The Prediction of Divorce through Mental Disorders and Demographic Characteristic

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this research was to discover the prediction of divorce between Zanjan couples based on mental disorders and demographic characteristics. The research design was casual–comparative. As divorce prone couples, 60 males and females (30 couples), were selected who were initially referred to divorce crisis Intervention Centre in Zanjan. As for normal couples sampling, 30 students from Zanjan schools, whose parents were members of normal couples, were selected. The Inventories were SCL-90 and demographic Questionnaire. From the dimensions of SCL-90, the groups were significantly different at all ($p<0.05$). The results of Logistic Regression analysis for SCL-90 showed that overall Somatization, depression and paranoid significantly predicted divorce in couples. So Somatization, depression and paranoid increase the probability of divorce. Also results of Logestic Regression analysis for demographic variables showed that increasing the number of children, income and the education decrease it. The findings underline the importance of mental disorders and demographic characteristics in divorce.
  Key words: Divorce, mental disorders, demographic Characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important problems in the context of marriage is the phenomenon of "Divorce". The increasing prevalence of divorce caused researchers and theorists in the field of marriage and family to seek to explore the causes and influencing factors of divorce.

Divorce is a complex phenomenon with several factors influencing it; such as personal, social, economic and cultural factors. Personal factors have attracted attention of psychologists and family counselors. Personal factors include genetic and physiological factors, psychological and personality characteristics, and learning and demographic characteristics. Mental disorders increase tension and conflict between couples that would threaten the marriage.

Neuroticism, interpersonal sensitivity, paranoid, depression, anxiety and obsession are characteristics that enhance the likelihood of divorce (Lemmens, Buysse, Heene, Eisler & Demyttenaere, 2007). In addition to these factors, some of demographic factors such as age, education, socio - economic and occupation status have a significant effect on the continuity or discontinuity of marriage (Ahmadi & Raeespour, 2009; Sarookhani, 1997).

Identifying factors that provide ground for marital conflict and divorce among couples is a master key to reducing marital problems and divorce in any community. Many researchers have emphasized the role of diseases and disorders in marital relations. For example Whisman (2007) believes that some of psychiatric disorders such as anxiety disorders, mood disorders and substance abuse, are more related to marital problems than other disorders. In this respect, there are several viewpoints: One believes that mental disorders are caused by marital problems. The second view believes that mental disorders can lead to marital problems. Third poin of view suggests that there is a reciprocal effect between both issues and the fourth view believes that in the relationship between them another variable may be involved (Whisman, Uebelacker & Weinstock, 2004). Burman & Margolin (1992) believes that the effects of marital variables in mental health status are indirect and there is no unidirectional relationship between these variables.

Heene (2003), examined different views concerning depression and marital distress and concluded that there are four perspectives in this context: 1 - marital distress can lead to depression; 2 - Depression can lead to marital distress; 3 - Marital distress and depression interact with each other; 4 - An additional variable may contribute to the association between depression and marital distress, such as economic and employment problems.

Gutman and Levenson (2002) showed that women who have a chronic problem of sexual arousal and divorced women have more anxious and are more impulsive. Some local studies have also found similar findings. For example, Barahimi, Ahmadi & Abedi (2009) concluded that there is a positive correlation between emotional abuse and depression-anxiety among couples and emotional abuse of spouses will provide the context for the depression. On the other hand, some demographic factors such as age, educational level, family size, income and ..., have an impact on life quality and hence the marital relationship. For example, Age of couples have a great influence on their mental state and psychiatric disorders, and will affect types of their exchanges and interactions.

Gender, Physiological and psychological differences between couples are the other demographic factors that affect marital relationships and how couples cope with stress of married life. Differences between men and women in attitudes, structures and physical ability to enjoy sexual relations are important differences that show the role of gender in marital conflict and its survivial or failure. Socio – economic status and ocouples' income is another determinant of marital breakdown and divorce. The number of children, education and job conditions of spouses and other demographic variables are involved affecting the likelihood of divorce and marital problems (Rahmatollahi, 2006).

Following the research having been conducted in the field of mental disorders and demographic characteristics associated with divorce, this study aims to compare couples at risk of divorce with normal couples through examining the role of the factors that will determine the possible effects of divorce.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

According to the research aims, in this study the Causal – comparative method was used. Causal – comparative research is a method in which the independent variable has already occurred and the researcher is trying to determine its effect on another variable at the moment (Delavar, 2002). Statistical society in this study consisted of all couples at risk of divorce who had referred to the court and the council of dispute resolution and the parents of elementary school students of the zanjan city. Sampling method in this study was a systematic cluster and a school was randomly selected. In both groups, 30 couples were selected and they were given the questionnaires designed for the research.

SCL-90 questionnaire and demographic questionnaire were the research tools. In this research, statistical computing to analyze the data in both

descriptive and inferential levels was performed by using the spss-16 software.

In descriptive level, the means and standard deviations and in inferential level, the independent T-test and logistic regression were employed.

Research Tools

1 - SCL-90 questionnaire: The Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90-R) instrument helps evaluate a broad range of psychological problems and symptoms of psychopathology. The questionnaire consists of 90 items assessing symptoms that could be answered by the participants. The SCL-90 is intended to measure symptom intensity on nine different subscales. The 90 items of the questionnaire are scored on a five-point Likert scale, indicating the rate of occurrence of the symptom during the time reference (Abedi & Mashhadi, 2001).

The nine primary symptom dimensions are labeled as: Somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and Psychoticism (Mardani-Boldaji, 2000). Dragotis, Lobor and Fostain used this Questionnaire on cancer patients already were determined based on the presence or absence of mental disorders by the "Hospital Health Questionnaire". The results showed that the SCL-90 questionnaire was also able to distinguish between patients requiring therapeutic intervention and those with no treatment need (Behkish, 1994). Investigating the test-retest reliability of this questionnaire, Behkish (1994) found high correlation coefficient between 0.78 and 0.90 (Mardani-Boldaji, 2000).

2 -Demographic Characteristics: This questionnaire was used to compare the characteristics of the two groups according to age, duration of marriage, income, employment status, marital status, number of children, type of marriage (whether family or non-family).

RESULTS

Table 1 contains the SCL-90 test descriptive data for two groups (normal couples and couples at risk of divorce). Results of Table1shows that the mean scores on all subscales of the SCL-90 in couples at risk of divorce are more than normal couples.

The data in Table (2) indicates that there is a significant difference between the normal couples and couples at risk of divorce on all subscales of the SCL-90 (p<0.05) and in all scales, scores of couples at risk of divorce is higher.

Table 3 shows Coefficients of the logistic equation (SCL-90 test variables entered in the equation). B coefficient in the first column of the table above indicates the coefficients of each of the predictor variables in the model.

Positive coefficients related to paranoid ideation, depression and somatization prove that when these variables increase, the likelihood of divorce increases too.

Wald statistic indicates all of the predictor variables are useful and in this analysis, somatization variables, depression and paranoid ideation, are significant and the analysis can be performed by using mentioned variables.

In column Exp(B), values of less than 1 indicates that an increase in the predictor variable is associated with a lower chance of divorce and none of the variables in Table 3 are not less than 1. Other variables were not statistically significant.

Table 4 shows Coefficients of the logistic equation in demographic characteristics. B coefficient in the first column of the above table indicates the coefficients of each of the predictor variables in the model. Negative coefficients related to the number of children, income and education proves that when these variables increases the likelihood of divorce decrease. Wald statistic indicates all of the predictor variables are useful and in this analysis, number of children, income and education are significant and the analysis can be performed by using mentioned variables.

In column Exp(B), values of less than 1 indicates that an increase in the predictor variable is associated with a lower chance of divorce and in Table 4, number of children, income and education are less than 1. Other variables were not statistically significant.

Table1. Descriptive data on the risk of divorce and normal subjects with SCL-90

Mental disorder	Group	Number	Mean	Standard error of the mean	St.D
Somatization	Normal	60	0.33	0.24	0.03
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.30	0.80	0.10
Obsessive Compulsive	Normal	60	0.54	0.35	0.04
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.29	0.99	0.12
Interpersonal sensitivity	Normal	60	0.44	0.28	0.03
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.18	0.75	0.09
Depression	Normal	60	0.37	0.22	0.02
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.51	1.03	0.13
Anxiety	Normal	60	0.44	0.28	0.03
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.50	1.10	0.14
Hostility	Normal	60	0.43	0.45	0.05
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.08	0.77	0.10
Phobia	Normal	60	0.26	0.29	0.03
	Divorce Exposed	60	0.76	0.65	0.08
Paranoid ideation	Normal	60	0.37	0.23	0.03
	Divorce Exposed	60	1.61	0.88	0.11
Psychotic	Normal	60	0.15	0.19	0.02
	Divorce Exposed	60	0.67	0.72	0.09

Table2. T-test results based on the scores of SCL-90

Mental disorder	T value	DF	Sig.	Mean difference	Standard error	CI lower limit	CI upper limit
Somatization	-8.85	118	0.00	-0.96	0.10	-1.17	-0.74
Obsessive Compulsive	-5.53	118	0.00	-0.75	0.13	-1.02	-0.48
Interpersonal sensitivity	-7.18	118	0.00	-0.74	0.10	-0.95	-0.54
Depression	-8.20	118	0.00	-1.12	0.13	-1.39	-0.85
Anxiety	-7.21	118	0.00	-1.06	0.14	-1.35	-0.77
Hostility	-5.61	118	0.00	-0.65	0.11	-0.88	-0.42
Phobia	-5.36	118	0.00	-0.48	0.09	-0.67	-0.31
Paranoid	-10.50	118	0.00	-1.23	0.11	-1.47	-1.00
Psychotic	-5.31	118	0.00	-0.51	0.09	-0.70	-0.32

Table3. The coefficients of logistic equation in SCL-90

		B	S.E	Wald	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Exp(B)
Step 1	Paranoid ideation	4.77	1.004	22.56	1	0.00	118.02
	Constant coefficient	-3.47	0.64	28.97	1	0.00	0.03
Step 2	Depression	3.22	1.01	10.05	1	0.002	25.18
	Paranoid ideation	4.29	1.11	14.93	1	0.00	73.48
	Constant coefficient	-5.25	0.99	27.70	1	0.00	0.005
Step 3	Somatization	2.37	0.89	7.009	1	0.008	10.71
	Depression	3.03	1.06	8.04	1	0.005	20.74
	Paranoid ideation	4.30	1.29	11.14	1	0.001	74.39
	Constant coefficient	-6.50	1.28	25.74	1	0.00	0.001

Table4. The coefficients of the logistic equation in demographic characteristics

		B	S.E	Wald	Degrees of freedom	Significance level	Exp(B)
Step 1	Children number	-1.74	0.33	27.04	1	0.00	0.17
	Constant coefficient	3.89	0.76	25.93	1	0.00	49.35
Step 2	Children number	-1.70	0.36	21.63	1	0.00	0.18
	Income	-0.87	0.24	12.71	1	0.00	0.41
	Constant coefficient	6.05	1.10	29.89	1	0.00	424.63
Step 3	Children number	-1.78	0.39	20.93	1	0.00	0.16
	Income	-0.81	0.26	9.58	1	0.002	0.44
	Education	-0.20	0.08	6.31	1	0.01	0.81
	Constant coefficient	8.62	1.62	28.13	1	0.00	555.49

DISCUSSION

According to the t-test results of all nine scales of SCL-90, there was no significant difference between the two groups. This finding is consistant with the Lemmens et. al.,'s (2007) research. In analysis of two values logistic regression, the variables of somatization, depression and paranoid ideation were inserted in the equation. Namely in the presence of other mental disorders, the three disorders are the strongest predictors for the likelihood of divorce. The first explanation for this finding is that the marital problems have a negative impact on mental and physical health and they will increase the likelihood of psychological problems. On the other hand it seems that the relationship between mental disorders and marital problems is mutual. Burman & Margolin (1992) have emphasis we cannot suppose a straight and specific relationship between them. Thus, it can be said that mental disorders especially depression and anxiety disorders have a greater role in causing marital problems and marital problems also affect the incidence of these disorders. In explaining the significance of depression it can be suggested that the prevalence of mood disorders, such as depression, in comparison to other disorders is higher in common population; thus its impact on the marital relationship is higher. However, marital problems seem to lead to depression and increase in mean of the disorder of this group. Paranoid ideation is also one of the most common causes of divorce and marital problems. Suspicion and mistrust of spouses to each other are factors that increase the likelihood of divorce. Thus, the significant difference between both groups is due to the high incidence of this problem in couples at risk of divorce. In explaining the significance of somatization it can be said that frequent tensions and couple's inability to express all their internal distress at risk of divorce may lead to somatization of their stress and upset. In logistic regression analysis related to demographic variables, research findings show that the variables of income, education level and number of children are significant in predicting the likelihood of divorce. To

elaborate on this variable we can say that if couples had trouble providing basic needs, they would not be able to have a successful interaction and this would increase the likelihood of divorce. The educational level can be explained referring to Sarookhani (1997) who believes high level of education makes peoples more sensitive and more accurate to problems. Another result of this study relevent to demographic variables is, when the number of children increases, the likelihood of divorce will decrease. This finding is incongruent with the results of research by Ahmadi and Raeespour (2009). This might mean that with the increasing number of children the spouses are more committed to their marriage. In fact, children are an obstacle to the rapid divorce.

In summary, the results of the present study and similar studies related to the role of mental disorders and demographic factors in the continuation of the marriage highlights the importance of psychological and counseling services and with considering these variables will decrease the likelihood of divorce and the failure rate of marriage.

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