



Research Paper: Investigation the Relationship between Sexual Satisfaction and Emotional Divorce among Iranian Couples



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Abstract

Family is the oldest and most universal social unit in terms of its history and breadth. Appropriate relationships within society are formed based on appropriate relationships within the family, thereby leading to greater societal stability. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce among Iranian couples. This study was descriptive-correlational in nature. The statistical population consisted of all couples applying for divorce who referred to family counseling centers supervised by the Welfare Organization in Tehran during the second half of 2020. Using the convenience sampling method, 240 individuals were selected as the sample. The Golombok Rust inventory of sexual satisfaction (GRISS) and the emotional divorce scale were used for data collection. The results indicate a significant and meaningful positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce. Regression analysis also showed that sexual satisfaction can predict 0.3 of the variance in emotional divorce. The results of this study emphasize the role of sexual satisfaction in emotional divorce.

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1. Introduction

Marital relationship is the cornerstone of family relationships, in which the needs of spouses are met with mutual respect and cooperation. Individuals living in families with marital unity are in a balanced state of health and well-being while the lack of marital unity can lead to problems, conflicts, and marital disputes (Shirmohammadi et al., 2021). The overall negative evaluation of an individual's marital relationship and unfulfilled needs, desires, and wishes of couples in their marital relationship can lead to marital dissatisfaction, which increases marital problems. (Dong et al., 2022). Current statistics show that about 50% of marriages end in divorce, and the high divorce rate in Iran and the world is a clear sign of marital problems. Factors such as money, sexual relationships, kinship relationships, friends, children, sexual infidelity, emotional problems, financial problems, communication problems, work conflicts, and so on can create marital problems (Forouzanfar & Sayadi, 2019).

One of the consequences of marital problems is emotional divorce (Rasheed et al., 2021). Emotional relationships in marital life usually begin with high excitement and passion, but after a while, due to negligence and unawareness of one or both partners, these emotions decrease gradually, leading to a tendency toward indifference, which is called emotional divorce (Chau et al., 2021).

Emotional divorce is a situation in which the emotional capital between spouses is passively damaged, and despite the lack of love, affection, and intimacy between them, they do not separate from each other due to

their responsibility for their life or children (Al-Obaidi, 2017). (Al-Ubaidi, 2017). Emotional divorce is the first stage of the divorce process and indicates the decline of the marital, in which the bitter sense of alienation replaces unity and intimacy (Jarwan & Al-frehat et al., 2020; Horwitz et al., 2019).

According to Sternberg's triangular theory of love, love consists of three elements: intimacy, passion, and commitment. He believes that complete love only occurs when all three elements are present and balanced (Javan Dar Lashki et al., 2019). From Sternberg's perspective, in the stage of emotional divorce, the man or woman has no interest in each other, they are indifferent and cold, and they only continue their relationship due to the sense of responsibility they have towards their life or children. As a result, the external structure of the family is maintained, but it is empty inside, and the couples live together out of necessity and compulsion, without having constructive and appropriate emotional relationships (Gao et al., 2018).

According to Simonič & Klobučar (2017), emotional divorce has essentially negative consequences on both the individuals and the society, creating numerous problems for couples that cause a kind of turmoil and instability in the personalities of family members, and undermines the quality of family relationships and the commitment of spouses.

Sexual relationship is a delicate art that must be done correctly; Otherwise, a relationship that could serve love, affection,

and human understanding will have the opposite negative result and push men and women towards deviation. If, for any reason, healthy sexual relationships are not established between men and women, one or both will become frustrated, disheartened, and dissatisfied, and consequently, if other conditions of understanding are not established, the possibility of the collapse of married life and ultimately more separation will increase (Gol Mohammadi & Ali Mardani, 2022).

Social characteristics of the individual, his lifestyle, and marital characteristics are also involved in sexual satisfaction (Ebrahimi & Najafipour Tabestanagh, 2021). Sexual satisfaction is defined as an emotional response resulting from an individual's evaluation of their sexual relationship and includes a sense of sexual need being fulfilled, meeting individual and sexual partner expectations, and an overall positive evaluation of the sexual relationship (Samadi and Dalir, 2021; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2016).

Sexual dysfunction dissatisfaction not only has a negative impact on the relationship, but it is also closely related to social problems such as sexual offenses and crimes, psychological disorders and is considered as one of the reasons for 50% of divorces (Juretić, 2018).

Given the above, this research aims to answer the question whether or not there is a relationship between sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce among Iranian couples.

2. Methods

The present research method is a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population consisted of all couples seeking divorce who referred to family counseling centers under the supervision of the Welfare Organization of Tehran in the second half of 2020. Using convenience-sampling method, 240 individuals were selected as the sample. The researcher visited the aforementioned counseling centers and provided the questionnaires to the couples after explaining the research objectives and obtaining their informed consent. One of the criteria for entering the study was being a divorce applicant, being aware of the research objectives, and giving informed consent to participate in the study. Additionally, the major criteria for exiting the study were suffering from physical or psychological illness that could significantly affect the research objectives.

2.1. Research tools

Emotional Divorce Questionnaire: The tool used in the present study is a researcher-made questionnaire that has previously been factor analyzed and its validity and reliability have been confirmed. The scoring method of the questionnaire is a 5-point Likert scale, with a maximum score of 50 and a minimum score of 10. It is worth mentioning that the researcher-made questionnaire consists of three emotional divorce variables with 27 questions and a reliability of 0.920, sexual divorce with 19 questions and a reliability of 0.771, and finally, psychological divorce with 3 questions and a reliability of 0.685.

Glombek-Right Sexual Status Questionnaire (GRISS): This questionnaire has 28 items that was created in 1985 by Right and Glombek. It utilizes a 5-point Likert scale to measure the type and severity of sexual problems in seven areas, with separate forms for men and women. Scores range from zero to four, with a minimum score of zero and a maximum score of 112. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total

score of the scale was high, with a value of 0.84 for women and 0.79 for men, indicating strong internal consistency of the questionnaire.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables of emotional divorce and sexual satisfaction.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of the variables of emotional divorce and sexual satisfaction

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional divorce	10.85	60.17
Sexual satisfaction	95.73	54.16

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data. According to this test, the emotional divorce variable had a test statistic of 32.1 with a significance level of 0.05, indicating a normal distribution. Similarly, the sexual satisfaction variable had a test statistic of 62.1 with a

significance level of 0.09, indicating a normal distribution.

Table 2 shows the correlation matrix between emotional divorce and sexual satisfaction variables.

Table 2

Correlation matrix between emotional divorce and sexual satisfaction variables.

Research variable	1	2
1. Emotional divorce	1	
2. Sexual satisfaction	0.53**.	1

**p<0001

The Regression test (INTER) was used to predict emotional divorce based on sexual

satisfaction, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of univariate regression test to predict emotional divorce

Predictive Variables	R	R ²	F	β	sig
Sexual satisfaction	0.55	0.30	17.44	0.44	0.001

As can be seen in [Table 3](#), the significance level of the test is 0.001, which is smaller than the error rate of 0.05 and even 0.01. Therefore, with a confidence level of 99.0%, it can be concluded that the regression model is significant. Based on the results in [Table 3](#), it can be said that sexual satisfaction with a standard beta coefficient (β) of 0.44 can predict 30.0% of the variance in emotional divorce.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between sexual satisfaction and emotional divorce among Iranian couples. The results showed that sexual problems can predict emotional divorce. This finding is consistent with the findings of [Akhondi \(2017\)](#), [Belal and Rasool \(2020\)](#), and [Golmohammadi and Alimoradani \(2022\)](#). In the field of divorce and its growth in modern societies, various researchers have attempted to investigate its causation through different studies. Divorce is a multi-factorial phenomenon in which traces of cognitive factors can be identified as a set of cognitive errors. These cognitive errors manifest in different ways in couples, such as negative interpretations and biases that take different forms of processing. Many couples begin their lives with these defective cognitions, which may not be apparent at the beginning of their married life, and may surface later on as various problems over time. Initial events in married life (such as conditions upon marriage) can make these defective cognitions more apparent and pave the way for marital and familial conflicts.

The more attention and time couples devote to modern lifestyle and prioritizing luxury items, expensive trips, clothing, jewelry, and trendy items, the more possible it becomes for them to distance themselves from their life partner, and with the repetition of this issue, emotional divorce between couples may occur ([Scarfi et al., 2016](#)). Lifestyle, as a carrier of specific cultural and social values and meanings, is also a factor and generator of a particular intellectual system, attitude, beliefs, and the scope of its effects will not be limited only to the area of consumption. Rather, it will encompass all aspects of individual and social life, including family. In this regard, one of the most important determining variables of the stability and sustainability of marital life is the attitude towards marriage and divorce, which is itself influenced by lifestyle and its subsequent changes ([Abbasi, 2019](#)).

In the discussion of divorce and its growth in modern societies, various researchers have sought to investigate the causality through different studies. Divorce is a multifactorial phenomenon in which traces of cognitive factors can be identified as a set of cognitive errors. These cognitive errors, such as negative interpretations and interpretations, which take on different processing forms, are indicative of the defective cognitions of the couples.

Many couples start their lives with these defective cognitions, and these errors may not be apparent at the beginning of married life. They may only surface in later stages of life and manifest themselves in various problems. The initial events of married life, such as the conditions of the contract, lead to

the apparentness of these defective cognitions and provide the grounds for marital and family conflicts.

The more attention and time couples devote to modern lifestyles and prioritizing luxury goods, expensive trips, clothing and jewelry, and trendy items, the more they distance themselves from their partners. With the repetition of this issue, emotional divorce between couples may occur (Scaffi et al., 2016). Lifestyle, as a carrier of specific cultural and social values and meanings, is also a factor and generator of a particular intellectual system, attitude, beliefs, and convictions that will not be limited to the consumption sector but will also include all personal and social domains of life, including family. In this regard, one of the most important determining variables of the stability and durability of married life is the type of attitude towards marriage and divorce, which is affected by lifestyle and subsequent changes (Abbasi, 2019).

Factors such as neglecting each other's emotions, physical, sexual, and emotional separation can lead to sexual divorce, which destroys positive emotions and feelings between couples and lays the groundwork for emotional divorce. Usually, women do not prioritize having a relationship and how it is, while for some men, achieving sexual satisfaction without considering their spouse's feelings is important to them. These issues gradually lead to sexual and emotional coldness and eventually result in a decrease in intimacy in married life and damage to the sexual relationship, which in the long run can also psychologically separate individuals from each other and lead to unpleasant

psychological experiences such as a sense of emptiness, failure, and depression (Biazari et al., 2022). In further explanation of this finding, it can be stated that some sexual problems such as sexual decisiveness weakness are due to ignorance and dysfunctional beliefs and attitudes about sexual relationships. Dysfunctional sexual beliefs, despite being untrue and unsupported by evidence, create expectations that hinder the achievement of spouses' goals and create many conflicts by limiting the ability of couples to communicate. Individuals with negative and dysfunctional sexual schemas have less emotional interaction with their sexual partner and show more avoidance in intimate and emotional relationships (Hedayati Moghadam & Bakhshipour, 1). Dysfunctional sexual beliefs reduce the defective cycle of expectations, self-perception, negative sexual behavior, and performance anxiety and play a very prominent role in reducing intimacy in married life (Ebrahimi & Najafi Pour, Summer 2021).

The consequences of sexual dysfunction are significant issues that affect women at three levels. The first effect of sexual failure is sexual and psychological damage, which includes a range of muscular pain, sorrow, depression, fatigue, etc. Therefore, these women are disrupted in the natural course of life and are usually accompanied by a feeling of dissatisfaction. Some women resort to isolation and silence strategies and do not protest, but this lack of protest leads to the erosion of marital relationships over time. In some cases, this factor leads to conflicts and tensions, and couples are at odds with each

other. Frequent arguments, disrespect towards each other, and a decrease in trust and honesty are among the most important signs of this issue. Additionally, some women with a tendency towards relationships outside of marriage have experienced different forms of relationships. In some cases, these relationships have been at the emotional level, and in some cases, they have led to sexual relationships. The important point in this issue is the primary cause of the formation of marital relationships, which is mostly the fulfillment of emotional needs. Typically, these relationships occur through emotional communication and building trust, and then move towards complete communication (Bahrami & Shakouri, 2023). Sexual self-efficacy can be considered a belief that each individual has about their ability to effectively perform sexual activities and be desirable to their sexual partner. This belief is a form of self-assessment of one's ability and efficacy in sexual behavior and is associated with the level of self-esteem and satisfaction in sexual relationships, as well as feelings of empathy (Rezapour Mirsaleh et al., 2022).

Successful sexual relationships and expressing love and affection increase marital compatibility. Individuals who have higher sexual satisfaction also report a higher quality of life. The role of sexual quality of life in marital satisfaction and happiness is one of the important factors in achieving happiness and satisfaction in life (Abdollahi et al., 2021). The pleasure that individuals derive from satisfying their sexual desires is one of the most important pleasures that humans experience throughout their lives.

This sexual pleasure makes many daily problems and marital conflicts overlooked, and as a result, the likelihood of emotional divorce decreases (Mearofi et al., 2021). The control of cultural and religious upbringing of participants, modesty, shyness, and shame in response to questions about sexual satisfaction are the most important intervention variables in the present study. In addition, the research was of a correlational type and data was collected through self-report, so any inferences from the results should be made with caution.

5. Conclusion

In general, the lack of orgasm from women's perspective includes superficial orgasm, feeling sexual pressure, lack of a sense of release, inconsistency with their partner in achieving orgasm, and lack of sexual excitement. Women experience the consequences of sexual failure at three levels: individual, interpersonal, and social. Physical pain, isolation, psychological damage, depression, and lack of pleasure are among the most important consequences. Sexual failure is one of the main and important reasons that drive women towards extramarital relationships, which can lead to significant social damage and attention.

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Conflict of interest

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest with any organization. Also, this research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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