



The role of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness in predicting depression in women affected by infidelity

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study was to investigate the role of loneliness, sexual satisfaction, and forgiveness in predicting depression in women affected by infidelity. **Methods:** 250 women affected by infidelity in Tehran were selected using the purposive sampling method and participated in this study. Participants completed the Russell & Pilva & Cortona (1980) Loneliness Questionnaire, Larson et al. (1998), Ray et al. (2001), and Beck (1996) Depression Inventory. Data analysis was performed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression. **Results:** The findings showed that there was a significant negative relationship between feelings of loneliness and depression ($P < 0.01$) and a significant positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and forgiveness with depression ($P < 0.01$). The results of multiple regression also showed that feelings of loneliness, sexual satisfaction, and forgiveness play a role in predicting depression in women affected by infidelity and the share of feelings of loneliness was greater than other predictor variables. **Conclusion:** Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that feelings of loneliness, sexual satisfaction, and forgiveness are effective on depression in women affected by infidelity.

Keywords: Loneliness, sexual satisfaction, forgiveness, depression, marital infidelity.

Introduction

In most societies, including Iran, men's infidelity is more easily accepted, making women feel powerless and frustrated in front of their husband's infidelity (Costa, Haque, Elveria, and Falk, 2019; Fathi et al., 2013). This issue causes various psychological problems, including guilt, mood disorders, anger, sadness, shame, frustration and fear for women affected by infidelity (Gogi, Kumar, and Dory, 2016). One of the psychological problems that many of these women face is depression (Dehghan Manshad, Faruzandeh, and Zare Neyestank, 2020). The symptoms of depression are diverse; In general, four categories of symptoms are considered for depression: mood, cognitive, motivational and physical (Sadock et al., 2020). Various factors can affect the depression of women affected by infidelity. One of these factors is loneliness. According to Perlman and Pilau (1982), loneliness is a gap between what a person wants and gets. The deeper this gap is, the greater the feeling of loneliness (quoted by Samadi Kashan, Haj Hosseini, Behpejoh, and Zamani Zarchi, 2019). The feeling of loneliness arises when the person's contact and relationship with others is false, in such a way that a shared emotional experience is not imagined for this mutual relationship of the person with others, and in the process of contact with others, a person lacks a real and sincere relationship. Another component that can affect the depression of women affected by infidelity is sexual satisfaction. Young, Denny, Young, and Lokois (2000) define sexual satisfaction as a person's pleasant feeling about their sexual relationships. Couples who have sexual satisfaction in their lives can communicate with each other and solve their problems better; on the other hand, having sexual satisfaction is necessary to have an effective marital relationship (Park, Chiu, Liu, and Lee, 2020). One of the components that can affect the depression of women affected by infidelity is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a freely chosen emotional transformation in which the desire for revenge and avoidance of the wrongdoer is reduced. This process has sometimes been described as an altruistic gift (Pellochi, Palleri, Regalia, & Fincham, 2015). In the last two decades, psychologists have recognized the important role of forgiveness in effective interpersonal relationships. This effect is particularly relevant for minor transgressions (eg, relationship neglect) as well as major transgressions of trust and relationship boundaries such as infidelity (Chi, Tang, Worthington, Chan, Lan, & Lin, 2019). Based on this and considering the existing research gap, the present study investigated the role of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness in predicting depression in women affected by infidelity.

Method

250 women affected by infidelity in Tehran were selected using the purposive sampling method and participated in this study. Participants completed the Russell & Pilva & Cortona (1980) Loneliness Questionnaire, Larson et al. (1998), Ray et al. (2001), and Beck (1996) Depression Inventory. Data analysis was performed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression.

Results

There is a significant positive relationship between loneliness and depression ($P < 0.001$) and a significant negative relationship between sexual satisfaction and forgiveness and depression ($P < 0.001$). Before analyzing the data with the simultaneous regression method, the assumptions of this test were checked. Considering the state of skewness and elongation of scores, the assumption of normality of all research variables was confirmed. In order to check the assumptions of correlation and collinearity, Pearson's correlation test was used, the results of

which are presented in Table 1. Considering that there is an acceptable correlation between the studied variables and the correlation between predictor variables is less than 0.7, therefore, the assumption of correlation and collinearity has been correctly observed. In order to investigate multiple collinearity, we focused on collinearity statistics. Durbin-Watson's test ($W=1.45$) showed that the residuals are not correlated with each other. Therefore, the assumption of independent errors is also maintained. The linear statistic showed that none of the tolerance data is close to zero and the VIF values are less than 10, so the assumption of multicollinearity is also established. In order to investigate the role of predictor variables (loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness) in predicting the criterion variable (depression), multiple regression test was used simultaneously.

The regression model is able to explain about 44% of the criterion variable (adjusted $R^2=0.430$) and significantly predicts the criterion variable ($F=63.63$, $P=0.001$).

The regression coefficients of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness are significant ($P<0.001$) and these variables contribute significantly to the model. Multiple correlation (0.661) shows that approximately 44% of the variance of depression is explained by the linear combination of predictor variables (feeling of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness) ($R=0.661$, $R^2=0.437$ and 0.430 =adjusted R^2). Also, the feeling of loneliness had a greater contribution in predicting and explaining depression.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the role of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness in predicting depression in women affected by infidelity. The results showed that the linear combination of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness variables explains 44% of the variance of depression. Also, the feeling of loneliness had a greater contribution in predicting and explaining depression. In this way, the feeling of loneliness was a stronger predictor for explaining the depression of women affected by infidelity.

In explaining these results, it can be said that one of the problems of betrayed women is the frequent experience of feeling worthless. This feeling of worthlessness is associated with decreased self-esteem and hopelessness and loneliness (Ciarocco et al., 2012). The feeling of despair, loneliness and worthlessness in these women causes them to gradually limit their communication with the people around them and the society. Women affected by infidelity may feel that social connections no longer meet their psychological needs. Thoughts combined with comparison and feelings of longing for the lives of couples they encounter in social environments can also be associated with consequences such as frustration and disappointment. What helps to justify further distancing from society. This isolation will be either physical (separation from the community and cutting off social connections) or mental (lack of companionship or enjoyment of social connections) along with negative feelings about social relationships. In fact, a decrease in psychosocial functions is created in the feeling of loneliness, considered an important symptom of depression (Dalberg, McKay, Frank, and Nasir, 2022). In fact, reducing the feeling of pleasure and confusion in social functioning, which is one of the main characteristics of loneliness, is one of the factors affecting depression. The feeling of loneliness causes a person to become monotonous or limited in the activities that used to bring satisfaction (for example, having relationships with others) (Jahrami et al., 2020) and this change will be the basis of depression. One of the innate human needs is the need for sex. People who do not have enough satisfaction in their sexual relationships gradually lose their motivation and interest in romantic relationships with their

spouses (Nakunam, Etemidi and Pournaqash Tehrani, 2019). Therefore, in low sexual satisfaction, lack of interest and lack of motivation (as a stimulus to have sex) will play a major role. Since one of the main symptoms of depression is not having enough interest and energy for activities that a person was previously interested in, so lack of sexual satisfaction can cause symptoms of depression in a person and lead to it. Women affected by their husband's infidelity can choose different behaviors in front of their husband's behavior. When the betrayed person is able to forgive, his marital relations and weak marital satisfaction will be adjusted. While the lack of forgiveness that is associated with dishonor can negatively affect relationships and marital satisfaction, as well as individuals and families, and endanger mental health (Imanifar, Fatemi, and Amini, 2012).

Loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness significantly predict depression in women affected by infidelity. This research has provided a deep insight into the relationship between feelings of loneliness, sexual satisfaction and forgiveness with depression in women affected by infidelity. This issue can create a clear perspective for officials, psychologists, counselors and in general for people working in the field of reducing harm related to the family. The current research, like other research, was accompanied by limitations, which can be mentioned as the use of a questionnaire as the only research tool, the lack of control of intervening variables, and the limitation of the research community to Tehran, which shows the need for caution in generalizing the results. Since the use of other methods of measuring the research variables can increase the external validity of the findings, therefore, it is suggested to research other samples of the society. It is also suggested that future studies should aim for emotional intelligence, sexual performance and marital satisfaction in women with and without infidelity.

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