

A Comparative Study of Early Maladaptive Schemas in Women with Marital Infidelity Experience and those Who Didn't Have Such an Experience

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to determine the differences between early maladaptive schemas in women who faced marital infidelity and those who didn't. In order to determine the contribution of each components having access to extensive information can play a significant role in promoting the marital relationships and reducing the marital infidelity.

Methods: The present research is a casual-comparative study. The study sample consisted of all married women who refer to Welfare Divorce Reduce centers in Tehran province because of infidelity. Of these, 120 married women are selected among which 60 women experienced infidelity and 60 of them didn't experience marital infidelity. Data collection tool was short form of Young early maladaptive schemas. Data analysis was performed by using SPSS software and using statistical descriptions (frequency, tendency to center of index and dispersion index) and statistical analysis method was ANOVA.

Results: According to the results of this study, the hypothesis was confirmed. In other words, there is a significant different between the component of early maladaptive schemas in women who had infidelity and those didn't face infidelity in their marriage. So each of the components of early maladaptive schemas can be a predictor of marital dissatisfaction and infidelity.

Conclusion: The high level in early maladaptive scheme would decrease marital satisfaction and increase infidelity. It seems that determination of maladaptive schemas traits for each of the couples before marriage can be a contributing factor in improving marital relations. So people who seek to design and implement prevention programs in the family, including infidelity, should consider these factors too.

INTRODUCTION

Family, as one of the most important social systems, is formed by the marriage of a man and a woman. For a family, preservation and fixity are of the paramount importance. As a social unit, family in which the grounds are set both for propensity and collapse in its members' relationships, is the one place for growth and enrichment, healing and moderating the impairment

and complications.¹ Morality norms at the first place have the role of regulating the relationships between men and women based on principles and rationale.² For many couples a conjugal relationship begins with the phrase; only death can split us. Although at the early days of their marriage man and woman have the feeling of commitment, but sometimes it won't last forever.³ Iranian couples nowadays are faced with functional and fundamental changes by which the relationships between family members also have changed. So the strongest relationships at their finest place, namely family system, are at danger.⁴

According to Glasser(2004) most of the times couples begin their marriage with love, but as time passes that feeling of love fades away. In some cases they end up with divorce, but most of them involve with the

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tedium of everyday life and as a result they turn to alcohol, overeating, drug use and sexual relationships and infidelity.⁵

One of the major causes of divorce and family breakdown is marital infidelity and disloyalty.⁶ As it contains a series of elements such as improper emotional and sexual needs, opportunism, irresponsibility and deliberate deception, their acceptance for people who are somehow involved in this issue is not so easy.⁷ Infidelity can have serious negative consequences for those involved. Not only may infidelity lead to relationship distress, and thus decreased relationship satisfaction in both partners⁸ the victims and perpetrators of infidelity also frequently experience negative intrapersonal outcomes, such as decreased self-esteem,⁹ increased risk of mental health problems,¹⁰ guilt, and depression.¹¹

While many aspects of emotional and sexual relations have changed, monogamous is still expected and perfidy is received by couples as a painful situation.¹² Treas and Geisen (2000) argue that exclusivity expectations are a given among Americans in cohabiting or marital relationships. Specifically, between 94% and 99% of married and heterosexual, cohabitating couples expect monogamy.¹³ Marital infidelity is a means by which a person shows problematic and darker aspects of his personality without committing a recognizably criminal offense.¹⁴

Marital infidelity is something that couples therapists frequently encounter in clinical practice. However, despite the prevalence of this problem in the context of marital infidelity or knowledge of how to create treatment plans for this issue, yet they haven't reached at a satisfactory solution.¹⁵

In the eyes of many experts, an early maladaptive schema and other childhood problems is repeated in a person's future relationships and can affect his adult romantic relationships.¹⁶ Therefore, understanding these characteristics can be a means to predict lots of marital problems, including infidelity.

As Russel et al (2013) show in their studies, about 25 percent of men and 20 percent of married women would involve in extramarital relationships which not only have negative consequences on people involved in betrayal, but also reduces the couple's consent and is a divorce predictor. Many factors can be involved in the betrayal. In this study we compare early maladaptive schemas in women with marital infidelity and those without marital infidelity.¹⁷

In studying the causes of divorce in addition to social, economic and legal factors, personal and psychological factors such as schemas are of paramount importance.¹⁸ The phrase early maladaptive schema refers to a wide range of early and dysfunctional schemas associated with the person and others.¹⁹ These schemas are formed in childhood

and adolescence, in other words, as a result of unmet needs (e.g. security) which are the core components for the sustainable characterological disorders and personality disorders these schemas are formed and trying to keep the schema in all stages of life would cause in its extension. Early maladaptive schemas contains memories, emotions, cognition, physical emotion, and finally, the current early maladaptive schema and abnormal coping responses constitute the core for personality disorders theory.²⁰ Platts et al (2002) noted apparent alignment between the schema described by Beck et al. (Beck, 1964) and aspects of attachment (Bowlby, 1973). Therefore, there is a reason to think the fact that attachment theory may provide some insights on the creation of maladaptive cognitive schemas.²¹

Yong (1999) believes that the schemas are formed and continue to exist at three situations. These situations are fundamental emotional needs, early childhood experiences and emotional mood. Developmental origins of early maladaptive schemas lies in adverse childhood experiences. Schemas that are formed earlier, are usually more powerful. Schemas would cause a bias in our interpretation of events. This bias in interpersonal psychopathology is seen as misunderstandings, distorted vision, false assumptions, unrealistic goals and expectations.²² Anduze and Hamid Pur (2008) showed that the extent to which the schemas are more disagreeable, marital satisfaction decreases and reported that secure attachment style has a significant relationship with schema incompatibility.²³ Also, in another study, Yousefi et al (1389) compared the effectiveness of schema-based family therapy and family therapy based on Bowen model on the variables of early maladaptive schema, the desire to divorce, separation and attachment styles. The results show both approaches have had a significant effect on these variables change.²⁴

This study therefore aims to answer the question what is the difference between early maladaptive schemas in women with marital infidelity and those without a marital infidelity?

METHODS

The population consists of all married women who referred to welfare divorce reduction centers in Tehran because of marital infidelity. The study will perform in coordination with the State Welfare Organization and after a brief explanation about the nature of research and surveys, the distribution of questionnaires will be carried out. Of these, 120 married women are selected among which 60 women experienced infidelity and 60 of them didn't. Then subjects completed the short form of early maladaptive schemas by Yong (YSQSF). Data analysis would be done by SPSS software and variance analysis would be performed through descriptive statistical method and statistical analysis.

RESULTS

At first I will elaborate on the demographic data, after that the hypothesis will be discussed, using inferential statistics. The test of hypotheses using the alpha ($\alpha=0/05$ and $\alpha=0/01$) as an acceptable error rate to reject the null hypothesis (H_0), and verify hypothesis (H_A) has been considered. In other words, the probability of error of less than 0.05 for a significance level ($P<0/05$ or $P<0/01$) and more than 0.05 for the lack of a significant error ($0/05<P$) was taken into account.

To describe the demographic data descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation) was used.

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of subjects according to the study groups and marital status. The above table shows that almost 92% of women without marital betrayal are married and about 8 percent are divorced, while almost 65 percent of women who experienced betrayal are married and about 35 percent are divorced.

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of subjects and study groups in terms of employment status. The above table shows that 65% of women without betrayal are employed and 35 percent of them are housewives, while 61/7 percent of women who have been betrayed are employed and 38/3 percent are housewives.

Hypothesis: the components of early maladaptive schemas are different between women with marital infidelity and women without marital infidelity. To evaluate the second hypothesis ANOVA test was used.

Table 3 shows the comparison of mean scores of early maladaptive schemas components in terms of groups

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for marital statuses

Subjects	Groups		Total number
	Betrayed	Without betrayal	
Marital status			
Married			
Frequency	39	55	94
Percentage	65	91.7	78.3
Widow			
Frequency	2	4	6
Percentage	3.3	6.7	5
Divorced			
Frequency	11	1	12
Percentage	18.3	1.7	10
Married again			
Frequency	8	0	8
Percentage	13.3	0	6.7
Total			
Frequency	60	60	120
Percentage	100	100	100

of study subjects. In order to compare the subjects, an analysis of variance test was conducted. The above table shows that the difference between the two groups (women with and without infidelity) is statistically significant at the level of $P<0/01$ regarding their early maladaptive schemas (emotional deprivation, triggered-instability, mistrust-abuse, self-sacrifice, emotional inhibition, merit-magnanimity and continence- poor self-discipline). The above table also indicates that there is no significant difference between the two study groups regarding their early maladaptive schemas such as Social isolation, deficiency-shame, failure, incompetence and dependence, vulnerability to disease, distress-imperfect ego, obedience and strict criteria. In other words the average score for betrayed women is higher than that of women without a marital infidelity experience, regarding the early maladaptive schemas such as emotional deprivation, mistrust-abuse, emotional inhibition, and continence- poor self-discipline. On the other side the average score for women without infidelity experience is higher than the average score for infidelity women in early maladaptive schemas such as triggered-instability, self-sacrifice and merit-magnanimity. Also two study groups are relatively the same, regarding their early maladaptive schemas such as social isolation, deficiency-shame, failure, incompetence and dependence, distress-imperfect ego, obedience and strict criteria. As a result the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the second hypothesis of the study (H_A), claiming a difference in early maladaptive schemas between women with marital infidelity and women without marital infidelity is confirmed.

DISCUSSION

Infidelity, a multidimensional and complex phenomenon, is not comprehensible by linear models. Although this study has tried to examine specific angles of schemas of the women faced with this phenomenon, but there are still many dark spots that needed to be observed thoroughly. Generally speaking, the results of this study showed that

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for employment statuses

Subjects	Groups		Total number
	Betrayed	Without betrayal	
Employment status			
Employed			
Frequency	37	39	76
Percentage	61.7	65	63.3
House wife			
Frequency	23	21	44
Percentage	38.3	35	36.7
Total			
Frequency	60	60	120
Percentage	100	100	100

Table 3: Analytic statistics for early maladaptive schemas

Components of early maladaptive schemas	Groups	Mean	SD	F	D.F	p																																																																																																																																								
Emotional deprivation	Betrayed	18/32	4/284	55/104	181,1	(**) 1/000																																																																																																																																								
	Not betrayed	11/40	5/808				Triggered-instability	Betrayed	11/52	3/520	19/961	181,1	(**) 1/000	Not betrayed	15/50	5/942	Mistrust-abuse	Betrayed	17/23	3/105	80/569	181,1	(**) 1/000	Not betrayed	11/45	3/908	Social deprivation	Betrayed	8/32	1/761	3/130	181,1	0/079	Not betrayed	9/03	2/597	Deficiency-shame	Betrayed	7/13	1/761	1/595	181,1	0/209	Not betrayed	7/63	2/511	Failure	Betrayed	8/30	2/316	1/517	181,1	0/221	Not betrayed	8/98	3/620	Incompetence and dependence	Betrayed	7/92	1/977	/136	181,1	0/713	Not betrayed	7/72	3/706	Vulnerability to disease	Betrayed	9/28	2/408	/861	181,1	0/355	Not betrayed	9/87	4/233	Distress-imperfect ego	Betrayed	9/20	2/098	1/676	181,1	0/198	Not betrayed	10/17	5/390	Obedience	Betrayed	10/82	2/594	1/469	181,1	0/228	Not betrayed	11/68	4/894	Self-sacrifice	Betrayed	13/23	2/931	33/391	181,1	(**) 1/000	Not betrayed	18/05	5/753	Emotional inhibition	Betrayed	16/63	3/405	49/062	181,1	(**) 1/000	Not betrayed	11/17	4/995	Strict criteria	Betrayed	17/02	3/296	1/352	181,1	0/247	Not betrayed	16/05	5/531	Merit-magnanimity	Betrayed	11/12	2/263	9/956	181,1	(**) 1/000	Not betrayed	12/95	3/890	Continence-poor self-discipline	Betrayed	17/65	3/944	57/416	181,1
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SD: Standard deviation, **: -significance level at 0.01%, D.F: Degree of freedom

premarital check of couples' schema can be of a great help in creating a strong bond of marriage.²⁵

Considering marital betrayal as one of the taboos of our society, research in this area is associated with certain difficulties. Because of low exposure levels from those who have committed infidelity and the fear of revealing the secrets of their personal life and the subsequent results, the sample will cooperate poorly. That's why the most important limitation of the present study was low volume samples as well as the large number of questions that made subjects less patient. The research suggested an increase in the volume of sample to be used in future researches.

Marriage is a commitment between two persons that pledges them to remain faithful to each other for the rest of their life and share every happy and sad moment in life.²⁶ Unfortunately some couples won't remain faithful to each other and after some time betray their partner which makes their marital life to come to an end.²⁷ In order to make effective interventions to reduce the damage to families

affected by this problem doing research on the etiology and treatment of this phenomenon is essential.

Research on beliefs and perceptions of family members can make an effective alert on public opinion about the results of such a phenomenon. Because of the prevalence of different types of betrayal such as online infidelity, which unfortunately is increased without proper training in families, the implementation of extensive research in this area is necessary.

The results of the present study has numerous benefits for psychologists and family counselors before marriage, during the marriage and divorce. Clinicians should evaluate these features so that they could help couples with this problem.

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