

Identifying Factors and Contexts Leading Couples to Mutual Divorce

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Mardani, F., Navabinejad, S., & Yousefi, E. (2024). Identifying Factors and Contexts Leading Couples to Mutual Divorce. *Applied Family Therapy Journal*, 5(1), 78-88.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.aftj.5.1.9>



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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of the current research was to identify the factors and contexts leading couples to mutual divorce.

Method: This study was qualitative, utilizing descriptive phenomenology. The population consisted of couples seeking mutual divorce at counseling centers in Tehran. Among these, interviews with couples were conducted through purposive sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved. Qualitative data were collected using descriptive phenomenology and semi-structured interviews. Then, data analysis was performed using content analysis.

Findings: The results of the content analysis of the data collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews showed that the contexts leading to mutual divorce could be categorized into eight classes: 1) extramarital relationships, 2) domestic violence, 3) childlessness, 4) conflicts, contradictions, and differences, 5) criminality, 6) addiction, 7) age, and 8) economic status.

Conclusion: The results indicated that the factors leading to mutual divorce could be classified into two categories: personal factors and interpersonal or non-personal factors.

Keywords: Mutual divorce, contexts, factors, couples.

1. Introduction

Marriage is an intimate relationship characterized by choice and undergoing transformation, thereby differing from the type of relationship experienced between a mother and child in terms of intimacy. Intimacy is defined as a type of relationship where self-disclosure, understanding, trust, and deep closeness are experienced, and in a healthy marriage, both members consciously fulfill

each other's needs with mature styles (Ghezelsefloo et al., 2019; Saadati Shamir et al., 2019). Divorce is one of the most significant family damages, and experts believe that the divorce process typically follows this sequence: minor disputes, repetition of minor disputes and their escalation, separation or one partner's reluctance towards the other, prolonged quarrels and their repetition, couples' exhaustion from quarrels and conflicts, emotional divorce, and legal divorce (Ghezelsefloo et al., 2019). Couples start their shared

life with love but observe the gradual fading of initial intimacy, continuing their life in a monotonous and dull rhythm over time, resorting to alcohol, overeating, drug use, illicit relationships, and seeking to experience intimacy and sexual intimacy anew, leading to divorce (Alijani et al., 2022; Basharpour et al., 2021). Indeed, social developments, alongside the weakening of the patriarchal family and the growth of increasing social conflicts and confrontations, have led to the collapse of ancient traditions and the replacement of new moral values. These developments have challenged traditional concepts and old ways of private and family life (Mosadegh et al., 2023). In fact, family organizational disorder can be defined as the breakdown of the family unit and the disintegration of social role structures due to the reduction or inability of one or more family members to perform their roles (Damota, 2019; Darbani & Parsakia, 2022). Among the negative aspects emerging within this social institution is the phenomenon known as "mutual divorce," a process in which couples agree on all aspects related to their shared life and submit a certificate of irreconcilability to the court (Andersson & Kolk, 2015; Brand et al., 2019), a phenomenon not limited to industrial societies but as a new socio-cultural value, it has also made its way to other societies (Barzoki et al., 2015; Bolt, 2022). In other words, one of its types is mutual divorce. In mutual divorce, a man and woman can proceed with divorce by mutual agreement, and the intent of mutual divorce is not that the will of the woman and man is equally effective in divorce but is considered a contract between the spouses (Thadathil & Sriram, 2020).

It seems that examining this issue could help improve the culture of society in this regard; as every scientific research, while being cognitively and methodologically important, also has a practical function; nevertheless, a review of various studies showed that most of these writings were categorized under cross-sectional and quantitative research (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Most importantly, none of the studies specifically examined mutual divorce. Therefore, there is not much background on mutual divorce. However, references were made to the variables of those studies similar to the current study's subject. Further studies conducted in this area also mainly addressed the consequences of divorce. Some studies also referred to the direct relationship between divorce and others' interference and opinions in the lives of couples and existing problems in sexual and marital issues (Goudarzi et al., 2022; Hashemi et al., 2019; Mohlatole et al., 2018). In this situation, the question arises: How do individuals describe their

experiences with mutual divorce? Therefore, the effort of the current study to identify correlates associated with the demand for mutual divorce was qualitative, aiming to enter the world of lived experiences of mutual divorce applicants through interviews with them.

2. Methods

2.1. Study design and Participant

The present study was a qualitative research of the descriptive-phenomenology type, which used content analysis method for analyzing qualitative data. The research population included conflicting couples requesting mutual divorce, referred to counseling centers. Hence, one center was selected for convenience. In qualitative research, the researcher collects data more than once until reaching theoretical saturation of categories; therefore, the sample size was not predetermined, and sampling continued until saturation. Purposeful sampling with homogenous sampling was used. Homogenous sampling includes a group that has similar characteristics. In purposeful sampling, the researcher deliberately chooses individuals who provide important information, with the principal criterion being the selection of individuals who can provide the necessary information to answer the research questions. The sample size was 22 individuals (11 couples) based on theoretical saturation.

Additionally, the entry conditions for the research included: a minimum education level of a high school diploma, conflicting couples requesting mutual divorce, and willingness to voluntarily participate in the research and share their experiences through interviews. Exit criteria included lack of cooperation until the end of the interview, failure to provide relevant answers to the questions posed, and avoidance of answering all questions.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview form included open questions to examine the factors and contexts leading to mutual divorce among conflicting couples. For this purpose, the researcher initially developed the interview form. This form includes the research project title, interview time, date, and place. At the beginning of this form, a summary of the research project goal is mentioned, and the interviewer informs the interviewee about the research goal by reading it. Then, each of the interview questions is mentioned in

order. The duration of the interviews will be 45-30 minutes, depending on the conditions and willingness of the participants. All interviews are digitally recorded and immediately transcribed word by word after recording. To increase the validity and reliability, which equals the scientific robustness of the findings in qualitative research, the researcher's prolonged engagement and contact with participants with maximum diversity also increase the data's credibility. Additionally, data validity methods with participants reviewing the transcripts to resolve any ambiguities in codings are used. For this purpose, the researcher provided parts of the interview and coding to them to achieve uniform concepts regarding participants' statements. On the other hand, there is no precise consensus on the concept of validity and reliability in the field of qualitative research, and in qualitative research, reliability is proposed as a criterion to replace validity and reliability, consisting of four more minor concepts of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability, and also, in qualitative research, four methods are used to ensure reliability, which includes using structured processes from convergent interviews, organizing structured processes for recording, writing, and interpreting data, having at least two people conduct interviews separately but in parallel with each other, comparing findings of two or more researchers, and finally, using a guidance committee to evaluate and implement the interview program, which all stages were conducted in this research, indicating the reliability of the qualitative findings.

2.3. Data Analysis

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for collecting qualitative data, and content analysis method was used for analyzing qualitative data. Content analysis is a qualitative research method that tries to understand the internal meaning of qualitative data and categorize them by analyzing and classifying them. In this method, through a systematic classification process, codes, sub-categories, main categories, and explicit and implicit patterns were identified; this method aims to understand meaning by reducing qualitative data and categorizing them; in this method, the researcher avoids using predefined classes and essentially allows categories and their names to emerge from the data; therefore, after collecting the interviews, the researcher focused on the data to gain understanding and insight. Initially, data analysis was performed by repeatedly reading the text to gain a general insight. Then, the texts were

read word by word, and codes were extracted. This process continued continuously from extracting codes to naming them and then classifying them based on similarities and differences within the categories.

3. Findings and Results

In the initial coding phase, open coding was performed. For this purpose, data collected from the questionnaire were extracted through line-by-line analysis of interview statements and formulated as open codes. Then, similar codes were formulated as one category, and eventually, all these categories were listed.

To transform open codes into categories, codings with similar themes were brought together. After this phase, open codings were revised so that codes that could fit into more than one theme were eliminated or split into several open codes. Then, it was time to name similar open codes that were formulated together. In the naming phase, the overall common content of open codes was chosen as the name of the category. The characteristic of this naming was that the name of each category should reflect the main and common content present in its open codes. In this research, 94 open codes derived from qualitative data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews were formulated and named in 33 categories, including: infidelity, physical violence, substance and alcohol abuse, significant age difference, infertility, class difference, cultural differences, religious and belief differences, childlessness, criminal record, emotional and psychological violence, economic violence, differences in perspective and worldview, differences in norms and values, committing crimes, returning from rehabilitation, non-acceptance of addiction, marrying at older ages, low income, unemployment, unstable employment, poverty, mental disorders, personality and behavioral disorders, suspicion and pessimism, perfectionism, low flexibility and resilience, low problem-solving skills, lack of effective communication, low quality of sexual relationship, lack of conflict resolution skills, family interference, friends' interference.

After open coding and extracting categories, the next step, axial coding, was performed. This step involved naming sub-themes and main themes. Initially, categories with similar content were placed under a sub-theme, and then related sub-themes were organized under a main theme. [Table 1](#) displays the categories, sub-themes, and main themes.

Table 1

The Results of Qualitative Analysis

Row	Category	Sub-theme	Main Theme
1	Infidelity	Extramarital Relationships	Contexts
2	Physical Violence	Domestic Violence	
3	Psychological and Emotional Violence		
4	Economic Violence		Childlessness
5	Infertility		
6	Deliberate Childlessness		
7	Cultural Differences	Differences, Contradictions, and Disparities	
8	Belief and Religious Differences		
9	Class Differences		
10	Differences in Attitude and Worldview		
11	Differences in Norms and Values	Being a Criminal	
12	Committing Crimes		
13	Criminal Record	Addiction	
14	Non-acceptance of Addiction		
15	Substance and Alcohol Abuse		
16	Relapse from Recovery	Age	
17	Marriage at Older Ages		
18	High Age Difference	Economic Situation	
19	Unemployment		
20	Unstable Employment		
21	Poverty		
22	Low Income	Personal Factors	Driving Factors
23	Personality and Behavioral Disorders		
24	Skepticism and Pessimism		
25	Perfectionism	Interpersonal and Non-personal Factors	
26	Low Flexibility and Resilience		
27	Low Problem-Solving Skills		
28	Mental Disorders		
29	Low Quality of Sexual Relationship		
30	Lack of Conflict Resolution Skills		
31	Family Interference		
32	Friends' Interference		
33	Lack of Effective Communication		

As described, after analyzing the qualitative data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and reformulating the initial codes, three categories were identified as the main themes as follows: A) Contexts and B) Driving Factors.

The main theme of Contexts includes eight sub-themes as follows: 1) Extramarital relationships, 2) Domestic violence, 3) Childlessness, 4) Conflicts, contradictions, and differences, 5) Criminality, 6) Addiction, 7) Age, and 8) Economic status. Among these, extramarital relationships encompass the category of infidelity; domestic violence includes categories of physical violence, psychological and emotional violence, and economic violence; childlessness includes categories of infertility and deliberate childlessness; the sub-theme of conflicts, contradictions, and differences includes categories of cultural differences,

religious and belief differences, class difference, differences in perspective and worldview, and differences in norms and values; the sub-theme of criminality includes categories of committing crimes and having a criminal record; the sub-theme of addiction includes categories of non-acceptance of addiction, substance and alcohol abuse, and relapse from recovery; the sub-theme of age includes marrying at older ages and significant age difference; and the sub-theme of economic status includes unemployment, unstable employment, poverty, and low income.

Furthermore, the main theme of Driving Factors includes two sub-themes: 1) Personal factors and 2) Interpersonal and non-personal factors. Among these, personal factors include categories of personality and behavioral disorders, suspicion and pessimism, perfectionism, low flexibility and resilience, low problem-solving skills, and mental disorders. Finally,

the sub-theme of interpersonal and non-personal factors includes categories of low quality of sexual relationship, lack of conflict resolution skills, family interference, friends' interference, and lack of effective communication.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

To identify the contexts and driving factors leading to mutual divorce, a qualitative phenomenological method and content analysis were used for data analysis. The results of content analysis of data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews showed that the contexts leading to mutual divorce could be categorized into eight classes: 1) Extramarital relationships, 2) Domestic violence, 3) Childlessness, 4) Conflicts, contradictions, and differences, 5) Criminality, 6) Addiction, 7) Age, and 8) Economic status. Also, the results from the qualitative analysis of collected data indicated that the driving factors to mutual divorce could be classified into two categories: personal factors and interpersonal or non-personal factors. The findings of this research align with the previous studies (Alijani et al., 2022; Bredtmann & Vonnahme, 2019; Goudarzi et al., 2022; Hashemi et al., 2019; Law et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2019; Mohlatlole et al., 2018; Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Sorek, 2019; Talaezadeh et al., 2023; Thadathil & Sriram, 2020; Van Dijk et al., 2020; Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019).

Contextual factors represent issues that interviewees identified as precursors to opting for mutual divorce. In essence, contexts are issues that prepare the home environment and marital relationship for mutual divorce. The first category of mutual divorce contexts was exclusively related to the category of infidelity. The childlessness category included infertility and deliberate childlessness. The third sub-theme of conflicts, contradictions, and differences included cultural differences, religious and belief differences, class difference, differences in perspective and worldview, and differences in norms and values. The sub-theme of criminality encompassed two categories: committing crimes and having a criminal record. The sixth sub-theme of addiction included non-acceptance of addiction, substance and alcohol abuse, and relapse from recovery. The seventh sub-theme was Age, encompassing marrying at older ages and significant age difference. Finally, the last sub-theme was Economic status, including unemployment, unstable employment, poverty, and low income. In addition to the main theme of Contexts, the main theme of Driving Factors was composed of two sub-themes:

Personal factors and Interpersonal and non-personal factors. Personal factors covered six categories: personality and behavioral disorders, suspicion and pessimism, perfectionism, low flexibility and resilience, low problem-solving skills, and mental disorders. Interpersonal and non-personal factors included low quality of sexual relationship, lack of conflict resolution skills, family interference, friends' interference, and lack of effective communication.

One of the themes from the contexts leading to mutual divorce was childlessness. In explaining this finding, it can be said that families sometimes encounter marital conflicts and might opt for divorce not because they had initial problems but because they are stuck in the life cycle. Having children is considered one of the main and important stages in the life cycle in many societies, and when men and women realize they might never have children, they face a crisis caused by infertility, which can negatively affect all aspects of life. Infertility, as one of life's crises, imposes significant stress on couples and can lead to marital conflicts and divorce through various means (Raley & Sweeney, 2020; Sorek, 2019). In childless families, couples, in the absence of the pressure of raising a child, are more inclined to move towards dissolving the marital life, and it is in these conditions that a more suitable ground for the intervention of others is usually provided. According to available statistics, the divorce rate is lower in multi-child families (more than three children). Facing infertility significantly affects the lives of couples and is a stressful crisis for various aspects of couples' lives. Infertile individuals experience psychological disorders such as marital dissatisfaction, relationship disorders, feeling pressure on the fate of marriage, anger, and negative emotional effects; so much so that many researchers have pointed to increased marital conflicts and in some cases divorce among infertile couples (Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019).

One of the research findings was extramarital relationships as one of the contexts of mutual divorce. In explaining this finding, it can be said that infidelity has been reported as one of the important causes of divorce and separation. Marital infidelity, based on a general definition, is the violation of the commitment of a two-person relationship that leads to the formation of some degree of emotional and physical intimacy with someone outside of this relationship. Engaging in extramarital sexual relationships is one of the most important reasons for the breakdown of marriage. An important point about infidelity is that the infidelity behavior has a sexual basis, and the extent and reasons for men and women's involvement in

infidelity are different. In terms of involvement in infidelity behavior, men commit marital infidelity much more than women. Men easily take the path of infidelity as a result of not-so-severe marital dissatisfactions and conflicts. However, women had stepped on this path either intending to retaliate and seek revenge, either for revenge against the husband after becoming aware of his infidelity or to take revenge on their original family for forcing her into a forced marriage. Some women confess that after their husband's infidelity is revealed, they are deeply tempted to take retaliatory action, but they refrain from actualizing their intention for reasons such as feeling guilty, fear of consequences, and a definitive decision to separate (Bredtmann & Vonnahme, 2019). In general, in explaining this finding, it can be said that marital infidelity is more of a process of gradual emotional, emotional, and even physical separation that targets the integrity and sense of security of individuals and has consequences such as lack of sense of security, desire for revenge against the infidel, relatively stable emotional and cognitive disturbances towards the partner, neglect, disturbing doubts and suspicions, and stable illusions based on the continuation of infidelities, lack of emotional support, and backing (Law et al., 2019).

Regarding domestic violence, it can be said that global research has also shown problems, especially domestic violence, as an effective factor on divorce among women. Some instances of domestic violence mentioned in these studies include the husband's anger, verbal abuse by the husband, suspicion, beating the spouse, using inappropriate words in communication and verbal quarrels, lack of empathy, agreement, and consultation in life matters (Asadi et al., 2017; Baidoo et al., 2021). Further explaining this finding, it can be said that regarding the role of beating, it can be said that this problem will also cause marital relationships to face problems, as a man beating a woman is one of the barriers to friendship and intimacy between couples (Kourti et al., 2021).

Another sub-theme is differences, contradictions, and disparities, which can include various differences such as cultural, intellectual, belief, class differences, etc. It seems that this issue is generally manifested in patterns and beliefs reflected in the behavior and speech of men and women, creating the conditions for mutual divorce. For example, one of the roots of a woman's unmet emotional needs, which is among the most significant factors leading to emotional divorce, is the man's lack of affection (Azizi & Ghasemi, 2017). It appears that cultural beliefs, which dictate that men should control their emotions and that the expression of

emotions is not favorable for men, can be one of the reasons for men's lack of affection towards their spouses. Men, who have been raised with this belief since childhood and have learned less about expressing emotions during growth and before marriage, face difficulties in expressing affection towards their spouse and meeting her emotional needs after marriage. Therefore, it seems that cultural patterns and beliefs play a significant role in creating the conditions for mutual divorce (Adamczyk, 2013). Further explaining this finding, it can be said that the mismatched thinking and perspective of the man and woman regarding various issues can lead to arguments and tensions between the spouses, thereby reducing their positive communication and paving the way for mutual divorce. The difference in the economic level of the man and woman's families creates a gap in the financial expectations of the man and woman, causing tensions and problems in the spouses' relationships. Moreover, cultural mismatches, through differences in attitudes and customs, lead to conflicts and increase the distance between spouses, thereby creating the conditions for mutual divorce (Bastani, (Adamczyk, 2013).

The sixth context derived from the analysis of the sub-theme of addiction can be explained as follows: One of the spouses becoming addicted causes the individual to feel their emotional relationship with their spouse as cold and lifeless. The addiction of one spouse in itself provides a suitable environment for the growth of corruption, the disintegration of the family, the failure to satisfy the spouse's needs, and financial poverty (Goudarzi et al., 2020; Khosravi et al., 2021). The aforementioned causes the loss of order and discipline and chaos in the family nucleus. Often, the behaviors of the addicted spouse, especially men in such situations, are rooted in the psychological pressures caused by the use of these substances. The theoretical backing for this factor is the family systems theory. According to this theory, divorce can be a result of disturbances in family relationships, so the use of these substances can lead to verbal and physical violence by the spouse, which ultimately can have a direct relationship with the occurrence of divorce (Sorkhabi Abdolmaleki et al., 2021; Yousefi & Bagheryan, 2012; Zare Baghbidi & Etemadifard, 2020).

Regarding age, it can be acknowledged that in some instances, the age difference takes the form of a "generational gap" and poses significant risks for couples with more than a decade of age difference between them. Emotional stability and maturity, personality traits, moral and physical characteristics, and managing a steady line of emotional management by one party against the immaturity

and inexperience of the other, are the most significant factors that overshadow the balance of marital life in most dimensions and make it unbalanced. Moreover, today, marriages where spouses are of the same age or where the woman is older than the man are more common than before. Although marrying someone younger might initially seem interesting and exciting, a significant age difference between spouses is associated with decreased marital satisfaction over time. If the age difference between the man and woman is three to four years, it is considered normal. However, this depends on how much the man and woman can believe in and accept this age difference in marriage; indeed, this time cannot be generalized to everyone, meaning not all individuals with such an age difference have a good life. The smaller the age gap between spouses, the greater the possibility of understanding, as two people with a significant age difference are at two different stages of life, with different needs and characteristics (Bijari et al., 2020; Yousefi & Bagheryan, 2012).

The last context obtained was economic status. In explaining this finding, it can be said that poverty and unemployment, working in inappropriate work environments, earning income through improper channels, financial dependency on families, poor management of family financial resources, and rising living costs have been the source of many family conflicts, mental engagements, and marital disputes. The way economic issues impact divorce is such that while poor economic conditions and financial problems may not be the primary and main cause of divorce, they can reduce the level of marital satisfaction; the relationship between job instability, especially unemployment in men, and divorce is strong and negative (Sbarra & Whisman, 2022). Unemployed men have less understanding, communication, and order in family relationships and generally have more tense relationships with their spouses. Moreover, unemployed husbands are less supported by their spouses compared to families where there is no unemployment, have more arguments, and have less family cohesion (Sbarra & Whisman, 2022; Zulkarnain & Korenman, 2019).

Regarding driving factors, the results showed that they could be categorized into two sub-themes:

The first category consists of individual factors. One of the personal factor categories was the quality of the spouses' sexual relationship. In explaining this finding, it can be said that the sexual relationship between spouses is a two-way process, and any disturbance in it can lead the spouses towards other problems (Ebrahimi & Mohammadlou, 2020).

Problems in the sexual domain, possibly due to fear, anxiety, shame, or feelings of inadequacy and guilt, remain hidden and unspoken. Often, these hidden problems may manifest themselves with other symptoms and push the marital situation to the brink of severe disputes and even divorce. Sexual dissatisfaction for various reasons, such as the man's disregard for the sexual relationship, the man's coldness in the relationship, the man's sexual incapacity, the woman's coldness in the relationship, the man's abnormal needs, and the discrepancy between the man and woman in terms of the relationship, by causing disturbances in the sexual relationship, reduces the man and woman's satisfaction from the marital relationship and pushes the spouses towards mutual divorce (Basharpoor et al., 2021; Mosadegh et al., 2023).

Among the driving factors to mutual divorce, three categories were identified: mental and personality disorders, and suspicion and skepticism. In explaining this relationship, it can be said that a risk factor for relationship turmoil and divorce is the individual's psychological disorder in the past or present. A significant portion of communication problems and divorce among individuals with severe psychological disorders, depression, and some anxiety disorders has been reported, so much so that it can be said that marital conflicts and psychological disorders mutually affect each other (Mosadegh et al., 2023; Sadeghkhanian et al., 2023; Weiss et al., 2018). One of the disorders frequently observed among couples applying to courts and a very important factor in the occurrence of divorce is paranoid personality disorder. This disorder, the core of which consists of distrust of others and suspicion and malice, is among the serious complicating factors in relationships with others and marital relationships. Such individuals perceive the external world as opposing and contradictory to themselves and carry a sense of distrust towards others. They constantly think that others are out to harm them or are conspiring against them, and spouses are no exception. Malice towards the spouse is one of their prominent characteristics. They seriously want to know all aspects of their spouse's relationships with the external world. They are seriously sensitive to the minutest corners of their spouse's relationships with family, friends, and acquaintances. Therefore, they try to have the utmost control and supervision over their spouse's actions, behavior, and relationships, and any ambiguous relationships by the spouse can cause a severe feeling of anxiety and even danger in these individuals (Sadeghkhanian et al., 2023; Weiss et al., 2018).

One of the personal factors driving towards mutual divorce in this research was low resilience and flexibility. In explaining this finding, it can be said that one of the internal factors, considered as one of the constructs of positive psychology, is psychological resilience, which has proven its role in growth and health in the past decades and has recently found a special place in the family domain. Resilience is defined as a personality trait that helps an individual adapt to environmental changes and stresses, and it is believed that individuals with psychological resilience can choose easier ways in life situations because they develop problem-solving skills and show more resistance to stressful conditions. Further explaining this finding, it can be said that resilience is a construct connected with many different aspects, including marriage and family therapy. Also, research results regarding the relationship of resilience with the family domain and spouses' relationships indicate that resilience has the capability to predict marital satisfaction. Resilience is a trait that helps individuals and spouses to be less affected by adverse events, and spouses who lack the trait of resilience do not have the ability to adjust to adverse conditions and stressors arising from marital problems, which causes an increase in conflicts and marital dissatisfaction. In fact, low resilience in individuals reduces adaptation to problems and challenges and, with intensifying tension between spouses, increases the possibility of cooling relationships and mutual divorce (Alijani et al., 2022).

One of the categories derived from personal factors driving towards mutual divorce was perfectionism. Regarding perfectionism in marital relationships, one can refer to the issue of comparing one's marital life and spouse with others. Perfectionists, as individuals who define everything as flawless and ideal for themselves and live with the belief that there is always an exact, complete, and correct solution for human problems and that it would be disastrous if this perfect solution is not found, show a high tendency towards divorce when faced with the slightest problem or issue in marital life. This is because they have positive notions about separation and divorce, believing that ending their marital relationship will have positive outcomes for them and solve their problems (Nikoogoftar & Sangani, 2020; Sangani & Dasht Bozorgi, 2018). Further explaining this topic, it can be said that comparison at any age and at any stage of life has negative consequences, not only does it not lead to individual growth and excellence, but it also inflicts irreparable damage to the individual's morale and personality. This damage in marital life results in nothing but emotional divorce and eventually the separation of the

spouses from each other. Overall, perfectionism and greed manifest in increased expectations, deviations, sexual dissatisfaction, comparisons, and the presence of unrealistic beliefs and far-fetched imaginations in individuals.

Among interpersonal factors, the lack of effective communication and the lack of conflict resolution skills can be mentioned. Additionally, low problem-solving skills were one of the personal categories identified. In explaining this finding, it can be said that communication skills refer to participating in dialogue; that is, spouses can express their statements effectively and understandably and, in turn, listen carefully to the other's speech and have a correct understanding of it. This requires specific skills referred to as "dialogue participation skills" or communication skills (Goudarzi et al., 2022; Mohlatlole et al., 2018; Narimani et al., 2021). Problem-solving or conflict resolution skills help spouses reach a clear agreement that satisfies all their needs as much as possible, often about what, when, and how things should be done. The lack of communication and problem-solving and conflict resolution skills among spouses facing divorce can drive them towards mutual divorce. Further explaining this finding, it can be said that the greater the ability to resolve conflicts among spouses, the less likely emotional divorce is to occur among them. Since men and women inevitably have differences in thoughts and behaviors due to individual differences in marital life, the lack of conflict resolution ability may lead the course of the spouses' life towards tension, conflict, and psychological-emotional separation and divorce (Goudarzi et al., 2022; Weiss et al., 2018; Zare Baghbidi & Etemadifard, 2020). In fact, it is not the absence of differences and conflicts that enhances the quality of marriage and marital relationship but how these differences are dealt with and the ability to resolve marital conflicts that improves the quality of this relationship. Low conflict resolution ability among men and women causes disputes to widen and such a trend can lead to emotional divorce, which can lead to mutual divorce. On the other hand, research shows that the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction is the quality of the relationship between husband and wife (Narimani et al., 2021). Further explaining these findings, it can be said that various factors, including the silence of the man or woman, the man not allocating time for conversation, the man's indifference to the woman during conversation, and verbal quarrels, by causing disturbances in the verbal communication of the man and woman, have led to reduced intimacy and increased distance between them. Also, the weakness of the man and woman in establishing communication, lack of conflict resolution skills, and

frequent and sometimes long-term quarrels between the man and woman, by reducing positive interactions and increasing negative interactions between the spouses, have caused them to be aggrieved by each other, and in this way, have been effective in creating distance between them (Mohlatlole et al., 2018).

The last two categories from the sub-theme of interpersonal and non-personal factors driving towards mutual divorce were family interference and friends' interference. Further explaining this finding, it can generally be said that undue interference by relatives in family life in Iran is one of the problems that increase marital conflicts and family disputes between spouses; because spouses, due to the lack of aggression against relatives, show aggression towards each other, which causes marital disputes between them. Spouses, including brother, sister, and other individuals, are considered live models with whom the divorce applicant directly interacts. Therefore, during marital conflicts, due to the influence of live models, they may choose separation as the best option (Van Lissa et al., 2019).

5. Suggestions and Limitations

This research, like other studies, has limitations, among which can be mentioned: Given the research population and the sample selected for conducting qualitative interviews due to time constraints and also financial limitations, the researcher, despite the intrinsic desire, was unable to collect interviews from other provinces and cities with local and cultural diversity. Therefore, caution must be exercised in generalizing the components and themes extracted in the interview section with engaged couples in other cultures and provinces of the country. Given the importance of the divorce topic, it is suggested that the findings of this research be analyzed with high accuracy and a critical view and that further research be conducted to mature and present a more comprehensive model.

Acknowledgments

Gratitude is extended to all participants in the research and everyone who collaborated in conducting this research.

Declaration of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial support and no conflicts of interest.

Authors' Contributions

All authors made substantial contributions to the research process, covering various aspects from study design to data handling and manuscript preparation.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

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