

The role of psychological factors and marital satisfaction in predicting of extramarital relations among married women in Yazd

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the role of psychological factors and marital satisfaction in predicting extramarital relations among married women in Yazd, Iran. This is a descriptive correlational study and the population included all of the women who were cheated by their husbands and have referred to family counseling centers in Yazd city. Since the population was extensive, 150 individuals were selected by convenient sampling. Mental disorders syndrome questionnaire (SCL-90), ENRICH's marital satisfaction scale, and a questionnaire on attitudes toward relations outside of the marital framework were used as the research instrument. The data was analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The distribution of the population (normality of the data) was determined via Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Findings of the research revealed that the traits of interpersonal sensitivity, depression, violence, phobias and psychosis are significantly related to the individual's attitude towards relations outside of the marital framework; however, only anxiety and psychosis has a meaningful correlation coefficient regarding the spouse's attitude on extramarital relationships. In contrast to this, there is no significant correlation between the other psychological traits and the attitude toward the spouse's extramarital affairs. The results also suggest that there is a correlation coefficient of -0.29 ($P < 0.001$) between marital satisfaction and extramarital relations.

Keywords: Psychological factors, marital satisfaction, extramarital relations, married women.

Introduction

Family as a social is the basic of growth and evolution, conciliation, healing, and the development of damages, results in the collapse of relationships among its members ^[1]. No society can claim health without healthy families and no social damage cannot be emerged without being affected by family ^[2].

Although family relationship is one of the healthiest and most satisfying relationships, it might be damaged by several factors ^[3]. One of the damages that can result in deep conflict, separation, divorce and multiple social and psychological harms, is the extramarital relations in either of the couples ^[4]. Extramarital affairs can be defined as an individual's any activity outside of the boundaries of marital relationship by developing physical or emotional intimacy with someone else ^[5]. Extramarital relations are based on a general definition of the violation of the two-fold relationship commitment, which leads to the formation of a degree of emotional and physical intimacy with an individual outside of the marital relationship ^[6]. And from another perspective, it is divided into four types of sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, emotional-sexual infidelity, and virtual infidelity (including phone sex, sex conversations, and watching pornography) ^[7]. Extramarital relations might result in severe emotional outcomes among couples ^[8]. Clinical observations and scientific

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research show that the disclosure of marital infidelity has destructive impacts on couples ^[9]. Clinical specialists report that in the individual experiencing marital infidelity, strong emotions often fluctuate between feelings of anger against the spouse and the inner feelings of shame, depression, helplessness, and exclusion ^[10]. Also, responses such as violence ^[11] and revenge on the unfaithful person ^[12], anger, impatience, and abulia ^[13], feelings of sacrifice and abandonment ^[14], shock, disbelief, and denial ^[15], beating, killing the spouse and committing suicide ^[16] might occur followed by infidelity. This phenomenon puts couples at the risk of separation and divorce and may lead to severe mental disorders ^[17]. The prevalence of marital infidelity varies from research to research and country from country, likely due to crypianalysis, confidentiality, fear of disgrace and conservatism in answering the questions ^[18]. Other factors, such as various methodology, measurement tools, and the procedure will affect accurate estimations of infidelity statistics ^[19]. According one of the studies conducted in the United States in this area, 21 percent of men and 11 percent of women commit marital infidelity during their lives ^[20].

The factors contributing to the emergence of extramarital relations can be divided into two categories: psychological category including obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivities, depression, anxiety, violence ^[21], and the marital satisfaction-related category including matrimony, satisfaction with the relationship, the macro-social and cultural factors, and environmental factors. Research on the extramarital relations suggests that several reasons can be considered for an individual's developing extramarital relations. Heidari and Latif Nejad (2010) have discussed the relationship between psychosocial factors and marital satisfaction among the infertile women ^[22]. Hajian and Enayat (2015) have shown that wife's beauty and marital satisfaction have a positive and significant relationship with infidelity and extramarital relations ^[23]. Williams (2012) believes that emotional relationships and love are influencing in extramarital relations ^[24]. Mosteanu (2012) studied psychological factors such as the rate of aggression and depression in the emergence of extramarital relations ^[25]. In general, due to the importance of family solidarity and couples' marital relations, the present study aims at investigating the general image of tendency to extramarital relations and the effective factors in answering the question of how psychological factors and marital satisfaction play a role in predicting extramarital relations.

Methodology

This is descriptive correlational study. The statistical population included all the married women referred to the family counseling centers of Yazd because of cheating and extramarital relationships of their husbands. Due to the lack of a list of statistical population, a sample of 150 subjects were selected by convenient sampling method, based on the previous studies and in the counseling center. Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were employed

to analyze the data. The distribution of the population (normality of the data) was determined via the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with a significance level of $P < 0.05$. The research instrument includes:

Symptom Checklist 90 (SCL-90) for psychological disorders syndrome: The original form of this questionnaire was designed by Dragotis, Lipman and Curie (1973; quoted by Zakiee and Karami, 2014) to illustrate the psychological aspects of physical and mental patients. In 1984, Dragothis et al. revised the questionnaire and published the final form, called the Revised Symptom Checklist (scl-90-R). The reliability of the test was determined by test-retest technique (0.78 -0.90) and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.70-0.95. In Iran, Bagheri and Mirzaee (1980) conducted it among the 2500 subjects, and reported the reliability of higher than 0.80 for the test.

ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale: Olson has used this questionnaire to examine marital satisfaction and believes that this scale relates to changes that occur during the life cycle of a person, and hence, it is sensitive to changes in the family. Each of the items is relevant to one of the key areas. Assessing these areas within a marital relationship can describe couples' potential problems, or can identify their strengths. Olson et al. (1998) have reported the reliability of its recent version by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (0.92). In Iran, for the first time, Soleimanian and Navayinejad calculated the internal correlation of the test for the long (0.93) and short form (0.95). Using the Pearson correlation coefficient and test-retest method, Mahdavian (1997) calculated the validity of the questionnaire, at the interval of one week (0.937 for men, 0.944 for women, and 0.94 for men and women).

Questionnaire on attitudes towards relations outside of the marital framework: To measure the attitude to relations outside of the marital framework a questionnaire was designed in 2014 at Ravanpuyesh Institute. It consist of two dimensions. The first dimension is related to the attitude toward out-of-framework relations developed by the person him/herself, and the second dimension is related to the spouse (husband's) practice. The first dimension at first included 15 items, reduced to 12 once the validity and reliability of the test were examined. The second dimension included 14 items. Reliability and validity of this questionnaire was investigated for 600 married women in Kermanshah. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.79 for the first dimension and 0.86 for the second dimension. A higher score means a positive attitude toward relations outside of the marital framework ^[21].

Results

The Pearson correlation coefficient test was used to examine the relationship between predictor variables and the attitude towards relations outside of the marital framework (Table 1).

Table 1: Correlation coefficients of psychological traits and marital satisfaction with extramarital relations attitudes

Variables	The individual's attitude		The Spouse's attitude		
	Correlation	Significance	Correlation	Significance	
Psychological traits	-Obsessive compulsive disorder	0.05	0.24	0.001	0.99
	interpersonal sensitivity	0.10	0.01	0.06	0.13
	Depression	0.10	0.01	0.04	0.34
	Anxiety	0.15	0.001	0.08	0.04
	violence	0.11	0.006	0.06	0.16
	Phobia	0.08	0.04	0.07	0.09
	Paranoid Mind	0.07	0.10	0.02	0.62
	Psychosis	0.18	0.001	0.11	0.006
Marital Satisfaction	Marital relations	-0.29	0.001	-0.28	0.001

The results of the analysis show that interpersonal sensitivity, depression, violence, phobia and psychosis have a correlation coefficients of 0.10 (P <0.01), 0.10 (P <0.01); 0.15 (P <0.001); 0.11 (P <0.006); 0.08 (P <0.04); and 0.18 (P <0.001), respectively, with the attitude toward the relations outside of the marital framework. However, regarding the spouse's attitude toward the extramarital affairs, the significant correlation is existed only between anxiety and psychosis. In addition, there is no significant correlation between the other psychological traits and the spouse's attitude towards the relations outside of the marital framework. The results also indicate that there is a correlation coefficient of -29.2 (P <0.001) between marital satisfaction and marital relations. Simultaneous regression analysis was employed to predict the individual's attitude toward extramarital relations on the basis of psychological and social factors, beliefs and values (Table 2)

Table 2: Summary of the results of prediction of attitude towards extramarital relations based on the psychological traits and marital satisfaction

Criterion variable	Summary of the model	Predictor variables	B	β	t	Significance level
The extramarital relations developed by the person him/herself	R=0.53	Depression	-0.13	-0.17	2.39	0.02
	R ² =0.29	Anxiety	0.16	0.16	2.23	0.03
	F=11.61	Legalism	-0.25	-0.14	2.60	0.01
	p=0.001	Moralism	-1.08	-0.10	2.11	0.03
The extramarital relations developed by the spouse		Marital satisfaction	-1.06	-0.14	3.09	0.002
	R=0.49	Legalism	-0.26	-0.15	2.72	0.007
	R ² =0.24	Truthfulness	-1.04	-0.13	3.12	0.002
	F=11.85					
	p=0.001					

Due to the marital infidelity consequences for family and society which is associated with unsustainable relations and high divorce rates, this study was conducted to determine the relationship of psychological traits and marital satisfaction with relations outside of the marital framework. The results revealed that the interpersonal sensitivity, depression, violence, phobia and psychosis are positively related to the individual's attitude towards the extramarital relations.

However, regarding the spouse's attitude toward extramarital relations, the relationship is existed only between anxiety and psychosis. In addition, there is no relationship between the other psychological traits and the spouse's attitude toward the relations outside of the marital framework. This means that the individual with a higher levels of interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, violence, phobia, and psychosis will likely have relations outside of the marital framework, and as that level is lower, his attitude and desire for extramarital relations will be negative and less.

In other research, Kona et al. (2014) has considered the psychological factors such as violence and depression in tendency to extramarital relations. In a research titled "Comparative study of personality traits and attachment style among faithless, infidelity-exposed and normal spouses", Torabiyan, Ameri and Khodabakhsh (2012) realized a significant difference between unfaithful and normal men in neuroticism, conscientiousness, anxiety and avoidant attachment style. Heidari and Latif Nejad (2010) also have found that psychosocial factors are effective in extramarital relations. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with the above researches.

Moreover, it was found that there is a negative relationship between marital satisfaction and attitude towards extramarital relations. That is, the greater the satisfaction with the communication and sexual components of the marriage, the less tendency and negative attitude towards relations outside of the framework. Marital satisfaction is considered as one of the essential aspects of personality and life. It is one of the factors affecting the family's stability, as well as the mental health of the spouses, children and the community. There are many factors which lead to the marital satisfaction among the couples. Marital adjustment affects many aspects of individual and social life of humans. In fact, it is the foundation of a family's good performance and facilitates the parental role, increases the life span of the couple, increases health, develops economy, enhances life satisfaction, reduces psychological problems, manages conflicts, and improves communication and problem solving skills. However, if there is no consistency, these positive aspects will be eliminated, causing many problems in both individual and social areas and will lead to the extramarital relations. Williams (2012) believes that emotional relations and love are effective in extramarital relations. Villa and Del Prette (2013) have shown that sexual relations and happiness might decrease the tendency toward the extramarital relations [26]. Hajian and Enayat (2015) reported that wife's beauty and marital satisfaction have a meaningful and positive relationship with treachery and extramarital affairs. Karami and Zakiee (2014) realized that sociological and psychological factors are helpful in predicting attitudes toward relations outside of the marital framework among the married women. Thus, the findings of this study are consistent with the results from the above-mentioned research.

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