range is wide, and it was not a random sample.

11. I think you need to include the items in the scales (or put it in a table).

12. The authors need to be careful about causal inference. For instance, the authors say “perceived higher social support positively affects marital adjustment directly and indirectly through relationship dynamics which will then reduce the risk of depression through increased level of couple’s satisfaction”. Less depression could lead to higher social support which could lead to increased satisfaction. Depressed individuals tend to withdraw, if the person is not depressed, they probably have more opportunities to receive social support, hence increasing their relationship quality. Hence, because reciprocal associations are a possibility in this study, all causal language needs to be removed. These are only associations.

13. You have the same problem in the discussion. You could also say that lower depression protected against lower marital satisfaction. Again, be very careful how you discuss these results.

14. I don’t understand how the results support these comments “The SEM model in figure 5 shows that the process of marital adjustment affects level of satisfaction of married Pakistani women. This also supports previous conclusion [81] that marital satisfaction is a separate construct that is an outcome of marital adjustment.” I do not think it is possible to draw this conclusion with cross-sectional data.

15. There is so much reported in the discussion of this paper that it is hard to establish what the most important, critical points are.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes, for the most part.
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes, for the most part.
3. Are the data sound? The data have limitations, but seem sound.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data
deposition? Yes (?)

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? No.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Somewhat.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? They did not clearly acknowledge the work upon which they are building, particularly the other Pakistan work.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? No.

9. Is the writing acceptable? No, not really. I am assuming English is a second language for these authors. If that is the case, it is pretty good. But, it still needs grammatical work.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests