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Identification of Divorce Factors of Women

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Abstract: This study was designed to identify the divorce factors of the divorce-seeking women in Khuzestan, Iran. The sample consisted of 592 divorce-seeking women, selected according to a multi-stage sampling method. A 145-item questionnaire containing reasons for divorce was constructed, based on the views of 200 divorce-seeking women and was administered to the sample. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to identify the factors. Four factors were extracted: neglect of wife's wishes (40 items), husband and his family's lack of social skills (33 items), husband's social abnormalities (10 items) and husband and wife's personal and family incompatibilities (mismatches) (10 items). The findings are immensely important from theoretical and applied points of view, including marital discord, preventive and therapy models of divorce and preparing a valid scale for measuring factors of divorce.

Key words: Divorce, factors, women, identification

INTRODUCTION

For many people, marriage begins as a source of satisfaction and fulfillment but ends as a source of frustration and despair. Why does an endeavor approached with so much optimism lead so frequently to disillusionment? Why do some marriages end in divorce? (Karney and Bradbury, 1995).

Five major theoretical perspectives have influenced marital research. According to social exchange theory, marriages end when the attractions of the relationship are few, the barriers to leaving the relationship are weak and the alternatives to the relationship are enticing. The behavioral theory has concentrated on behaviors exchanged during problem-solving discussion and has been guided by the premise that rewarding or positive behaviors enhance global evaluations of the marriage, while punishing or negative behaviors do harm. Attachment theory emphasizes that relationship satisfaction depends largely on satisfaction of basic needs for comfort, care and sexual gratification (Hazan and Shaver, 1994) and the success of a given relationship will rest on whether each spouse trusts that the partner can fulfill those needs. Crisis theory derives from Hill's efforts to explain how families react to stressful events. According to this theory, declines in marital satisfaction and the occurrence of separation or divorce reflect failures to recover from crisis. Cognitive dissonance theory posits that individuals strive to maintain a sense of balance or consistency among beliefs, feelings, perceptions and behaviors. The diminished emotional commitment will likely be denied in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. The continuation of the denial of cognitive dissonance becomes impossible, as depression and a sense of loss of life purpose and meaning take hold of the individual. Such a response is commonplace in marital erosion (Karney and Bradbury, 1995).

Studies of the reasons of marital breakdown from the perspective of divorced men and women have provided sociocultural, psychological and historical insights into divorce (Gigy and Kelly, 1992). Salient among the early studies of marital complaints at the time of divorce is William Goode's research in 1948 on divorced women. The marital complaints mentioned most frequently concerned non-support, heavy drinking and neglect (Goode, 1956). Twenty-five years after Goode's study, Kitson and Marvin (1982) found that women cited ex-husband lack of communication skills, internal gender role conflict, extramarital sex, distrust, immaturity and drinking problems as their reasons for divorce. Kelly (1982) found that women frequently complained of feeling unloved and having their competence and intelligence constantly belittled by their husbands. Women in Fletcher's (1983) study cited their spouse's general and specific personality problems, negative attitudes, specific behaviors and extramarital sex problems as their reasons for divorce. Granvold (1979) also found that women cited reasons of lack of communication, conflict over roles/responsibilities, lifestyle values, extramarital sex and sexual problems.

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In Gigy and Kelly's (1992) study women were more likely than men to mention not being loved or appreciated, spouse unable or unwilling to meet major needs, feeling put down or belittled, role conflicts, spouse's unreliability, spouse's extramarital affairs, spouse's alcohol abuse, violence and spouse's drug abuse as reasons for divorce. Factor analysis revealed nine dimensions underlying the checklist responses for 437 women divorcing in the mid 1980's. The cited factors were unmet emotion/growing apart, lifestyle differences, boredom, demeaning/violent relationship, financial/employment problems, spouse's jealousy, substance abusing/unreliable spouse, career and role conflicts, respondent's substance abuse/affairs and severe illness.

Chang (2003) examined self-reported reasons for divorced Korean immigrant and non-Korean women. The majority of Korean immigrant women in the study cited their ex-husband's concrete abusive/negative behaviors and financial problems as their reasons for divorce, while non-Korean American women tended to report abstract and affective reasons. Patterns of reasons for divorce reported by women in the study seem to be related to their difficult post-divorce experiences.

Amato and Previti (2003) used national panel data collected between 1980 and 1997 to classify 208 people's open-ended responses to a question on why their marriages ended in divorce. Infidelity was the most commonly reported cause, followed by incompatibility, drinking or drug use and growing apart. In the study, people's specific reasons for divorce varied with gender, social class and life course variables.

Savaya and Cohen (2003) compared reasons for divorce among two groups of Arab women in Israel. The regular divorcees reported more reasons for divorcing than the contract divorcees and were considerably more prone to cite their husband's physical, sexual and verbal abuse, lack of commitment to the marriage and the family and alcoholism and mental illness, as well as interference by their in-laws. The contract divorcees were more prone to cite failure to get along, lack of communication and conflicts over traditional and/or modern lifestyle.

Nassehy (1991) categorized the causes of divorce in Iranian women as economic (i.e., incapability of husband to support the family, voluntary or involuntary absence of the husband due to drug addiction, imprisonment and abdonment), sexual incoherence (polygyny, extra-marital relations, lack of physical attraction) and family conflicts, age differences and personality conflicts.

Aghajanian and Moghadas (1998) reviewed of trends in divorce for the last three decades in Iran suggest that the divorce rate has been changing in response to social and legal changes and eight years of war. Iranian women who divorced, compared with married women, suffer economically and experience more psychological problems.

In their study, Zargar and Doost (2008) pointed out that communication problems, addiction, interference of family members and mental disorders of one or both couples are the most important divorce factors in Falavarjan, Iran.

Chlen and Mustaffa (2008) in a very recent study reported the top three reasons for divorce in Malaysia as infidelity, no longer in love and emotional problems.

Despite differing methodological approaches and samples, women's self-reported reasons for their divorce reflect socio-demographic changes and shifts in cultural attitudes. So, the present research was carried out to further examine the perceptions of divorcing women regarding the causes of their divorce and to identify underlying dimensions among the reasons cited.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants: The sample consisted of 592 divorce-seeking women from the 5 districts of Khuzestan Province which is located to the South of Iran. This sample was selected according to a multi-stage sampling method. During 2008-2009, the project was conducted in the family courts of the 5 Cities of Khuzestan. The age range for the women was 15 to 42 with a mean of 27.5. Respondents' education level was 9.6 years on average. Fifty-one percent of the women were childless and 41% had children.

Instruments: Two hundred divorcing women were interviewed for their reasons to divorce. These face to face interviews took place in the family courts' consultation rooms. The answers were then collected and closely reviewed for possible redundancies. A 145 item questionnaire was finally developed containing reasons for divorce based on the women's answers in the initial interviews . The item pool was then administered to the main sample of the study, i.e., the 592 divorce-seeking women, at the time of entry into the family court and their orientation meeting with the research assistant. She presented a standard introduction to the respondents, including a general statement regarding the nature of the research and detailed instructions for completing the questionnaire. Each item of the questionnaire was rated on a five-point likert-type scale (0-4) by the respondents. Analysis of internal consistency reliability yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.6 for the 145 items. Also, the statistic technique of principal component analysis was used for identifying the underlying dimensions of the questionnaire's responses.

RESULTS

Based on factor analysis the data of 592 women were analyzed. Prior to the factor analysis, Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were calculated as 894 (p<0001), respectively. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was used to determine whether the responses to 145 reasons for divorce could be summarized into more basic, integrated dimensions, reflecting the perceived causes of divorce. Four factors were extracted accounting for a total of 41.74% of the variance. The scree test also suggested that four factors be retained as is shown in Table 1 which

Table 1: Factor item loading

Items No.	Factor loading	Item
Item loadings on Factor 1 (Neglect of wife's wishes)		
4	0.583	Husband not loving
5	0.414	Husband lying
10	0.589	Husband not truthful (honest)
11	0.637	Husband not feeling responsibility for wife
12	0.553	Husband not forgiveness to wife
17	0.442	Husband not regarding the etiquette in front of others
23	0.571	Husband not understanding wife's problems
27	0.549	Husband not meeting wife's financial needs
28	0.424	Husband not meeting wife's sexual needs
30	0.493	Husband not reliable
31	0.403	Husband not caring for child rearing
38	0.623	Husband not caring for wife's wishes (needs)
55	0.600	Husband not supporting wife in case of difficulties
56	0.499	Husband not caring for having relationships with wife's family
57	0.490	Husband messy or disorganized
58	0.535	Husband not letting wife spend her own money
59	0.503	Husband spending time in friends' places without wife knowing
61	0.432	Husband not agreeing on wife's continuing education
65	0.547	Husband not spending time with wife and children for recreation
66	0.717	Husband not appreciating wife's attempts
70	0.497	Husband not helping wife with the housework
74	0.697	Husband not regarding wife's interests
75	0.538	Husband not giving gifts to wife on occasions
76	0.579	Husband disregard for wife
83	0.438	Husband not meeting wife's hopes and expectations
77	0.690	Husband disregard for wife's warning about female strangers
84	0.630	Husband not counseling with wife for daily things
89	0.465	Husband not skillful in dealing with life problems
83	0.479	Husband giving family secrets away
100	0.440	Husband impatient in face of life problems
101	0.485	Husband's not forgiving wife's mistakes
106	0.618	Husband not paying attention to wife's tiredness of work outside
107	0.680	Husband lack of sympathy with wife's sickness
110	0.496	Husband's inexperienced behavior
117	0.591	Conflict regarding spending and handling money
119	0.510	Conflict regarding out of house duties
127	0.623	Husband not fulfilling own promises
128	0.407	Wife's regret at marrying husband
133	0.570	Husband not having a plan in life
149	0.495	Husband not satisfying wife

Table 1: Continued

Items No.	Factor loading	Item
Item loadings on factor 2 (Husband and his family's lack of social skills)		
2	0.499	Disrespect by husband's family
3	0.501	Husband insulting
6	0.401	Husband obstinate
8	0.511	In-laws interfering
13	0.423	Husband losing temper
14	0.536	Husband threatening wife to divorce
32	0.553	Husband's arrogant behavior
33	0.586	Husband revengeful
43	0.456	Husband abusive
49	0.595	Husband irresolute
5033	0.594	Husband magnifying small conflicts
51	0.472	Wife hating husband
52	0.432	Loss of respect between husband and wife
54	0.469	Verbal conflict between husband and wife
60	0.516	Husband's family encouraging him to divorce
68	0.439	Husband's mental illness
71	0.501	Husband prejudice
82	0.454	Misunderstanding between husband and wife
85	0.539	Husband ignoring wife because of being busy with own family
92	0.507	High expectations by the in-laws
94	0.556	Husband telling wife that he have had better chances to marry with
97	0.461	Husband hiding things form wife
98	0.547	Husband limiting wife
102	0.577	Husband comparing wife with others' wives
108	0.606	Conflict between in-laws
111	0.474	Husband being superstitious
113	0.536	Husband's lack of love for wife
134	0.409	Husband's unusual demands when having sexual intercourse
140	0.492	Husband looking at wife as a servant
141	0.509	Husband sulking in conflicts
145	0.510	Husband jealous of wife
146	0.561	Husband suspicious of wife
148	0.439	Husband scrupulous
Item loadings on Factor 3 (Husband's social abnormalities)		
36	0.653	Husband drug abuse
37	0.575	Husband alcohol abuse
39	0.688	Husband's relations with unsuitable people
45	0.485	Husband too considerate about own friends
46	0.451	Husband's lack of job/spouse workless
96	0.437	Husband gloating
99	0.577	Husband pleasure-seeking/spouse being a moocher
123	0.619	Husband committing crimes or ethical offences
144	0.433	Husband lavish
150	0.408	Husband's bad smell in the mouth
Item loadings on Factor 4 (Husband and wife's personal and family (Incompatibilities)		
16	0.452	Incompatibility in economical status of families of origin
25	0.453	Incompatibility in appearances
80	0.508	Incompatibility in social status of families of origin
90	0.574	Incompatibility in customs of families of origin
104	0.424	Husband not sociable
129	0.469	Husband's lack of physical attraction for wife
130	0.410	In-laws' disagreement with the marriage
132	0.423	Husband's indifference to his own appearance
135	0.481	Husband's disrespect for guests
143	0.433	Husband's lack of sexual attraction for wife

ases a cutoff correlation of 0.4, as an unacceptable minimum loading value. The table also shows the factor scale items and factor loads. The first factor can be labeled neglect of wife's wishes' including 40 items and accounting for 22.96% of the variance. The second factor can be termed husband and his family lack of social skill. This factor includes 33 items and accounts for 9.40% of the variance. The third factor represents husband's social abnormalities. This factor includes 10 items and accounts for 5.14% of the variance. The fourth factor denotes husband and wife's personal and family incompatibilities (mismatches). This factor includes 10 items and accounts for 4.24% of the variance. Analysis of internal consistency reliabilities yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.95 for the neglect of wife's wishes factor, 0.92 for the husband and his family lack of social skills factor, 0.82 for the husband's social abnormalities factor, 0.78 for the husband and wife's personal and family incompatibilities (mismatches) and 0.96 for the total items.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the current investigation was to examine the perceptions of divorcing women regarding the causes of their divorce and to identify underlying dimensions among the reasons cited. The current study demonstrated that neglect of wife's wishes (unmet emotional needs) is the most important divorce factor for women. The findings are compatible with Attachment and Social Exchange theories (Karney and Bradbury, 1995) those of Goode's (1948), Gigy and Kelly (1991) and Chlen and Mustaffa (2008). They also reported neglect and unwillingness to meet spouse's major needs as major divorce factors among women. This factor also corresponds to the specific item used in Gigy and Kelly's (1992), research i.e., not feeling loved or appreciated by spouse, spouse not willing or able to meet my needs. This factor refers to the fact that with the high expectation that women bring with them into their marriages, there is no surprise that they will be upset when they find that their needs are not met. They will sooner or later think of divorce. Nearly all women express high satisfaction early after their marriages. However, for many, their satisfaction lowers as they get farther from being newlyweds. Women with unmet needs to respect, trust, intimacy and husband's lack of commitment to family life will naturally come to detachment.

The results also show that husband and his family's lack of social skills is the second important divorce factor for women. The findings are compatible with the behavioral theory (Karney and Bradbury, 1995; Granvold,

1979; Savaya and Cohen, 2003; Zargar and Doost, 2008). They also reported lack of communication skills, conflict over roles/responsibilities, husband's physical and verbal abuse and interference by their in-laws as major divorce factors for women. Social skills play an important role in the maintenance of marital satisfaction. Couples, who possess effective social skills experience many positive social and psychological circumstances such as social support and enjoyment of time with one another. So, husbands with lack of adequate social skills are likely to have partners who are less satisfied with their relationship.

The findings of the present study also indicate that husband's social abnormalities is the third divorce factor for women. The results are compatible with the Crisis Theory and those of Goode's (1956), Kitson and Marvin (1982), Fletcher (1983), Granvold (1979), Gigy and Kelly (1992), Nassehy (1991), Chang (2003), Amato and Previti (2003) and Savaya and Cohen (2003). They also demonstrated that drinking or drug use, extramarital sex, demeaning/violent relationship and financial/employment problems are major divorce factors for women. Social abnormalities, husband's drug abuse, unemployment, alcohol abuse, lavish, committing crimes and unemployment, man's not living up to the unspoken expectations the spouse holds increase the risk of divorce. Unemployed men are likely to feel inadequate in their role as providers while their wives may get confused, frustrated and angry. Unemployment is threatening to the man's self-worth and is often associated with decrease in money and sexual activity and increases depression, alcohol consumption and fighting for both husband and wife. Another common symptom of family dysfunction is alcohol and drug abuse among men. They learn to hide behind the bottle and drug instead of facing the reality; they, even after one drink or drug, are no longer warm and fun. In other words, these men are masters at creating stresses and crisis, such as unemployment, drinking or drug use and committing crimes. They are so completely wrapped up in their self destruction that they will soon loose touch with their wives.

Finally, the results show husband and wife's personal and family incompatibilities as the fourth major divorce factor among for women. The results are compatible with the cognitive dissonance theory (Donovan and Jackson, 1990) and those of Amato and Previti (2003). They also reported husband-wife's incompatibilities as a major divorce factor for women. Incompatibility is a broad and general reason. It may be related to differences of spouse religiosity, customs, modernity, education, aspirations, values, social and economical status of families of origin, appearances and lack of sexual attraction. Mismatched

couples are strangely disconnected. They seem as if they have never been really married. They share few enjoyable interactions and have little respect for each other; they cannot communicate; they disagree on fundamental issues and their sex life is poor. There are few expressions of positive emotion; there is little affection, little playfulness and little lightheartedness. After a while, they are too hard and frustrated to be genuinely kind to each other. Mismatched couples are joined together only by marriage, not by shared ideas and ideals, similarity in appearances, compatibility in customs of families of origin, similarity in sexual and physical attraction and similarity in economical social status of families of origin are not traceable.

Although, marriage and divorce are considered cultural issues and are affected by socio-cultural factors, it seems that divorce factors are rather universal for women and are not that different from culture to culture. The results of this study show the fact that divorce factors for Iranian women are very much alike to those cited by other studies.

The findings of this study have theoretical and applied implications for family psychologists, family therapists, marriage and remarriage-seeking women and policy makers. The findings of this study confirm the extent to which the wife in our society has shifted her philosophical beliefs regarding the evaluation of marriage and decision to divorce. Whereas, before, divorce was a solution more often limited to social and economic abnormalities such as unemployment and alcohol and drug abuse, today, divorce for women is most commonly sought because of a more general dissatisfaction with neglect of emotional and affective needs, husband's lack of communication skills and personal and family incompatibilities. Women are recommended to think long and hard before marriage, do not rush into marriage, do not marry for wrong reasons, try to know their future husbands well and learn to deal with stress. Policies should strengthen marriage and reduce the risk of divorce. There are several suggestions: First, there should be national attempts to reduce workplace demands and increase workplace flexibility, so that married people can give more attention to the needs of their families. Paid family leaves would reduce stress and help avoid crises when a child is born or a family member is ill. Moreover, workshops can be set up to strengthen and repair marriage. These can be held on weekends, or be taped and distributed in the community. Finally, government agencies, community organizations and religious groups can be funded to develop marriage promotion programs, especially for low-income or half-educated couples. There can even be laws for not permitting hasty marriages. A

waiting period would give the couple time to participate in premarital programs. This will give them time to think more on what they are doing, after which they may either say no or keep their promises more seriously.

This study has a number of limitations. One is that, for the reason explained in the method section, it does not use a reprehensive or matched sample. The study was restricted to women. Despite these limitations, the study makes an important contribution to the understanding of divorce among women in Khuzestan, Iran. It is the first study, in Iran in which the authors are identifying divorce factors in female divorcees via factor analysis. Further research is recommended, using more representative samples of both male and female and regular and contract divorcees and comparing the weights of the various factors.

CONCLUSION

The present study indicated that four major factors may lead to divorce in Iranian women. These factors were identified as neglect of wife's wishes (unmet emotional needs), husband and his family's lack of social skills, husband's social abnormalities, husband and wife's personal and family incompatibilities. The findings of this study confirm the extent to which "the wife" in our society has shifted her philosophical beliefs regarding the evaluation of marriage and decision to divorce. This study has two major messages for the international society, Firstly, people should take into account similarities in personality characteristics, social skills, family status of their partners before getting married. Secondly, government agencies, community organizations and religious groups can be funded to develop marriage promotion programs.

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