

Mediating role of irrational beliefs in the relationship between the quality of family communication and marital satisfaction

Parisa Janjani (1,2)

Khodamorad Momeni (3)

Alireza Rai (1)

Mohammad Reza Saidi (1)

(1) Department of Cardiology, School of Medicine, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran

(2) PhD Student of Psychology, College of Social Sciences, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran

(3) Department of Psychology, College of Social Sciences, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran

Correspondence

Alireza Rai,

Department of Cardiology, School of Medicine, Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Kermanshah, Iran

Phone: +989126440916

Email: raialireza@yahoo.com

Abstract

Introduction: Considering the importance of the family institution and that marital satisfaction plays the most important role in sustainability of marital life, this study aimed to investigate the mediating role of irrational beliefs in the relationship between family relationship quality and marital satisfaction.

Material and Methods: It was a correlation exploratory research. The statistical population of the study included employee women in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. 250 samples were available selected. Questionnaire by McKeon Family Crisis Assessment, Irrational Beliefs Questionnaire and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire were used to collect the required data. Data were analyzed using SPSS-19 software and descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and path analysis.

Results: The results of this study suggested a positive relationship between quality of family communication and marital satisfaction. Also, the results showed a negative relationship between irrational beliefs and marital satisfaction. Other results reported a significant direct relation between irrational beliefs and family movement for achieving help for marital satisfaction as 0.19 and -0.21, respectively, and there was a direct correlation between passive evaluation and irrational beliefs as 0.24, in which

the coefficients were significant at level $p < 0.01$, however no direct and significant relationships were found between other variables in the study.

Conclusion: Irrational beliefs to the relationship between the quality of family communication and marital satisfaction act as a mediator, and can be an advocate of family counseling in pre-marital counseling and marital interventions.

Key words: Irrational beliefs, family relationship quality, marital satisfaction, women

Introduction

Family has been introduced as an institution or social institution, which results from a marriage between men and women. Healthy, constructive engagement between humans and the establishment of love to others and the intimacy to one another are some examples of manifestations of human social life. An individual's satisfaction with marital life is considered as family satisfaction, which in turn guarantees the concept of life satisfaction, and facilitates the growth and excellence, and material and spiritual progress of society. Marital relationship has been described as the most important human relationship, since it provides the initial structure for establishing a family relationship and educating the future generation (1). Marital satisfaction is the most important and a complex aspect of a marital relationship. In other words, one of the vital aspects of a marital system is the satisfaction that spouses feel and experience in their relationship (2). The term marital satisfaction refers to the general satisfaction with the close marital relationship, and the satisfied couples are couples who show a great deal of agreement, are satisfied with the type and level of their relationship, are satisfied with the type and quality of their leisure time and apply good management in time and financial issues (3). Increasing the problems, dissatisfaction and marital incompatibility, increasing rate of divorce and its adverse consequences over the recent years have highlighted the importance of couples' relationships. In this regard, one of the most effective approaches in researching and recognizing the roots and causes of communication problems is the rational-emotional-behavioral view. In this perspective, attention is paid to perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, expectations and beliefs of the individual and their effects on everyday behaviors. Ellis (1987), a rationalist-emotional-behavioral theorist, considered illnesses and mental disorders resulting from misconceptions, false beliefs and beliefs, and wrong attitudes. In his opinion, irrational beliefs are the main cause of disagreements in social relations, especially in couples' relationships. According to statistics reported among incompatible couples (4), misunderstandings, irrational and absolutist beliefs were more frequent (approximately 60%) than other factors, since irrational beliefs were known as exaggerated, inflexible, absolute, and unrealistic. Bernstein (1989) also emphasizes that much evidence points to the fact that cognitive mechanisms affect marital adjustment and satisfaction; therefore, marital life is not immune to irrational beliefs (5). Also another researcher showed that irrational beliefs were a known factor in marital conflicts and irrational beliefs were positively associated with various types of distress, such as general distress, anxiety, depression, anger, and guilt (6). Fincham, Beach and Davila (2004) have shown that the conflict resolution style and the ability to develop emotions and feelings in the first 5 years of marital life were considered as important factors in marital satisfaction (7). Couples' agreement on communicative styles, emotional expressions, sexual relations, leisure, and house hold chores were known to be influential among other important factors in marital affairs (8, 9, 10). Another important factor in marital satisfaction is how to communicate.

Effective communication has a prominent role in marital relationships (11). Communication in the family uses the mechanisms of the family to share their preferences, needs and feelings. Communication is considered as the next facilitator and dynamic dimension of family system, which plays a vital role in helping the family to move towards the coherence and flexibility of the family so that Lewis and Spanier (1979), reviewing research in three decades of 1950 to 1970, concluded that communication skills were positively related to the quality of marriage (12). Positive communication facilitates movement at different levels of the family organization, while the lack of communication skills or negative relationships prevents the family system from changing levels of cohesion and flexibility. Therefore, proper communication can play a key role in preventing the collapse of the family system in times of crisis and difficulty (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). Since the family is known as one of the main institutions of the society and the main guardian of the growth and development of their couples and their children, helping couples to improve couples and their children, marital relationships have been taken into consideration through various methods of treatment during recent years. It is necessary to help couples to solve marital problems through identifying the reasons and factors affecting marital dissatisfaction and satisfaction. Considering the essential role of marital relations on the concept of mental health, identification of effective factors in marital satisfaction can be considered as an important step in marital relationships. On the other hand, the increase in divorce rates in motivational societies has led researchers to find effective factors in marital satisfaction and stability. According to the discussion above, the present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of irrational beliefs in relationship of quality of family communication and marital satisfaction.

Materials and Methods

It was a correlation exploratory research. The samples of the study included employed women in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences where 250 samples were available and selected according to their availability. They participated in the study on their own free will.

Inclusion criteria: Married women, women who did not have a history of mental illness and chronic physical illness, women who had not yet been referred to the judicial authorities.

Exclusion criteria: people who had not the desire to continue cooperation

The questionnaires used in this study were demographic questionnaire, Jones irrational beliefs questionnaire, Family Injury Family Valuation Scale and Enrich Marital Satisfaction Quiz.

Jones's irrational beliefs questionnaire. The irrational beliefs questionnaire was based on Ellis's (1962) theory in 1969 and developed by Jones (19). It includes ten scales. Each scale contains ten questions. A five-point Likert scale was used to grade the responses, and respondents

determine their degree of agreement or opposition according to the degrees. A special key is made for each scale. In any scale, the higher the score, the more illogical the severity of the belief is. The total score of the individual in the questions of each sub-scale is calculated, and the sum of all subscales or the total score of irrational beliefs is achieved (20). Using test-retest method, Jones (1969) demonstrated the reliability of the test as 0.92, and the reliability of each of its sub-scales were reported from 0.66 to 0.80. In Iran, it was reported the reliability of the test on a student sample of Allameh Tabataba'i University students by Cronbach's alpha to be 0.71 (20, 21). In this study, Cronbach's alpha 0.81 was obtained.

Family crisis oriented personal evaluation scale (F-COPES). This scale was developed by McCubbin, Larsen and Olson in 1981 to measure family adaptation and problem-solving. F-COPES is a 30-item tool consisting of 5 sub-scales: a. acquiring social support, b. cognitive reframing, c. spiritual social support, d. mobilizing the family to acquire help, e. passive evaluation (22). This 5-point Likert scale ranged from strongly agree for 5, and strongly opposed for 1. This scale was performed on 27-40 respondents in the first assessment and then was divided into two groups, which were identified by factor analysis on these five subscales and Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each subscale with general scores of 0.86 and 0.87 for the first group and the second group, respectively. T McCubbin et al (1982) suggested the retest of reliability to be 0.61 (reframing) to 0.95 (spiritual social support) with a four-week interval. In their study (23). Blake and Darling (2000) investigated life quality along with data analyses for the given scales where Cronbach's alpha 0.81 was reported (24). Also, Seidi & et al (2011) suggested Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.81 for general subscale; the highest coefficient for the social support access was reported as 0.80 and the lowest coefficient for passive evaluation was 0.43(13).

Enrich Marital Satisfaction questionnaire (short form). The questionnaire was used to measure marital satisfaction. The questionnaire was developed by Olson et al. (1978, 1987) which included 115 questions and 12 scales. Soleimani (1994) provided a short form of this questionnaire which included 47 items and its reliability was investigated calculating Cronbach alpha 0.95 through testing 11 respondents (25). The present study made use of Soleimani short form with 47 items. Olson (1989) reported the reliability of the questionnaire with an alpha coefficient of 0.95. Calculating the alpha coefficient of the short form questionnaire, Soleimani (1997) reported the reliability of 0.95 (26). Sanaiee (2008) stated that alpha coefficient for Enrich questionnaire suggested in Olson et al.'s report for both contractual response scales, marital satisfaction, personal issues, marital relationship, conflict resolution, financial monitoring, leisure activities, sexual relations, marriage and kids, roles for equality between women and men were 0.9, 0.81, 0.72, 0.68, 0.75, 0.74, 0.76, 0.48, 0.77, 0.72, and 0.71, respectively(27). Alidadi Thaeem et al (2014) suggested Cronbach alpha 0.95 for the test(28).

Obtaining permission from the University of Medical Sciences and explaining the research objectives for the participants, questionnaires were provided to them, and the participants responded to the questions individually. In this study, only married women who did not have a history of mental or physical illness and did not intend to divorce were included, and women who refused to complete the questionnaire were excluded and the questionnaire was delivered to another potential sample. Collecting data, data were analyzed by SPSS-19 software using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and path analysis.

Results

Table 1 shows mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient of zero-order two by two variables under study. The hypotheses related to simple relationships between variables were investigated based on Pearson correlation coefficients. The results suggested a positive relationship between qualities of family communication with marital satisfaction. Also, the results showed a negative relationship between irrational beliefs and marital satisfaction.

Table 3 shows the fitting characteristics of the model. NFI and CFI indices equal one or are close to 1, and the RMSEA index, which is one of the important indicators in fitting the hypothesized model, is less than 0.05, indicating a high utility of the hypothesized model. In this model, irrational beliefs could play a mediator role between the quality of family communication and marital satisfaction.

The path analysis was used to analyze the mediation role of irrational beliefs in the relationship between qualities of family communication and marital satisfaction. The results showed that there is a significant direct relation between irrational beliefs and family movement for obtaining marital satisfaction, -0.21 and 0.19 respectively, and there was a direct relation between passive evaluation and irrational beliefs, 0.24, which were significant at $p < 0.01$. However, there was no direct and significant relationship reported between the other variables in the study. Table 3 suggests the standard and non-standard coefficients between variables.

The results of the study showed that the standard coefficient of difficulty in passive evaluation, spiritual social support, cognitive reframing, acquiring social support, and mobilizing the family to acquire help with marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs were 0.43, 0.39, 0.05, 0.04 and 0.08, respectively, which were significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 1. Average, standard deviation and correlation matrix among variables

Variables	Mean & SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. marital satisfaction	151.54 (24.38)	1						
2. irrational beliefs	107.79 (19.62)	-0/28**	1					
3. passive evaluation	13.77 (2.91)	0/31**	-0/27**	1				
4. mobilizing the family to acquire help	16.76 (4.01)	0/31**	-0/15**	0/60**	1			
5. spiritual social support	15.05 (3.09)	0/18**	-0/17**	0/42**	0/41**	1		
6. cognitive reframing	28.66 (5.24)	0/14**	-0/18**	0/42**	0/39**	0/73**	1	
7. acquiring social support	29.41 (7.39)	0/29**	-0/20**	0/63**	0/72**	0/48**	0/46**	1

Table 2: Fitness fitting indicators for a given model

RMSEA	NFI	CFI	X2/df	df	X2
0/00	0/099	0/99	0/53	3	1/59

Figure 1. Standardized Factor Paths (Factor Load) for direct effects of the probabilistic model variables. The mediating role of irrational beliefs in relationship between the quality of family relations and marital affiliation

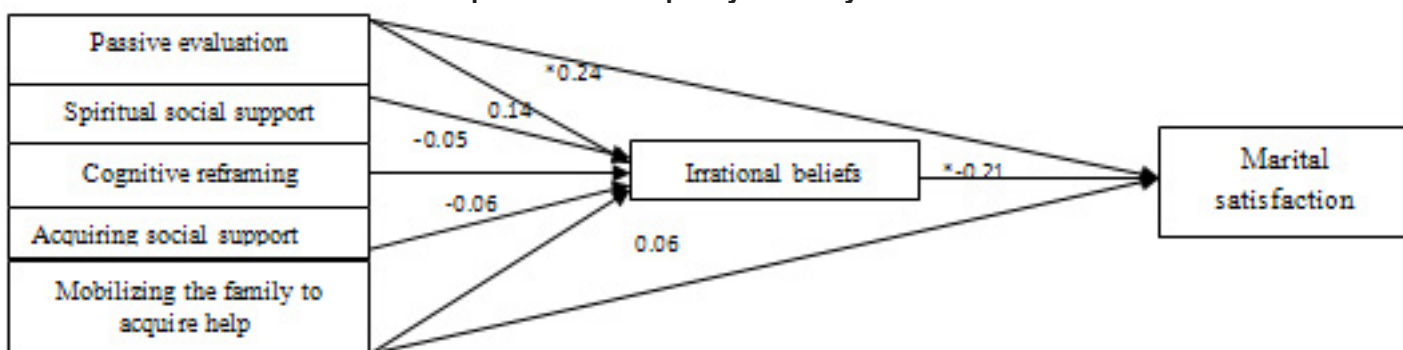


Table 3: Standard and non-standard coefficients among variables

Path	B	β	Meaningfulness
Effect of passive evaluation-marital satisfaction	1/16	0/14	0/06
Effect of mobilizing the family to acquire help-marital satisfaction	1/17	0/19	0/00 ***
Irrational beliefs-marital satisfaction	-0/14	-0/02	0/8
The Effect of Spiritual Social Support-Irrational Beliefs	-0/21	-0/05	0/53
The Effect of Cognitive reframing - Irrational Beliefs	-0/17	-0/06	0/5
The effect of acquiring social support - irrational beliefs	-1/6	0/24	0/00
The Effect of Passive Evaluation - Irrational Beliefs	0/33	0/06	0/45

*p< .01

Table 4: Standard and non-standard coefficients between variables

Path	Standard coefficients	Non-standard coefficients	Meaningfulness
Passive evaluation with marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs	0/43	0/05	0/0001
Spiritual social support with marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs	0/39	0/00	0/0001
Cognitive reframing with marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs	0/05	0/01	0/0001
Acquiring social support by marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs	0/04	0/01	0/0001
Mobilizing the family to acquire help to get marital satisfaction through irrational beliefs	-0/08	-0/15	0/0001

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to explain the mediating role of irrational beliefs in the relationship between family quality of life and marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is the most important factor for the sustainability and durability of common life, and it is essential to recognize the factors affecting it to improve quality of marital satisfaction. The results of this study showed that irrational beliefs can play a mediator role in relation to the quality of family communication and marital satisfaction. And the variables of family movement to acquire support and irrational beliefs are directly predictive of marital satisfaction.

So far, no research in Iran and other countries investigated the mediating role of irrational beliefs in the relationship between the variables of family quality (acquiring social support, cognitive reframing, spiritual social support, mobilizing the family to acquire help, passive evaluation) and marital satisfaction. However, several studies have evaluated the relationship between irrational beliefs and marital relationships. For example, Bernstein and Bernstein (1989) suggested that many of the spouses had problems in establishing and maintaining friendly and intimate relationships with each other, since they expected to earn some interests from their marriage in general, and from their spouses in particular(5). On the other hand, 85 and 91% of those at the verge of divorce suggested positive opinions and irrational and irrational predictions of marital relationship at the beginning of their marriage, and believe that the probability of divorce was zero to them which corresponds to the results from the present study (29). Many scholars and theorists consider irrational beliefs as the main cause of disagreements, especially in marital relationships. Irrational beliefs have also been reported in disrupted families which in turn confirmed Ellis and Beck's view that psychological problems were the major result of people's misconceptions. Ellis (1995) believed that dependency on others, fear and loneliness, passivity to choose, continuous effort to influence others even when at risk, would most likely cause couples to have particular tendencies in their behavior and actions

which results in their dissatisfaction with marital life and marital dissatisfaction rises due to a series of unrealistic expectations and beliefs and challenges in life. Dependent individuals tend to enter into relationships with people who are emotionally available; they try to control a relationship without expressing their needs and desires and as the result feel a state of uncompromising endurance. They try to care for someone who is in a critical condition, but such care and attention changes to an obsession and frustration. In fact, this dependency forms a relationship that is characterized by living for another, controlling others, solving others' problems, and excessive concern about intimacy, and it occurs when a person with his inefficient and addictive behaviors affects thoughts, feelings and behaviors of others (30, 31).

Also the other study showed that irrational beliefs lead to dysfunctional emotions, which further affect the perceived marital adjustment of both partners(32).

Another variable affecting marital satisfaction in this hypothesized model is the quality of communication with the family, since communication in the family uses the mechanisms of the family to share their preferences, needs and feelings (14). Communication is also considered as the facilitator and dynamic dimension of the family system, which plays a vital role in helping the family to move towards the coherence and flexibility of the family (18). To explain these results, it can be concluded that effective and proper communication in the family helps to promote satisfactory factors among couples and facilitates social and spiritual support, access to social support and family movement to help. Also, the proper and effective communication along with reduction of inhibitor factors to intimacy can result in better marital satisfaction. In summary, the results of the present study were presented in two theoretical and practical sections: at the theoretical level, the results of this study could help in better identification of the causative factors and correlations of marital dissatisfaction. Also, the findings of this study can confirm the theories related to the relationship between marital anxiety and marital satisfaction, and also the results of previous studies.

Since so far no research ever investigated the relationship between quality of family communication and marital satisfaction, the present study may introduce a new perspective to investigations on marital satisfaction. At the practical level, the findings of this study can offer preventive aspects to be considered in pre-marital counselling. It can also introduce an empirical and therapeutic basis for couple therapists and family therapist who may use cognitive and behavioural therapies to affect excitement and emotions of couples, teach them the skills to share feelings and emotions, and help couples to be better communicators and improve the quality of family communication which leads to higher marital satisfaction.

References

- Larson JH, Holman, TB. Predictors of marital quality and stability. *Fam Relations*. 1994; 43: 228-237.
- Gorchoff S M, John OP, & Helson R. Contextualizing change in marital satisfaction during middle-age: An 18-year longitudinal study. *Psychological Science*. 2008; 19: 1194-1200.
- Anderson M, Trudel S, Bounader L, Boyer A, Villeneuve F. Effect of marital and sexual enhancement intervention for retired couples: The marital life and aging well program. *Journal of sexologist*. 2008; 17: 265-276.
- Martin J. Turner. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), Irrational and Rational Beliefs, and the Mental Health of Athletes. *Front Psychol*. 2016; 7: 1423.
- Berneshtayn f, Berneshtayn M. Communication-Therapeutic Behavior from Behavioral-Communication Point of View. Translated by Hamid Reza Sohrabi (2001). Tehran: Publications of Rasa Cultural Services Institute. 1989.
- Víslá A, Flückiger C, Grosse Holtforth M, David D. Irrational Beliefs and Psychological Distress: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychother Psychosom*. 2016; 85: 8-15.
- Fincham FD, Beach SR, & Davila J. (2004). Forgiveness and conflict resolution in marriage. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 2004; 18: 72-81.
- Lotfi Kashani F, & Vaziri S. The effect of sexual skills training on marital satisfaction. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2011; 30: 2581-2585.
- Shayesteh G, SAhebi A, & Alipour A. Relationship between Marital Satisfaction with Relativistic Beliefs and Unreasonable Expectations of Couples. *Journal of Family Research*. 2006; 2(7): 223-238 .
- Adlparvar AH, MAzaheri MA, Sadeghi MS, Adlparvar A, & Khodabakhsh S. Sensory processing style of couples and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Research*. 2013; 9(35): 279-298.
- Olson DH, Olson AK. *Empowering couples: Building on your strengths*. Minneapolis: Life Innovations. 2000: 109-33.
- Arefi M. Attachment styles, marital interaction processes and marital satisfaction: Structural equation model (Fit family therapy model). *Journal of Family Counseling & Psychotherapy*. 2012; 4(3): 507-528.
- Seyedi MS, Pourebrahim T, Bagherian F, MAnzor L. The relationship between family spirituality and its resilience, with the mediation of family quality. *Journal of Psychological Models and Methods*. 2011; 2(5): 63-79.
- Fincham FD, Beach SRH, Lambert NM., Stillman T F, & Braithwaite S R. Spiritual behaviors and relationship satisfaction: A critical analysis of the role of prayer. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. 2008; 27: 362-388.
- Lambert NM, & Dollahite DC. The threefold cord: Marital commitment in religious couples. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2008; 29(5): 592-614.
- Williams LM, & Lawler MG. Marital satisfaction and religious heterogamy: A comparison of interchurch and same-church individuals. *Journal of Family Issues*. 2003; 24(8): 1070-1092.
- Roer-Strier D, & Sands RG. The impact of religious intensification on family relations: A South African example. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2001; 63(3): 868-880.
- Walsh F. *Strengthening family resilience*. New York: Guilford press. 2008.
- Ebadi GH, & Motamedin M. Investigating the Factor Structure of Jones's Irrational Beliefs Test in Ahvaz City Knowledge & Research in Applied Psychology. 2005; 23: 73-92
- Zareidost A, Atefvahid MK, Bayanzadeh SA., Birashk B. Comparison of the source of control, coping strategies and irrational beliefs in prostitutes and ordinary women in Tehran.. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry & Clinical Psychology*. 2007; 13(3): 272-279
- Zolfaghari M. Effectiveness of rational emotional therapy on depression and unbalanced interpersonal relationships due to marital conflict (case study). Thesis Master of Clinical Psychology. Tehran Psychiatric Institute. 1998.
- Townsend, T., & Lanphier, E. (2007). Family influences on racial identity among African American youth. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 33(3), 278-298. doi:10.1177/0095798407302568.
- Easley MJ, & Epstein N. Coping With Stress in a Family With an Alcoholic Parent. *Family Relations*. 1991; 40(2): 218-224.
- Blake W, Darling CA. Quality of Life: Perceptions of African Americans. *Journal of Black Studies*. 2000; 30: 411-427.
- Soleymanian AA. Investigating the Impact of Irrational Thoughts on the Cognitive Approach of Marital Neglect. Master thesis dissertation, Tehran Teacher Training University.1994.
- Hamidi F. The Relationship between Attachment Styles and Marital Satisfaction in Married Students. *Journal of Family Research*. 2007; 3(9): 443-453.
- Sanaiee B. *Family Valuation Measures*, Tehran: Behesat Publications.2008.
- Alidadi –taemeh F, Jafari-rosahn M, Esmaeil-pourmoghadam E. Relationship of Spiritual Intelligence with Marital Conflict and Marital Satisfaction Strategies in Married Students in Tehran. *Journal of Family Counseling & Psychotherapy*.2014; 4(3): 507-528
- Minnotte KL, Pedersen D, & Mannon SE. The emotion terrain of parenting and marriage: Emotion work and marital satisfaction. *The Social Science Journal*. 2010; 47: 747-761.
- Mahdavian F. The effect of education and communication on marital satisfaction and mental health. Master's Thesis, Psychiatric Anisthus, Tehran. 1997.
- NasiriZaraj Z, Raji H, Ahmadi GH. Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Marital Satisfaction among Isfahan Triple Areas. *Journal of Family Research*. 2013; 9(35): 325-341.
- Filipović S, Vukosavljević-Gvozden T, Opacic G. Irrational Beliefs, Dysfunctional Emotions, and Marital Adjustment A Structural Model. *Journal of Family*. 2016; 37(16).