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## Role of Self and Other Forgiveness in Predicting Depression and Suicide Ideation of Divorcees

Batool Ahadi and Saeed Ariapooran  
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,  
University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Daneshgah St., P.O. Box 179,  
Ardabil, Postal Code 56199-11367, Iran

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**Abstract:** This study aims to survey the role of forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others to predict depression and suicide ideation among divorced women. Then 124 divorced women of Kermanshah City were selected. Subjects completed following scales; forgiveness questionnaire, beck depression inventory and suicide ideation scale. Findings showed significant negative correlation of forgiveness of self and others to depression and suicide ideation. Results of multivariate regression through enter method also showed that forgiveness of self has explained significant value of variance of depression and suicide ideation.

**Key words:** Suicide ideation, depression, forgiveness, divorced women

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### INTRODUCTION

One of the major risks treats society and family is divorce. Regretfully, women's life often faces ambiguities and risks, in our society. Solitary guardianship of children, economic problems, living alone with depression and disappointment and also inappropriate attitude to divorcee widow women, confronts women with various problems. Of divorce-related damages are suicide and suicide ideation. Suicide is the most terrible and final detector of psychological complaints ability to predict suicide and its inestimable results has busied mental health experts (Unger *et al.*, 2001). Despite extensive attention to suicide and its predictors, limited attention has been given to suicide ideation (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Suicide ideation is the thoughts and imaginations about killing of self which provokes a range of thoughts from unstable thoughts about death to mental rumination about death (Wimmer, 2007). Results show that preliminary thoughts about suicide are the start point of long-term thoughts about suicide and these thoughts will probably lead to suicide in the future (Joiner, 2002). Surveys show that suicide ideation and behaviors are mostly consequence of biological, cognitive, psychological, social and familial stresses (Lewinsohn *et al.*, 1994).

Negative events and life stressors, like divorce and separation are of important factors with prominent role in suicide and they are noted as stresses effective on suicide

in various studies. Fergusson *et al.* (2000) showed that failure in friendly relations, personal differences with family (husband and friend) and juridical and legal problems are of efficacious factors which affect suicide commitment. Unger *et al.* (2001) showed that failure in love have had important role in suicide commitment. quarrel with spouse, parents or children is the most common cause of suicide attempts, however, weariness of life due to severe depression, failure in love, or lover's disrespect, have been noticeable. Depression is one of the variables that have relationship with suicide ideation and thoughts and 80% of suicide cases due to psychological disorders are due to depression.

McCullough *et al.* (2003) defined forgiveness as motivational changes, whereby, negative motivations like retaliation against transgressor change to positive motivation with conciliation and goodwill. In other words, forgiveness is the renewed motivations associated with motivations of conciliation and goodwill (Hook, 2007). McCullough and Hoyt (2002) showed through survey of personality variables role in prediction of forgiveness that if transgressor is the husband or romantic lover, personality predicts 0.18, 0.18 and 0.15 of variance of retaliation against husband, offence from husband and forgiveness of husband, respectively. Results of McCullough *et al.* (2003) showed that forgiveness is related to mental health variables for example depression. Maltby *et al.* (2001) and Mauger *et al.* (1992) demonstrated that failure in forgiveness of others is

associated with higher scores of depression and anxiety. Thompson *et al.* (2005) showed that mental rumination relates to depression and negative mood relevant to revenge and offence from transgressor. Objective of current study is to survey the relationship between forgiveness of self and others with depression and suicide ideation of divorced women. Since, relationship of forgiveness with suicide ideation hasn't been directly considered in research literatures, it can be deduced from results of related surveys in which demonstrated that depression is an effective variable that has relationship with both suicide ideation and forgiveness, then it can be deduced that forgiveness can be related to suicide ideation, too. Regarding the lack of enough surveys about this subject, importance of current study in reinforcement of research literature about psychology especially divorced women-related psychology, can be noted.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This is correlation regression type study; because forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others are regarded as predictor variables and two other variables (depression and suicide ideation) are considered as criterion variables.

**Participants:** Sample of this study comprises 124 divorcees who were conveniently selected from divorced women who are supported by a Charity Institute and from divorced women involved in juridical centers of Kermanshah Province in Iran. This research project was conducted from July 2008 to April 2009.

**Measures:** These measures are as following:

- **Suicide Ideation subscale:** This subscale is extracted from college adjustment scale, which is edited by Anton and Reed (1991) and has 108 items. Suicide ideation subscale of this scale has 12 items. This scale measures the suicide-related thoughts and subjects respond each question in a four-point Likert-type scale; from incorrect to precisely correct. Reliability and validity of this scale have been calculated above 0.75 in the survey of Anton and Reed (1991). In current study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of this subscale is 0.86. In this study, also, correlation of this subscale with Beck Depression Inventory was calculated as 0.94 that is indicative of subscale's high reliability
- **Beck depression inventory-II (BDI-II; Beck *et al.*, 1996):** The BDI-II is an extensively used and studied inventory designed to assess current severity of depression, which was developed from

Table 1: Means and standard deviations of study variables in divorced women

Variables	Mean	SD
Suicide ideation	25/86	9/49
Depression	27/48	8/53
Forgiveness of self	8/40	5/59
Forgive of others	15/44	7/38

clinical observations of depressed and non-depressed psychiatric patients. Attitudes and symptoms consistent with depression are represented in a 21-item questionnaire and patients are asked to rate the severity of each on an ordinal scale from 0 to 3. The BDI-II is scored by summing the rating and cut- scores may be used to classify patients according to depression severity. The BDI-II is based largely on the first edition of the BDI, which has indicated good test-retest ( $r = 0.86$  for psychiatric patients,  $0.81$  for non-psychiatric subjects) and strong content, concurrent and discriminant validity in clinical and non-clinical samples (Beck *et al.*, 1988)

- **Forgiveness questionnaire (Walker and Gorsuch, 2002):** Two subscales (self subscale and forgiveness of others subscale) extracted from forgiveness Questionnaire. The questionnaire has 22 items. Its two subscales have 10 items (5 items for each subscale). Subjects respond both two subscales on seven degree Likert scale; from totally unacceptable to perfectly acceptable. Walker and Gorsuch (2002) have reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83 and 0.86 for forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others, respectively Table 1. In this study, it was obtained 0.715 and 0.79 for forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others subscales, respectively

**Procedure:** To collect data, researchers referred to charity institute and by cooperation of charity's experts, list of divorce women was determined. They were invited to institute and then responded questionnaires. Divorced women involved in juridical centers of Kermanshah Province in Iran, responded the questionnaires after giving consent. It should be noted that for women with educational level under middle school, questions were being read by researchers and answers were being marked at answer sheet after confirmation of women who were listening to researchers. This research project was conducted from July 2008 to April 2009.

**RESULTS**

Table 2 shows significant relationship of forgiveness (forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others) to depression ( $r = -0.29$ ) and suicide ideation ( $r = -0.28$ ) and

Table 2: Intercorrelations among suicide ideation, depression, forgiveness of self and forgive of others

Variables	Depression	Suicide ideation
Forgiveness of self	-0.29(p<0.001)	-0.28(p<0.001)
Forgive of others	-0.18(p<0.05)	-0.20(p<0.03)

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis examining the prediction of depression by forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others

Variables	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
Forgiveness of self	-0.269	-3/085	0.003
Forgiveness of others	-0.137	-1/576	0.118
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.087			

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis examining the prediction of Suicide ideation by forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others

Variables	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
Forgiveness of self	-0.259	-2/974	0.004
Forgiveness of others	-0.157	-1/804	0.07
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = 0.089			

it shows a significant correlation between forgiveness (forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others) with depression ( $r = -0.18$ ) and suicide ideation ( $r = -0.195$ ). It means that rate of depression and suicide ideation of divorced women decreased as the forgiveness of self and others were increasing and vice versa ( $p > 0.05$ ).

As it is shown in the Table 3, regarding the value of RS, forgiveness of self and others has determined 0.102 of depression's variance. Then, considering the  $\beta$  value and level of meaningfulness, forgiveness of self and others has been the most powerful variable for negative prediction of depression among divorcee women ( $p > 0.05$ ).

As it is shown in the Table 4, regarding the value of RS, forgiveness of self and others has determined 0.104 of suicide ideation variance. Then, considering the  $\beta$  value and level of meaningfulness, forgiveness of self and others has been the most powerful variable for negative prediction of suicide ideation among divorcee women ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Results of Pearson's correlation test showed that there is significant negative correlation between forgiveness of self and others with depression. It means that as the forgiveness increases, depression rate increases and vice versa. This finding accord with findings of Thompson *et al.* (2005), McCullough *et al.* (2003), Maltby *et al.* (2001) and Mauger *et al.* (1992). Common findings of their surveys show that forgiveness has significant relationship with depression. To explain this finding can say that the more individuals don't forgive themselves and others the more they dip in thoughts and emotions and worry about their future, then depression symptoms will appear more and more. Despair and disappointment will take root in the heart of divorced women when they see that their life, which has been

founded on hope and desire, is broken down. Here roots will spread more from one day to the next. They blame their husband for their defeat in love and life and then seek revenge on husband. They may also blame themselves for this separation and then will be attacked by negative thoughts and feel sinfully and becomes more depressed from one day to the next.

Results of Pearson's correlation test, also, showed that there is significant negative correlation between forgiveness (forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others) and suicide ideation. It means that by increase of forgiveness (forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others) depression rate increases and vice versa.

Regarding the fact that no survey has indicated to role and importance of forgiveness in suicide ideation. On the other hand depression has relationship with forgiveness, too (Maltby *et al.*, 2001; Mauger *et al.*, 1992) then relationship of forgiveness and suicide ideation is explicable. To explain this finding can say that divorced women who blame and don't forgive themselves will have definitely guilty conscience serious, which their negative consequences will overwhelm them and will increase the prevalence of suicide ideation among them. Also, since, divorced women blame their husband and don't forgive them and then they feel angry about them. Since, divorced women can't express their anger as aggression (external manifestation of anger) to their husband (because of no relation with them), then, women will be affected by fret and mental rumination about themselves and this situation will provoke suicide ideation among them.

Results of multiple regression test, by enter method, showed that forgiveness of self has been the most powerful predictor of both depression and suicide ideation. However, forgiveness of others hasn't been able to predict depression and suicide ideation. This finding accord with findings of Thompson *et al.* (2005), McCullough *et al.* (2003), Maltby *et al.* (2001) and Mauger *et al.* (1992). They have indicated that to relationship between forgiveness and depression. To explain this finding, it can be noted that the more divorced women blame themselves for separation and divorce, the more they will have negative thoughts about themselves and will ruminate about their own mistakes of married life and then these negative thoughts cause depression and disappointment and create suicide ideation. However, since, forgiveness of others couldn't have predicted depression and suicide ideation, then it can be noted that notwithstanding divorced women blame their husband, they are obliged to come to terms with it and are forced to not ruminate over this matter. In such situation, the most important issue about which they think is their own mistakes made during married life.

In general conclusion, it can be noted that results of current survey support the relationship of forgiveness (forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others) to depression and suicide ideation. Then, on the basis of obtained results, it is suggested that attention be paid to importance of forgiveness in depression and suicide ideation of divorced women, especially in consultation session. Also, regarding the fact that mean of depression (27.48) and suicide ideation (25.86) of divorced women is elevated, it is suggested that more attention should be directed to their mental and social requirements, because depression and suicide ideation can impel them to commit suicide.

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