

Role of Relationship Beliefs and Cognitive Insight on the Quality of Marital Relationship among Divorced Women

Ebrahimi L^{1*}, Mohamadolou M²

^{*1}Assistant Professor, Department of psychology, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

²PhD student of Psychology, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Semnan Branch, Semnan, Iran

***Corresponding Author:** Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

Tel: 0098-9144463609

Email: L.ebrahimi@zun.ac.ir

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Abstract

Background: The spread and growth of divorce is in critical level in the country and health of family, as the cornerstone of future health of society, is exposed to problems.

Objectives: This study tries to investigate the role of relationship beliefs and cognitive insight in quality of marital relationship of divorced women.

Methods: This is a descriptive-correlational study and the participants chosen based on convenience sampling included 80 divorced women who referred to the Social Emergency Center of the Welfare Organization of Zanjan in the final nine months of 2017. The instruments were the Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS), the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) of Epstein and Eidelson and the Beck Cognitive Insight Scale (BCIS). To analyze the data, the Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used.

Results: Results indicated negative and significant relation between relationship beliefs and cognitive insight and the quality of marital relationship of divorced women. The results of regression analysis also indicated that the components of relationship beliefs and cognitive insight both define 51% of the variance of the quality of marital relationship.

Conclusion: Results of this research showed importance of taking preventive and medication measures within framework of the educational and counseling programs with respect to the cognitive variables, especially relationship beliefs and cognitive insight.

Keywords: *relationship beliefs, cognitive insight, quality of marital relationship, divorced women*

Introduction

Regarding highly effective role of family health in social progress and promotion, any attention to the issue will guarantee social health. Suitable relationship is established in society on the basis of suitable family relationship. The more suitable is relations inside family, the more consolidated and stable will the family hence become. Therefore, family, as one of the most important part of any society, plays a determining role in social progress and stability [1]. The quality of matrimonial relationship is a multidimensional concept, consisting of different dimensions of

relations between spouses such as compatibility, satisfaction, happiness, integration and commitment [2]. When looking into the causes of divorce, it will be of special importance to consider social, economic and judicial factors, while reflecting on the personal and psychological reasons such as cognitive distortions, lack of cognitive insight and insufficient relationship beliefs that lead to divorce. Studies show that the most problematic grounds in difference among spouses are communicative, unrealistic expectations of marriage and the spouse, lack of sincerity and failure to show interest [3-10].

Cognitive therapists believe that illogical beliefs, especially relationship behaviors, prepare the ground for dissatisfaction and disputes among spouses [11]. In fact, many of the unfavorable problems and reactions are caused by irrational beliefs and thoughts and as long as such thoughts continue to persist, problems with relations, acceptance and alliance with others will continue [12]. Therefore, one of the factors of dissatisfaction or satisfaction with marital relationship has the meaning of relationship beliefs and communication. Relationship beliefs mean the idea or mentality that wife or husband have in their marital relationship and accept it as a reality, while inefficient relationship beliefs are those referring to irrational beliefs and thoughts, which are exclusive to marital relationship and have caused problems due to excessive use. They consist of five essential beliefs:

1. Belief in 'Disagreement is Destructive,' not accepting differences of opinion and negative interpretation of them.
2. Belief on 'Partner Cannot Change' and the belief that the 'Partner Cannot Change' and the expectation of its re-occurrence in the future.
3. 'Mindreading is Expected'; expectation that without mentioning, the husband will be able to understand her feelings, thoughts and needs.
4. Sexual Perfection,' expecting the husband to have sexual relations under all conditions without understanding her status.
5. Belief on 'Sexes are Different in Needs': Absence of right understanding of man and woman's cognitive and physical differences and equal expectation or the reason for differences between two sexes are innate [13].

Other factor, which seems to be linked with the quality of the marital relationship, is ability of a person to get distanced from their beliefs and evaluations [14]. Beck et al. (2004) believe that as an ability for evaluation and correction of the distorted beliefs and wrong interpretations, cognitive insight has two components: Self-Reflection has been described as an index of internal contemplation, inclination for confirmation of risk taking, openness and acceptance; Self-Esteem indicates degree of confidence and trust of a person in personal beliefs, judgments and conclusions and also resistance against others' feedbacks and self-rightfulness when self-concept is in a very low

level or self-trust is in a very high level. In this case, cognitive insight does not exist [15].

Regarding results of this study, which consider role of cognitive variables in marital satisfaction as important, there has been no study to the best knowledge of the researcher to deal with the share of the cognitive expectations and factors, including cognitive insight and relationship beliefs in quality of spouses' marital relationships. Therefore, this study tries to address the following question, "What is the connection between relationship beliefs and cognitive insight and quality of the marital relationship of the divorced women?"

Methods

This is a descriptive-correlational study, and the participants were chosen based on convenience sampling out of 103 women who referred to the Social Emergency Center of the Welfare Organization of Zanjan for divorce in the final nine months of 2017. Eighty of the volunteers were selected based on convenience sampling and answered the following questionnaires.

Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS): GRIMS was developed by Rust et al. (1998) to evaluate the quality of marital life. It contains 28 items with four choices next to each item: 'Totally Disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Fully Agree'. The choices are scored between zero and three. Therefore, total score is between zero and 84. The high score shows graver marital state. Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed with 360 samples through split half and Cronbach's alpha formula coefficient. Both methods presented 0.81 and 0.94 percent results, showing high correlation (0.91) between the improvement of the couples and the counselor [16]. In terms of validity, this questionnaire is in accordance with the view of Fincham and Bradbury (2000) on marital quality. Isanejad, Ahmadi, and Etemadi (2010) showed that the questionnaire had a correlation of 0.67 with Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) of Busby, Crane, Larson, and Christensen (1995) that aimed to evaluate the quality of marital life on the basis of the view of Lewis and Spanier on marital quality. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.89 in the Cronbach's alpha method [17]. Besharat (2011) also estimated reliability of the questionnaire to be 0.93, using Cronbach's alpha

formula, and 0.94 through the test-retest method with a two-week interval [18]. Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire was proved to be 0.90.

To assess the relationship beliefs, the researchers used the Epstein and Eidelson (1990) 40-item Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI), which assesses five inefficient relationship beliefs (three suppositions and two standards). 'Disagreement is Destructive' (the supposition), 'Mindreading is Expected' (standard), 'Partner Cannot Change' (supposition), 'Sexual Perfectionism' (standard),

and 'Sexes are Different in Needs' (supposition). Each question was scored on six-point Likert scale, including 'Totally Wrong' to 'Totally Incorrect'. Collecting the scores of each item of the sub-scale, the score of the related sub-scale was estimated and by adding the score of five sub-scales, total score of relationship beliefs was estimated. Higher total score of the scale revealed more inefficient relationship beliefs [19].

Table 1: Number of Questions of Each of the Sub-Scales

Sub-Scales	Disagreement is Destructive	Mindreading is Expected	Partner Cannot Change	Sexual Perfectionism	Belief that Sexes are Different in Needs
Positive Questions	26•31•21•11•1•6	37•32•27•22•17•12	39•19•14•4	39•4•14•19	40•35•30•30•15•10
Negative Questions	36•16	2•7	33•28•13•18	34•29•24•9	25•5•20

The reliability of the association of relationship beliefs in a research by Epstein and Eidelson (1982), using Cronbach's alpha method for subscales, ranged from 0.72 to 0.81 and in a research by Emelcomp, Sundermann and Rafan (1987), had appropriate internal reliability (at the range of 0.74 to 0.83) and the test-retest reliability was 0.76. Meanwhile, this list enjoys proper validity. The scores of the index of relational beliefs had positive correlation with the Jones Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT) (1968) and had negative correlation with marital compatibility in the Marital Adjustment Test of Locke and Wallace (1959) [20]. The Persian copy of the document has been prepared by Heidari, Mazaheri and Poor-Etemad (2001) through translation and re-translation methods and whose reliability was estimated through Cronbach's alpha (the sub-scale of 'Disagreement is Destructive' (0.85), 'Mindreading is Expected' (0.76), 'Partner Cannot Change' (0.72), 'Sexual Perfectionism' (0.63), and 'Sexes are Different in Needs' (0.56). Its reliability, assessed through test-retest method, was found to be 0.81 [21]. Cronbach's alpha of the study's questionnaire (the sub-scale of 'Disagreement is Destructive' was put at 0.89, the 'Mindreading is Expected' at 0.82, 'Partner Cannot Change' at 0.79, 'Sexual Perfectionism' at 0.69 and 'Sexes are Different in Needs' at 0.59) was estimated. To assess the degree of cognitive insight of the divorced women the Cognitive Insight Scale of Beck et al. (2004) was used. The

self-assessment scale included 15 items and two sets of questions:

A) Self-Reflection (including nine items (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12, 14, 15).

B) Self-Esteem (including six questions (2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13), a questionnaire in a four-degree scale ranging from 0 (Fully disagree) to 3 (Fully agree). The composite index or cognitive insight was gained through minimizing the score of test in the self-esteem component from the self-reflection component. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.68 for self-reflection sub-scale and 0.70 for self-esteem sub-scale. Yusefi, Arizi and Sadeqi (2007) reported Cronbach's alpha formula for self-reflection sub-scale to be 0.69 and 0.79 for self-esteem sub-scale and 0.74 for overall scale. Moreover, the coefficient of scale reliability was assessed in split-half method, standing at 0.72, and the coefficient of reliability in test-retest was reported to be 0.69 [22]. Cronbach's alpha of this research's questionnaire was obtained to be 0.72.

In coordination with the Social Emergency Centers of Zanjan Welfare Organization, the divorced women were initially introduced to the researcher, who is a family and divorce counsellor, for intervention and to provide them with counseling on divorce prevention. Having briefed them on goals of the research, the participants were asked to fill up the questionnaires on consent to help the researcher conduct the research and collect data on the counseling intervention. After obtaining the

informed consent and the consensus, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their information and that they were not to be subject to any extra expenditure or losses for taking part in the research as their dignity will be respected. The participants were informed of the way of responding to questions and were then provided with questionnaires to be filled up within maximum one week. After three months, the questionnaires were collected. Twenty-three out of the whole (103) questionnaires, thus filled up and collected, were faulty and were hence discarded. A total of 80 valid and completed questionnaires were selected as the data needed for the research. Then the collected data were analyzed using Pierson correlation test as well as the regression tests.

Results

As Table 2 shows there is negative significant relationship ($p=0.001$, $r=0.56$) between relationship beliefs and quality of marital relationship of the divorced women and there was highest level of correlation between the components of 'Partners Cannot Change' ($p=0.001$, $r=0.73$) and 'Disagreement is Destructive' ($p=0.001$, $r=0.56$) with quality of marital relationship. Therefore, it can be claimed that high level of inefficient relationship beliefs of the divorced women lowered their marital relationship.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient of Relation Beliefs and the Sub-Scales with Marital Relation Quality

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Correlation Coefficient(r)	Level of Significance (p)
Quality of Marital Relation	Relation Beliefs	-0/56	0/001
	Disagreement is Destructive	-0/57	0/01
	Partners Cannot Change	-0/73	0/001
	Mindreading is Expected	-0/50	0/001
	Sexual Perfectionism	-0/54	0/001
	Sexes are Different inNeeds	-0/47	0/001

Table 3 shows positive and significant relationship ($p=0.001$ and $r=0.61$) between self-reflection and quality of marital relationship of the divorced women and there is negative and significant relationship ($p=0.001$ and $r=0.53$) between self-esteem and the quality of marital

relationship of the divorced women. Therefore, it can be claimed that the higher the self-reflection, the higher the quality of marital relationship and the higher the self-esteem, the lower the quality of marital relationship will be.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient of Sub-Scales of Cognitive Insight and the Marital Relation Quality

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance (p)
Quality of Marital Relation	Self-Reflection	0/61	0/001
	Self-Esteem	-0/53	0/001

Results of regression analysis, put in Table 4, shows that observed F value is significant in less than 0.0001 level and relationship beliefs and cognitive insight predict and define a total of 51 percent of the variance of the marital relationship quality. Regarding the beta coefficients and their

significance level, all the components of relationship beliefs and cognitive insight were significant predictors of the quality of marital relationship.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis of the Variable of Marital Relation Quality and Relation Beliefs and the Sub-Scales

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Beta Coefficient	t Value	Level of Significance	Coefficient of Determination	F Ratio	Level of F Significance
Quality of Marital Relation	Partner Cannot Change	-0/108	-1/37	0/006	0/51	16/32	0/001
	Disagreement is Destructive	0/168	1/58	0/011			
	Mindreading is Expected	0/124	2/12	0/014			
	Sexual Perfectionism	0/207	2/25	0/016			
	Sexes are Different in Needs	0/198	3/39	0/002			
	Cognitive Insight	0/197	1/98	0/014			

Discussion

This study follows the objective to study the role of relationship beliefs and cognitive insight in quality of the marital relationship of the divorced women. Based on this study's findings, it can be concluded that the cognitive factors, studied in this research, can predict the quality of marital relationship. Furthermore, the results indicate high correlation between the belief on 'Partner Cannot Change' and belief in 'Disagreement is Destructive', 'Self-reflection' and 'Self-esteem' with quality of relationship. Eventually, it can be concluded that inefficient relationship beliefs and discrepancy in the cognitive insight of the divorced women has lowered their marital relationship quality. This finding falls in the same vein with the result of research by Janjani (2017) [23], Servina et al. (2015) [24]; Sedaqatkah et al. (2017) [25], who showed that irrational beliefs and relational beliefs negatively correlate with dissatisfaction with marital life. A look into results of this study, which point to the belief in 'Partner Cannot Change' highly correlating with quality of the marital life, which seems to be in accordance with the approach of documents, indicating that when they come to interpret their husband's behavior and conduct, women usually consider their adequate, positive and good behavior and conduct as temporary, occasional and dependent on condition, while regarding their unfavorable and negative behaviors as being permanent in nature. A more notable and important point is special belief in the fact that under condition of satisfaction with marital life,

the problems relating to husband cause contradiction and dissatisfaction and that's the one who should change; however, unfortunately, he cannot do that if so wishes. The attitude on the behavior in marital relationship adjusts the couples' internal concepts and discursive self-representations in an incompatible and dysfunctional way. In fact, none of the couples pay attention to the key point that both should undergo changes and not the accused husband/wife only. Consistent with this finding of this research, it is suggested that correction of the couples' relationship beliefs and change in their wrong, irrational and unreal mentality be one of the main points of focus in the counseling and guide interventions of family guides and counselors.

Defining the role of the divorced women's belief in 'Disagreement is Destructive' in weakening the quality of marital relationship, it can be claimed that Alice (1986) believed, "If I fail to gain what I wish, it will be dreadful and I cannot tolerate it." Women irrationally convince themselves that they cannot tolerate the problems with marital relationship with their husband that they do not experience or predict. Eidelson and Epstein (1982) believed that when a wife and husband get engaged with each other on the belief, decisions are made around the issue or it is pegged on chance. Under such conditions, the couples lie under condition of undecidedness and lack of responsibility, hoping that the condition will be over so speedily. Such a condition will put the couples under doubt in relationship and cause

relational rift and increase the tendency among the couples to get divorced [13].

In accordance with results of this study, there is significant relationship between the cognitive insight and its micro scales and the quality of marital relationship. The result concurs with the findings of Soleimani et al. (2016) [26], Najafi et al. (2016) [27] and Belqanabadi et al. (2013) [28]. To define results of this research, it can be claimed that the reason for negative correlation between self-esteem and quality of marital life is that those having high level of self-esteem cannot tolerate different opinions and excessively trust their beliefs and judgments; consequently, they come across with tension when having ties with others and suffer differences and contradictions when having marital relationship with their partner. The women suffering distorted cognitive insight have wrong rendition of events and feel being isolated and personally incompetent when getting engaged with their husband. Wrong rendition of events will affect their mental health and tranquility and as a result, the quality of their marital life lowers. On the other hand, due to confirming their risk taking, openness and acceptability, the women, who have high level of self-reflection, are more capable of being compatible with conditions and consequently have higher quality of marital relationship.

Conclusion

This study focused on the divorced women, who were referred to the Welfare Organization's Social Emergency Centers by the legal authorities and the dispute settlement centers, the results should be cautiously generalized because it seems that the role of cognitive factors among the women, who self-refer themselves to the counseling centers to resolve their marital problems, is less important than the role of the same factors in the divorced women, that are introduced by the legal authorities. This study used cross-sectional plan and since results of the cognitive factors and their influential role need time, the factor also served as a limitation in the study. Regarding the results gained in this study and the afore-mentioned limitations, it can be suggested that a similar research be conducted on the men and women seeking self-referring divorce and those referring to the family counseling centers, thus comparing results of this research

with those results. Using longitudinal and long-term plans to verify the authenticity of the impact of the predictive variables on the variable of criteria and also conducting similar research in a qualitative way to explore and identify other cognitive factors influential in divorce is suggested. Regarding recent measures of the Welfare Organization and State Justice Department on counseling to prevent divorce, the results of this research can serve as a basis for psychological interventions in the divorce procedure. With respect to the fact that cognitive factors can be instructed and since such an ability can be promoted among couples, it is suggested to train the couples, while raising their cognitive self-consciousness and anxiety and take an effective step towards preventing divorce, while minimizing marital relationship problems and raise quality of couples' marital relationship.

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Contradiction of Interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest whatsoever to declare in connection with this research.

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