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Inspecting the Relationship between Sexual Satisfaction and Marital Problems of Divorce-asking Women in Sanandaj City Family Courts

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Abstract

Marriage is one of the most important sources of social support for the identity of an individual as an adult, although some of the factors which affect its success or failure have not been recognized so far. Higher level of sexual satisfaction results in higher marital satisfaction, which in turn decreases marital instability and divorce. In this descriptive-correlation study, the divorce-asking women in family courts of Sanandaj city are considered as the statistical population with a sample size of 400 subjects who were selected via available sampling in 2011. Data gathering tool contains the scales for measuring sexual satisfaction and also marital problems. Findings show that sexual satisfaction has a significant negative effect on marital problems ($r = -0.35$, $P < 0.01$). This significant negative relation between the mentioned variables means that the individuals who have reported lower sexual satisfaction, have higher marital problems. The calculated value of R-square ($R^2 = 0.123$) for reporting correlations shows %12 congruence between those variables. Divorce-asking women, whom in this study score low sexual satisfaction, have higher scores in marital problems. Sexual satisfaction could predict low marital problems among couples.

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1. Introduction

Divorce and couples' destructive conflicts are considered as major perilous factors causing mental disorders and psychological traumas in the family, while endangering the mental health of society. Hence, many social organizations have been trying to take preventive measures for divorce. Many studies show that divorce rate is increasing around the world, while separations are caused by different reasons (Bower, 2011). Unfortunately, Iran is experiencing an unexpected increase in the rate of divorce. Iran has the world's fourth divorce rank (Foroutan & Jadid Milani, 2008). This happens when the family's normal functions in biological, social, cognitive, and emotional fields are damaged, leading to a psychological, social cleavage and a legal phenomenon which is called divorce. The factors influencing on the emergence of divorce have been referred to throughout various studies: economic and social factors (Sandström, 2011), environmental and genetic factors (Jerskey et al., 2010), personality traits and

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experiencing constant stress (Bower, 2011), relationship quality and commitment to marriage (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007) and the destructive, conflicting behaviours together with couples' relationship problems (Birditt et al., 2010).

One of the factors affecting the incidence of divorce and relationship problems between couples is the behaviour associated with their sexual performance. As an important and integral part of every woman's life (Tayebi, 2011), sexuality is considered to be one of the most significant factors affecting women's health. It is also a major indicator of life satisfaction affecting couples' level of mental health (Movahedi & Azizi, 2011). Sexual satisfaction refers to a person's pleasant feeling out of that type of sexual relationship which forms a vital part of couples' impression of each other which in turn maintains their marriage. Practical background studies indicate that Masters, Johnson, and Kaplan were among the first to deal with the systematic study of human sexual behavior. They consider four sexual attributions as (desire) arousal, plateau, orgasm, and resolution (Vaziri et al., 2010). Later Rosen refers to six female sexual functions as desire, arousal, lubrication (wetness), orgasm, satisfaction, and pain (Rozen, 2000). In comparison to other aspects of couples' lives, the impact of marital interaction on the breakdown of marriages has been the topic of few researches; a fact to denote the question for the researchers that if frequent, satisfactory, and pleasant marital sexual intercourse can help save a marriage or not? (Dzara, 2010). According to Margolis (2003) 40% of women experience sexual dysfunction at the time of their marital life, where 1/3 of them experience absence or deficiency of sexual desire, and 1/4 suffer from lack of orgasm experience. Hilz study indicates that nearly 43% of women and 31% of men in America suffer a kind of sexual dysfunction. A random survey in the Asian urban population indicates that over 20% of men and 30% of women have complained at least about one aspect of their sexual relationships (Nichols, 2005). According to the 2005 national survey done in Iran, 31.5% of women have sexual dysfunction (Safari-Nejad, 2006). The prevalence of sexual dysfunction has been reported less frequently in divorce-asking individuals in Iran or at least it has not been made available. In some studies, sexual problems of divorce-asking women have been reported from 68% to 89% (Agha-Mohammadian et al., 2003; Amirian-Zadeh et al., 2005; Foroutan & Jadid Milani, 2008). The study conducted by Modanlou, Ziaee and Rabiee (2005) showed that divorce-asking women's level of sexual satisfaction was lower than the normal level of Iranian women's sexual satisfaction. Many studies indicate that optimum sexual function can be interconnected with marital satisfaction in both genders. These researches also show that sexual problems have a noticeable impact on the couples' life quality and social relationships while causing a high rate of separation and divorce (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Bayers, 2005; Slosarz, 2000; Nichols, 2005; Chen Yeh et al., 2006; Sevène et al., 2009; Dzara, 2010; Carvalho & Nobre, 2011; Trompeter, Bettencourt & Barrett-Connor, 2012; Nourani-Sa'dodin et al., 2008; Foroutan & Jadid Milani, 2008; Ali-akbari Dehkordi, 2010; Movahed & Azizi, 2011). The study conducted by Trompeter, Bettencourt and Barrett-Connor (2012) indicated that emotional closeness during sex was associated with more frequent arousal, lubrication, and orgasm; such hearty relation leads to better sexual function and satisfaction. Carvalho and Nobre (2011) have shown that high sexual desire and better sexual function are interconnected with marital satisfaction in both genders; regarding dyadic adjustment, their findings indicated that participants with high desire had significantly more dyadic consensus, cohesion, satisfaction, and affection. According to Lau et al. (2006), the quality of the marital relationship, mutual trust, decision-making, and relationship control, were significantly associated with sexual dysfunction which in turn leads to sexual dissatisfaction. This aspect of marital behaviour is so important that Yucel and Gassanov (2010) claim that marital infidelity occurs due to sexual problems in couples. Moreover, the study conducted by Trudel and Goldfarb (2010) indicated that improving sexual function enhances marital function, that marital treatment may improve not only sexual and marital functioning but may also reduce symptoms of psychological distress. Nichols (2005) suggests certain requirements for attaining consent in marital relations amongst which is the satisfactory sexual relation for both partners. As a matter of fact, proper satisfaction of sexual instinct seems to be a natural desire which has to be taken care of; otherwise, it will cause negative effects such as psychological and physical illness (Safdarkhani, 2008). After reviewing research background and finding out the negative impacts of divorce on family functioning and community, it has become clear that in Iran little has been done on the topic of the effect of sexual satisfaction on the family disputes and couples' relationships, therefore this study deals with the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital problems of divorce-asking women in Sanandaj city family courts.

2. Research methods

This is a descriptive-correlation study. Divorce-asking women in family courts of Sanandaj city at Kurdistan province are considered as the statistical population under research with a sample size of 400 subjects who were continuously and gradually selected via available sampling method in 2011. After taking necessary permissions from Judiciary officials, a number of trained female interviewers approached divorce-asking women who were attending the family court for the first time. They announced their consent to participate in the research project when the interviewers provided them with explanations. Indicators of descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient) were exerted for data analysis.

3. Instruments

3.1. *Index of Marital Satisfaction:*

(IMS) is a 25-item instrument designed to measure the degree, severity, or magnitude of a problem one spouse or partner has in the marital relationship. It does not characterize the relationship as a unitary entity but measures the extent to which one partner perceives problems in the relationship. The IMS does not measure marital adjustment since a couple may have arrived at a good adjustment despite having a high degree of discord or dissatisfaction. The IMS has two cutting scores. The first is a score of 30 (± 5); scores below this point indicate absence of a clinically significant problem in this area. Scores above 30 suggest the presence of a clinically significant problem. The second cutting score is 70. Scores above this point nearly always indicate that clients are experiencing severe stress with a clear possibility that some type of violence could be considered or used to deal with problems. The practitioner should be aware of this possibility. Another advantage of the IMS is that it is one of several scales of the WALMYR Assessment Scales package reproduced here, all of which are administered and scored the same way. The IMS has a mean alpha of .96, indicating excellent internal consistency, and an excellent (low) Standard Error of Measurement of 4.00. The IMS also has excellent short-term stability with a two-hour test-retest correlation of .96. The IMS has excellent concurrent validity, correlating significantly with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. The IMS also has very good known-groups validity discriminating significantly between couples known to have marital problems and those known not to. The IMS also has good construct validity, correlating poorly with measures with which it should not correlate, and correlating significantly with several measures with which it should correlate, such as sexual satisfaction and marital problems (Fischer & Corcoran, 2007). Reliability of this test in the present study is .84 and .78 through Cronbach's alpha and half-split method for the entire questionnaire.

3.2. *Sexual Satisfaction Scale:*

(SSS) measures personal feelings and concerns about compassion and sexual relationship with the partner. It reflects statements of compassion satisfaction and expression, comfort level when discussing sexual issues, attitudes towards sex, intercourse, and birth control decisions and feelings about sexual fidelity. The high scores in this scale indicate satisfaction of compassion expression and a positive tendency towards the function of sexuality in marriage. The low scores indicate dissatisfaction of compassion expression, worries about the function of sexuality in marriage or disagreement about birth control decisions. The instrument for sexual satisfaction data gathering includes a 17-item questionnaire and a Likert attitude measurement scale in which each option scores 1 to 5. Score range from 0 to 85 is expected for respondents. Questionnaire validity is approved by eight psychology and counselling specialists. Split method has been used to show the questionnaire reliability: odd and even questions are graded separately and the correlation and reliability coefficients for the questionnaire are obtained as .75 (Yavari-Kermani, 2010). The questionnaire has been adapted to cultural condition in Iran. This scale has a high correlation with Female Sexual Function Index and its subscales (Shakerian, 2011). The reliability of this test in the present study is .82 and .76 through Cronbach's alpha and half-split scales for the entire questionnaire.

4. Findings

The subjects' age average was 28 with a marriage duration average and age difference of 6 years each. Their education was at diploma level or below that (81%). More information on the demographic characteristics of divorce-asking women is available in table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data of the divorce-asking women at Sanandaj city Family court 2011

	<i>Variable levels</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>percentage</i>
Age characteristics	<i>Under 20</i>	28.17	.417	72	18
	<i>21 to 30</i>			207	52.1
	<i>31 to 40</i>			77	19.1
	<i>Above 40</i>			44	10.8
Couples' age difference	<i>1 & below year</i>	5.65	.22	47	11.7
	<i>2 to 5 years</i>			193	48.2
	<i>5 to 10 years</i>			126	31.6
	<i>Above 10 years</i>			34	8.5
Marriage duration	<i>Below 2 years</i>	6.20	.306	153	38.3
	<i>2 to 4 years</i>			62	15.5
	<i>4 to 6 years</i>			37	9.3
	<i>6 to 8 years</i>			30	7.6
	<i>8 to 10 years</i>			33	8.3
	<i>Over 10 years</i>			85	21
No. of Children	<i>No Child</i>	1	.047	191	50
	<i>1 child</i>			129	32.2
	<i>2 children</i>			53	13.2
	<i>3 children & more</i>			27	6.2
Educational characteristics	<i>High School & below</i>			148	37
	<i>Diploma & Pre-College</i>			175	43.8
	<i>Post-diploma</i>			44	11
	<i>BA & above</i>			33	8.2
Couples' domicile	<i>City</i>			363	90.8
	<i>Village</i>			37	9.2
Woman's occupation	<i>Employed</i>			74	18.5
	<i>Housewife</i>			326	81.5
Type of couples' domicile	<i>Property</i>			133	33.2
	<i>Rental</i>			267	66.8
Husband's occupation	<i>Employed</i>			306	76.5
	<i>Unemployed</i>			94	23.5
Husband's Educational level	<i>High School & below</i>			208	52
	<i>Diploma & Pre-College</i>			97	24.2
	<i>Post-diploma</i>			46	11.5
	<i>BA & above</i>			49	12.2
Husband's type of occupation	<i>Self-employed</i>			252	63
	<i>State job</i>			93	23.2
	<i>Unemployed</i>			55	13.8
Income	<i>Low</i>			133	33.3
	<i>Normal</i>			216	54
	<i>High</i>			51	12.7

Investigating the mean and standard deviation in table 2 (33.73, 13.30) indicates that over 70% of subjects under study have reported low sexual satisfaction in their marital relationships.

Table 2. Mean & Standard deviation scores of marital relationship problems and sexual satisfaction

<i>Descriptive statistic</i> <i>Variable</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>minimum</i>	<i>maximum</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
<i>Marital relationship problems</i>	400	29.2	100	81.2	9.15
<i>Sexual satisfaction</i>	400	22	68	33.73	13.30

In order to study the connection between sexual satisfaction and marital relationship problems (marital satisfaction), the two-tailed Pearson correlation test has been carried out. As shown in table 3, the results of this test indicate a significant negative relation between sexual satisfaction and marital relationship problems ($r = -.35$, $P < .01$). Such significant negative relation between the mentioned variables indicates that the subjects with lower sexual satisfaction bear on a higher degree of marital relationship problems.

Table 3. Correlation of sexual satisfaction and marital relationship problem

Pearson correlation coefficient	Significance in two-tailed test	Number	R-square
-.345**	.000	400	.123

** $P < .01$

Generally, in interpreting the value of the relation of the two variables, and regardless of its direction, R-square (R^2) is considered as an indicator which provides the researcher with more data than the correlation coefficient (R). Accordingly, the reported correlation's value of the calculated R-square ($R^2 = .123$) indicates a relation or congruency of 12% between variables listed. This means that the variable of sexual satisfaction has determined 12% of the variance of marital relationship problems.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that a majority of the divorce-asking women had alarming marital relationship problems; this was a major reason for women to attend the court and ask for a divorce. Moreover, subjects under study have reported less sexual satisfaction and this variable could explain the marital relationship problems. The results of the study show that there is a significant negative relation between sexual satisfaction and marital relationship problems, i.e., those who reported less sexual satisfaction, suffer more marital relationship problems. These results are congruent with other studies on women's mass population which emphasize on favorable sexual function as the vital factor in creating happiness in family and causing satisfaction and adjustment in couples during their married life (Bakhshayesh & Mortazavi, 2009; Ali-akbari Dehkordi, 2010; Lau et al., 2006; Chen Yeh et al., 2006; Trudel & Goldfarb, 2010; Carvalho & Nobre, 2011). These results also are consistent with the researches on marital relationship problems, divorce and the level of couples' sexual problems (Dzara, 2010; Foroutan & Jadid Milani, 2008; Rahmat-o-llahi, Fatehizadeh & Ahmadi, 2006; Amirian-zadeh et al., 2005; Modanlou, Ziaee & Rabiee, 2005; Agha-mohamadian et al., 2003). The results of this study indicate that a higher level of sexual satisfaction can increase marital life quality and decrease couples' relationship problems; this will also decrease marital instability and divorce rate. The present study underlines that the couples' sexual relationships including marital relationship quality, mutual trust and behavior control are significantly related to weak sexual function (sexual dysfunction) and sexual dissatisfaction. This means that any failing in these behaviors brings about a

defective cycle which causes marital maladjustment and disagreement. Although some researches emphasize the interpersonal factors as the most important determinant of sexual satisfaction, other studies deemphasize the sexual physical elements such as feeling sexual desire, having physical pleasure, and physical excitement; instead, they make much of the more important determinants of sexual satisfaction in women such as (a) to feel desired for the partner, (b) to receive attention of the partner, (c) to be able to satisfy the partner (Carvalho & Leal, 2008). Taking into consideration the results of the study which demonstrate the effective role of marital sexual relationship as either strengthening or breaking up the marriage, and also asserting the fact that divorce and couples' destructive conflicts are considered as major risky factors causing mental disorders and psychological traumas in the family, then the importance of trainings and specialized services in consulting clinics before and after marriage should be more emphasized. As demonstrated in the studies, the rate of separation and divorce has significantly decreased whenever couples are provided with special trainings on sexual relations (Ali-akbari Dehkordi, 2010; Foroutan & Jadid Milani, 2008). Unwillingness of some the subjects to respond due to the stress of attending the court, illiteracy, and incomplete questionnaires were among the limitations of this study.

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