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Causal explanation of emotional divorce of married women: the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and marital burnout

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Abstract

This research was conducted to explain the cause of emotional divorce of married women based on the cognitive regulation strategies of emotions and marital burnout. The present study was descriptive-correlation of exploratory type-sequential and guided. The statistical population was 1854 married women who were referred to health homes in Tehran in 2019, and 375 women were selected by multi-stage random sampling method based on sample power software. The research tools were Gutman's emotional divorce questionnaire (2008), Garnefski et al.'s cognitive emotion regulation strategies (2001), and Pines' marital burnout (1966), which were implemented on the target sample. In order to analyze the data, in addition to descriptive statistics, the statistical method of structural equations of smartpls was used. The standard coefficients of direct path analysis results have shown a significant relationship between cognitive emotion regulation strategies ($\beta=0.694$) and emotional divorce. Also, the results of the standard coefficients of the indirect path have shown a positive relationship between marital burnout ($\beta=0.694$) with the mediation of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and the emotional divorce of married women. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the cognitive regulation of emotion is mediating in the relationship between marital burnout and emotional divorce.

Keywords: *Emotional divorce, emotional regulation strategies, marital burnout.*

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Introduction

One of the most important stress factors in the family and in the relationships of couples is emotional divorce. Emotional divorce describes a relationship in which spouses seem good and intimate in social settings, but are unable to tolerate each other in private. Emotional divorce does not emerge as a temporary disorder in married life, but as a stable situation (Motatayano, 2015). Emotional divorce occurs due to the lack of positive interactions with the spouse, lack of meeting emotional needs, sexual dissatisfaction, lack of physical attractiveness, betrayal, financial issues, chronic diseases, physical abuse, etc. It leads to symptoms of anxiety, depression, guilt, despair, withdrawal from social activities, pessimistic and stable attitude about oneself, spouse and future (Luminita, Esperanta, 2010). Emotional regulation strategies are considered as a cognitive-emotional style in relationships between couples, where the lack of projection and inappropriate strategies of emotions lead to problems in couples' relationships (Babakhani and Rezaei, 2016). Emotional regulation strategies as a personality trait in the range of emotions is a very significant issue that has obvious effects and undeniable results on interpersonal relationships. It can clarify some of the issues related to family relationships in the form of emotional relationships between two people who make a marriage contract (Besharat, Mirzaei, Gholamali Lavasani and Naqipour, 2017). Emotional regulation strategies are one of the basic factors of successful behavior and activity and play an important role in adapting to stressful life events and may affect the quality of life. In other words, cognitive emotion regulation strategies refer to the way people think after a negative

experience or traumatic event occurs for them (Patton, 2012). Marital burnout among couples causes marital apathy, which is a sign of emotional exhaustion and pessimism (Brummelhuis et al., 2011). Kaiser, 1993 defined marital burnout as a gradual loss of emotional attachment, which includes a decrease in attention to the spouse, emotional alienation, and increased feelings of discouragement and indifference towards the spouse, and includes three stages. 1) Disillusionment and disappointment: Disillusionment with marital relations is a distinct feature of this stage. At this stage, the heartbroken person ruminates on his frustration towards his spouse in complete silence. 2) Anger and hatred: The clearest feeling in this stage is the feeling of hatred, which seems to be caused by the recurrence of negative and harmful behaviors of the husband and wife. Because it is difficult to ignore the spouse's mistakes, which was easy in the first stage, at this stage. 3) Discouragement and indifference: Emotional and physical distancing is the characteristic of the last stage of the marital burnout process. Contrary to the previous stage, anger and hatred decrease to some extent and emotional coldness increases significantly. Also, the restorative behaviors of the previous stages do not take place at this stage due to blaming the spouse for causing problems. Marital burnout in a marital relationship means a negative and unpleasant attitude that a husband and wife have in different aspects of their marital relationship (Kuchaki Amirhande, Karbalai Mohammad Meigoni and Sabet 2017).

The present study was conducted to investigate the causal explanation of emotional divorce of married women based on the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies with marital burnout.

Method

The current study is a descriptive, exploratory-sequential and directed correlational study that provides a model to explain the causality of women's emotional divorce based on the role of cognitive emotion regulation strategies with burnout. Therefore, the statistical population of this research was among 1854 married women who referred to health centers in Tehran in 2018, which was selected by multistage sampling method and considering the possibility of differences in cultural, social, class and... Its residents, the health houses of Tehran city were divided into five regions: north, south, east, west and center, and from each region five health houses were selected randomly and 15 married women from each health house were selected non-randomly and voluntarily. and available were selected as samples. According to the possibility of 20% dropout of the subjects, the sample number was 375 people.

Materials

1. Emotional divorce questionnaire. This scale has 24 items and must be answered by yes or no. A yes answer gets one point and a no answer gets zero points. The minimum score in this scale is zero and the maximum score is 24. The higher the number of yes answers, the higher the probability of emotional divorce. The cut-off point of this questionnaire is 8, and if the score is higher than that, an individual is at risk of emotional divorce.

2. Cognitive emotion regulation strategies questionnaire. This questionnaire is a self-report tool and has 36 items. This questionnaire was invented by Garnefski and Kraaij (2001) and its purpose is to measure the subscales of cognitive emotion regulation. Scoring is based on a five-point Likert scale from never to always (never 1 to

always 5). The range of scores for each subscale is from 4 to 20. The total number of marks ranges from 36 to 180 marks.

3. Marital burnout questionnaire. The partner burnout scale is a self-report instrument designed to measure the degree of burnout in relationships between couples. This scale was developed by Pines (1996). This scale has 21 items, which include 3 main components: physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, and psychological exhaustion. The materials of this questionnaire are graded on a seven-point Likert scale. Level 1 represents no experience of the desired phrase and level 7 represents a lot of experience of the desired phrase. A higher score indicates a higher burnout rate.

Findings

The highest mean in relation to emotional divorce in women is equal to 35.27 and the standard deviation is 7.41. The highest average in relation to the components of emotional cognitive strategies in women is related to the component of refocusing on planning and the lowest average is related to acceptance strategies. The highest average in relation to marital burnout components in women is related to emotional exhaustion and the lowest average is related to physical fatigue.

The results of the obtained significant coefficients show that the indirect path between emotional regulation strategies and the mediation of marital burnout with emotional divorce is significant according to the significance coefficients T.value at the confidence level of 0.99. The results of inclusion of variance or VAF (0.403) have shown that marital burnout has a partial mediating role for the two variables of cognitive emotion regulation strategies and emotional divorce. The path between the

components of cognitive emotion regulation strategies is a suitable mediator for marital burnout with emotional divorce according to the significant coefficients of T.value at the confidence level of 0.99.

In this research, $SRMR = 0.054 < 0.08$ has been obtained, which shows that the test has a good fit.

Discussion

The present study aimed to provide a model to explain the cause of women's emotional divorce based on cognitive emotion regulation strategies with marital burnout. Using the structural equation modeling method to evaluate how the structural model fits the data collected in the test of the research questions is consistent with the theoretical model. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the negative hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, it is concluded that the structural model of the research fits the collected data. The significance examination of the direct paths of the results has shown that there is a significant relationship between the components of emotional regulation strategies and emotional divorce. Based on this, it can be said that the research hypothesis is confirmed. In terms of the intensity and direction of the relationship, based on the results of the beta coefficient, it can be said that the components of cognitive emotion regulation strategies have a high intensity effect with emotional divorce.

The use of emotional regulation strategies can greatly affect the marital problems of couples, on the other hand, there is a relationship between these two variables in various dimensions. One of the factors that people should consider in premarital counseling is attention to the personality trait of emotion regulation strategies. Emotion regulation strategies are an important factor in the mutual understanding of couples

towards each other and the timely and appropriate control and management of emotions in the occurrence of life conflicts, which is related to emotional health and overall mental health of people. In addition, emotional regulation strategies are considered as a cognitive-emotional style in relationships between couples, which lack of externalization and inappropriate strategies of emotions lead to problems in couples' relationships. Emotional regulation strategies as a personality trait in the range of emotions is a very significant issue that has obvious effects and undeniable results on interpersonal relationships. It can also clarify some of the issues related to family relationships in the form of emotional relationships between two people who enter into a marriage contract (Babakhani and Rezaei, 2016).

According to the results of the research, it is suggested that in order to increase the creation of suitable communication platforms in the field of helping couples to improve their relationships, they should be provided with suitable facilities. In this regard, it is suggested that couples should be given the necessary training in the field of communication skills, problem solving skills, and conflict resolution methods, as well as various trainings in the field of couple therapy, in order to improve the quality of couples' relationships in order to face all kinds of marital conflicts.

Ethics

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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