



International Journal of Current Research and Academic Review

ISSN: 2347-3215 Volume 3 Number 11 (November-2015) pp. 233-240

www.ijcrar.com



A Comparison of marital satisfaction in women with and without divorce application in Ahvaz – Iran

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KEYWORDS

Marital satisfaction,
Divorce,
Factors affecting divorce

A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to comparison of marital satisfaction in women with and without divorce application in Ahvaz. This was a Cross-sectional study which has done on which 130 women those were referred to the Family Court with divorce application and 148 women referred to health centers without divorce application were recruited. The Instrument consisted of a demographic questionnaire, and Enrich Marital Satisfaction. Data were analyzed with using SPSS version 20. The results showed that there was a significant difference ($p < 0/05$) between marital satisfaction among the two groups. The results showed that employment and education of women are predictor factors among women with divorce application. As well as working women and women with lower education.

Introduction

Marital relationship has been described as one of the most important and the most fundamental human relationships because it provides a primary structure for establishing family ties and training the next generation. Marital satisfaction is a very significant and complicated aspect of a marital relationship. In fact, one of the vital aspects of a marital system is the satisfaction that spouses feel

and experience in their relationship (1). If women are not satisfied with the mainstream of life with their husbands, they do not have the pleasant feeling that they should have from their marriage (2). Among the factors influencing marital satisfaction, psychological factors, demographics, characteristics of parents, couples' physical and mental health, personality, the amount of independence and dependence, physical

attractiveness, factors before marriage and a combination of the above factors can be named (3). Statistics show that in 2009-2010, 14 marriages out of each 100 ones ended to divorce which prove 13.8 percent increase compared to the number of registered divorce in 2008-2009 (4).

The results of Roshan Bin (2006-2007) showed that there was a positive relationship between marital satisfaction and social compatibility which means that more marital satisfaction leads to more social compatibility in women equally and vice versa (5). Velkut and Hugs (1999)¹ in their study concluded that communication problems were the most common mentioned cause of divorce both for men (33 percent) and for women (23 percent) (6).

Certainly, many factors can make a marriage vulnerable. The amount of influence of these factors has been reported differently in different studies. What is important is to identify the factors that have destructive effect on a greater number of marriages. In this case, the risk divorce factors in a society can be identified and moderated by informing the authorities, couples and families and planning programs or appropriate interventions.

Marital satisfaction of couples is a mutual process and any disruption in this process can create a basis for next problems in a family and leads to intense conflicts and even divorce. Therefore, the present study compared the marital satisfaction in divorce-willing women and non-willing-divorce women in Ahvaz to see that if there is a positive relationship [between marital satisfaction and divorce], by adopting appropriate interventions in this regard can decrease the number of divorce and the following social damages which are the most effective divorce results .

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was performed on 278 divorce-willing and non-divorce-willing women in Ahvaz city in 2013-2014. To determine the sample size the formula of comparison of means was used and confidence interval 95% and the power of test 80% and 127 people for each group were considered. Finally, out of 278 subjects, 130 divorce-willing women and were referring to Family Court in Ahvaz and 130 women who did not want divorce and were referring to health centers were compared. Six centers were randomly selected from the list of all health centers in the East and the West of Ahvaz. Sampling method is continuous and based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included: minimum period of 6 months of their married life with their spouses, literacy and exclusion criteria was infertility. Data were collected through the consent letter to participate in the study and two demographic information questionnaires (such as jobs, education, etc.) and Enrich standard marital satisfaction questionnaire. After collecting data using SPSS version 20 independent T tests, chi-square test and logistic regression were analyzed. The significant level $P < 0.05$ was considered. In June, 2013, this study was approved by the Ethics Committee in Ahvaz University of Medical Sciences and received a code of ethics 2013.53.

Results and Discussion

Based on the findings, most women in both groups were housekeeper (in the case group 80% and in the control group 91.2%). The highest frequency of education level in both groups (case group 48.5%) and (comparison group 38.5%) was related to secondary education and diploma, and the lowest frequency of the subjects' education level

was related to academic education (13.1%) in the case group and elementary education (14.2 %) in the comparison group. The average age of spouses (male) in the case group was 35.6 ± 8.9 and in the comparison group was 35.4 ± 9.3 . The highest frequency of age in both groups was 30-39 (40.8% in the case group and 48.6% in the comparison group) and the lowest frequency of age in the case group was 40 and more and in the comparison group was 20-29. In both groups, most of spouses (male) were self-employed (in the case group 55.4% and in the comparison group 61.5%) and the least of them were unemployed (in the case group 14.4% and in the comparison group 1.4%). The highest frequency of education level of spouses (male) in both groups was related to secondary education and diploma and the lowest frequency was related to illiterateness. Table 1 shows the comparison between two groups based on marital satisfaction using independent T-test which proves that there is a significant relationship between observed frequencies ($P < 0.001$). To assess the amount of influence of marital satisfaction variable and meaningful intervening variables of occupation and education of females and males on asking for divorce variable, the variables under study were entered to regression Logistic test to study the reciprocal effect of these variables on each other and on the divorce variable. (It is worth to mention that because of correlation between occupation and women's and men's education and omitting the reciprocal effect of them on each other, just occupation and female's education variables were entered to regression logistic test). As Table 2 shows, the odds ratio or risk of divorce ratio among housewives is less than these among employed ones (OR=120.406, CL=5.081-2853.130, $P=0.003$). Secondary education and diploma (OR=0.022, CL=0.001-0.454, $P=0.013$) after academic education has the most effect on

not asking for divorce than other education levels and after that the elementary education (OF=0.008, CL=0.001-0.386, $P=0.015$) and then guidance education (OR=0.014, cl=0.001-0.299, $P=0.006$) are placed.

The comparison of two groups in terms of spouse's age (male) and requesting for divorce shows that statistically there is no meaningful difference ($P=0.695$). In Hamsoo's study, the average age for males who were divorce-willing 35.5 ± 7.1 was reported (7). In another study, among divorce-willing men who were referring to divorce consulting center, average men who were 28-39 years old (55.6%) had the highest frequency and men who were 40 years old and more had the lowest frequency (8).

In terms of spouses' (male) occupation, there was a significant difference in both groups ($P < 0.001$). In a study, more than a third of men were unemployed or no especial occupation they had and about 50 percent of all subjects were self-employed and almost 10 percent were clerk (9). Another study also showed that a great number of male subjects were self-employed (10-11). Based on the findings, the amount of unemployment among the non-divorce-willing males was less than it in the other group and also the number of males who were clerk or self-employed were more than it in the other group. But among divorce-willing males the number of persons who were clerk or self-employed was less and the amount of unemployment was more than these data in other group. These information can suggest that non-divorce-willing males strived hard to sustain their family.

Comparison of education of spouses in both groups also showed a significant relationship ($P=0.001$). Mashki's study and

colleagues also proved that 57 percent of males were under diploma at the time of marriage. Guidance education had the highest frequency of education among the male subjects and then elementary education and finally diploma education were placed respectively (9). Based on Eshaghi's study and colleagues, the education level of spouses of divorce-willing females was mostly diploma (12). In the antithetic study of Foroutan and Milani, most males (43.5 percent) had academic education (13). The observed difference was probably related to cultural differences such as environmental and life situations and inclination to academic education in the statistical society of this study than it in other studies (11). What can be observed here is the higher frequency of academic education among non-divorce-willing males than it among divorce-willing males. It seems that higher education males have leads them to have more consultation and joint decision making and provides more talking and agreement in their married life which itself decreases thinking about divorce. Table 1 shows that there is a significant relationship in comparison of marital satisfaction in divorce-willing women and non-divorce-willing women ($P < 0.001$). And also it is inferred that there is a 95% confidence that between requesting for divorce and marital satisfaction a significant relationship exists ($P < 0.001$). So it can be concluded that marital satisfaction in women is one of the effective factors of requesting divorce and not requesting divorce. Mohsen Zade's study and colleagues (2011-2012) showed that marital dissatisfaction led to a practical request for divorce to end the marital relationship practically. Zargar's study and colleagues and Neshat Doost's were also consistent with the present study and indicated that marital inconsistency led to divorce and based on the couples' opinion, one of the most important causes of divorce

was communicative problems (8). Velkut and Hugs's study also proved that communicative problems and incompatibility was the most common cause of divorce for both women and men (6). Agha Mohammadian and colleagues in their study of marital satisfaction and its relation to divorce understood that there was a higher marital satisfaction in non-divorced women than it in divorced women (15). The results of Sanaie Zaker and Bagherian Negad's study also proved that divorce-willing women and men expressed their dissatisfaction in most of their life dimensions (16). Another study by Fatehi Dehghani and Nazari indicated that to what extent the amount of marital satisfaction increased the amount of couples' inclination to divorce decreased which means that marital satisfaction is an effective factor in couples' inclination to divorce. It can be inferred from the findings that general marital satisfaction guarantees its subscales including marital satisfaction (satisfaction of the marital relationship, sexual relations, marriage, children, financial management, etc.), communications (feelings, attitudes, couple' awareness, the consent of the level and type of communication, etc.), conflict resolution (attitudes, end-to-talk, etc.) and Idealized distortion (prosocial behaviors) which finally provide satisfaction of married life and disorder in each subscale can affect the general satisfaction of married life and take a person to marital dissatisfaction and finally to divorce.

Findings showed that in both groups housewife women referred more than employed ones, but the frequency of employed women was more in the case group (it was reported in other studies too) (11, 18-19). Therefore, in terms of women's occupation, a significant relationship was observed ($P = 0.007$) (20-21). It seems that fatigue and time limits which arise from

women’s occupation to have more communication and spending more time with their spouses and also their affordability to administer an independent

life lead to this fact that following problems it is easier form them to decide about divorce.

Table.1 Comparison of females’ marital satisfaction average and its subscales between two groups of case and comparison

Variable		B	P-value	OR	95% confidence interval for the odds ratio	
					The lowest quantity	The highest quantity
Marital satisfaction	Marital satisfaction	1.006	0.526	2.735	0.122	61.82
	communication	0.737	0.640	2.090	0.095	45.902
	Solved conflicts	0.757	0.633	2.131	0.096	47.533
	Idealized distortion	0.445	0.777	1.561	0.071	34.119
	Total score of marital satisfaction	0.575	0.715	0.563	0.026	12.289
Female’s occupation (base: being employed)	housekeeping	4.791	0.003	120.406	5.081	2853.130
Female’s occupation (base: academic)	Elementary	4.883	0.015	0.008	0.000	0.386

Table.2 Regression logistic test of investigating the effect of marital satisfaction and its subscales and meaningful intervention variables on divorce request

variable	Divorce-willing n = 130	Non-divorce-willing n = 148	p-value
	Mean and standard deviation		
Marital satisfaction	22.88±5.97	39.37±5.70	<0.001
Communication	20.75±7.27	36.03±7.27	<0.001
Solved conflicts	22.18±5.36	22.18±4.31	<0.001
Idealized distortion	169.52±3.60	16.08±3.16	<0.001
Total score of marital satisfaction	75.30±15.72	123.72±18.12	<0.001

The odds ratio or risk ratio of divorce among housewives is 120.406 times than it among employed ones (OR=120.406, cl=5.081-2853.130, P=0.003), so that for every increase unit in housekeeping than working 4.791 of divorce requests reduces.

It is also inferred from findings that there is a significant relationship between education level in women and their request for divorce (P=0.028). It seems that highly educated women were more compatible and has less inclination for divorce. In the present study

the similar result was obtained (13). Also Riyahi and colleagues (1386), in another study related to education in women and their inclination to divorce, showed that diploma had the highest frequency (22.2 percent) and academic education had the lowest frequency (6.1 percent) (22). In another study it was concluded that there was a significant difference between different education levels so that those people whose education level was higher than diploma were the fewest divorce-willing people ($P < 0.01$) (18). Diploma and secondary education (diploma and secondary education = $OR = 0.022$, $CL = 0.001-0.454$, $P = 0.013$) compared to academic education and other educational levels has the most effect for not asking for divorce and after that elementary education (elementary = $OR = 0.008$, $CL = 0.001-0.386$, $P = 0.015$) and then guidance education (guidance = $OR = 0.014$, $CL = 0.001-0.299$, $P = 0.006$) were placed. It means that higher education decreases divorce requests and vice versa. Generally, it is inferred that housewife women with higher education have less inclination to divorce which can indicate that housewife women with higher education have more time for their married life and they can manage the issues and problems related to married life better and they have more compatibility with different situations.

It seems that women with high education have less curiosity about marginalized and everyday problems and they spend more time making their husbands and family satisfied. But financial independence in employed women lead them not to accept all men's conditions to continue the married life like housewife women and they know themselves in an equal situation therefore because their return to paternal house is not only a burden but also they are allowance to the family they leave their house easily and

return to their paternal house or they have a completely independent life. One of the limitations of this research is that maybe the responses of divorce-willing people to questions of the questionnaires have been under their inappropriate mental situation. The results of this study can be a start point for next studies so some researches related to sexual issues to reach to practical solutions are suggested.

Conclusion

Marital satisfaction among divorce-willing females was less than it among non-divorce-willing females and also employed women and those who had lower education were more willing to divorce. Therefore, providing specialized consulting and informing couples about marital issues before and after marriage to decrease the number of divorces is suggested.

Acknowledgment

This article was taken from a student thesis approved by Ahvaz Jundishapur University Arvand International branch. Hereby the dear staff of research deputy of university and all those who supported us in this project are appreciated.

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