



Original Article

The relationship between optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and loneliness with couple burnout in married women

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was investigate the relationship between optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and loneliness with couple burnout in employed married women in elementary school in Qazvin city, Iran.

Materials and Methods: The statistical population of this descriptive-correlational study consisted of all married women who employed in elementary schools of Qazvin city in 2018. Amongst them 152 women selected through single-stage cluster method. The research tools included "Life Orientation Test-Revised" (LOT-R), Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA-S), Sexual Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, and Couple Burnout Test (CBM). Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics including multivariate regression method by aiding SPSS software.

Results: The results revealed a significant negative correlation between married women's marital burnout, and optimism and sexual self-efficacy ($P < 0.01$), while the correlation was revealed to be significantly positive between the married women's marital burnout and loneliness ($P < 0.01$). In fact, couple burnout in married women is correlated respectively with optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and loneliness.

Conclusion: It seems that increasing optimism and sexual self-efficacy and decreasing loneliness lead to reduction in couple burnout.

Keywords: Couple burnout, Loneliness, Optimism, Sexual self-efficacy.

Please cite this paper as:

Ahadizadeh N, Khalatbari K. The relationship between optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and loneliness with couple burnout in married women. *Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health* 2020 Mar-Apr; 22(2):99-104.

Introduction

The family is the important factor for a healthy society. According to Pines et al. study, when couples have intimate relationships, they enter into a set of dreams and expectations, and when these dreams and expectations are replaced with punishment and stressful experiences, the marital relationships lead to couple burnout (1).

According to Ellis, marital dissatisfaction is the lack of objective feelings of satisfaction and pleasure experienced by couples when

considering all aspects of marriage (2). On the one hand, one of the factors protecting people against mental illness and disorders is optimism or positive thinking. Peterson believes that this mental ability is a kind of emotional preparation that makes people believe that good things are more important than bad things. Person with positive thinking is hopeful that the best results will be achieved in the future (3).

Also, some studies have shown that increasing optimism increases marital satisfaction (4).

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Received: Apr. 10, 2019

Accepted: Dec. 16, 2019

Mincu and Tascu (5), Ghadami and Khaltabari (6), also Machaty (7) reported that increasing optimism in couples increased their marital adjustment, and sexual problems in marital relationships could lead to lower quality of sexual relations and, in general, marital relationships. Low quality in these cases can lead to marital dissatisfaction and sexual and marital frustration in women (8).

Also, sexual self-efficacy is an important feature in improving the quality of couples' sexual relationships (9). Sexual self-efficacy is a kind of self-assessment of the ability and efficacy of sexual behavior (10).

Studies have shown that couples' intimate relationship plays an important role in marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (11). It seems that the type of knowledge and beliefs that married women have about sexual issues have a significant effect on their couple burnout and increasing negative sexual beliefs are related with couple burnout (12).

On the other hand, one of the most important social relations issues is the feeling of loneliness (13). Feelings of loneliness can indicate deficiencies in emotional relationships that can eventually lead to marital conflicts in couples (14). Also, according to the studies, there is a significant direct relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction, marital conflict (14) and marital satisfaction (15). Feeling lonely does not meet one's expectations of social relationships, which are associated with observable behavioral problems such as sadness, anger, and depression, showing the inconsistency between one's expectations and desires with the possibility of achieving these desires in social relationships (16,17).

On the other hand, feelings of loneliness can be considered one of the important factors of emotional disturbances that lead to couples emotional distances and dissatisfaction with the quality of their relationship with each other (15).

Considering the growing rate of divorce in the country (18) which is due to the increase in marital conflicts and dissatisfaction of couples with married life and consequently marital burn out, therefore, identifying the effective factors is very important.

Also, the conducted studies in the country have rarely addressed the variable of marital burn out, and therefore identifying its predictors such as sexual self-efficacy and loneliness can lead to new findings.

Materials and Methods

The present study is written based on the master dissertation of family counseling, which was approved by the North Tehran branch of Islamic Azad University. The statistical population of this descriptive-correlational study consisted of all married women employees in primary school in Qazvin in 2016-2017. In this study, the inclusion criteria included marriage duration at least 5 years. The exclusion criteria included a history of psychiatric hospitalization or taking psychiatric medications. Finally, the statistical population was 260 people, which according to Morgan and Krejcie table, 152 people were selected as the cases. They were selected from 34 schools through one-stage cluster random sampling. The implementation process was as follows: At first, the present research proposal was approved by the Vice Chancellor for Research, Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch, and after receiving a letter of introduction from education and reviewing the research topic and research questionnaires by that vice chancellor, the researcher went to schools. At first, the researcher explained the purpose of the present study to teachers for 15 minutes and while obtaining written consent to participate in the research, asked those who were willing to cooperate to complete the research questionnaires. In the present study, four questionnaires were used to collect data.

A) Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R): This questionnaire was designed by Scheier and Carver in 1985 and revised by Briggs in 1994. This questionnaire contains six self-report items that assess general expectations of positive aspects of life versus negative aspects. The responses ranged from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (0). Scheier and Carver reported convergent validity (Cronbach's alpha= 0.78) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha= 0.78). To determine the convergent validity of the test in Iran, the correlation coefficient of the test with five factors of Beck Hopelessness Scale was used (reliability coefficient= 0.70) (19). In the present study, its reliability coefficient was measured as 0.74.

B) Adult Socio-Emotional Loneliness Scale (SELSA-S): This questionnaire was designed and developed by De Tomasso, Brennan and Bast (2004), based on the Weiss classification. This scale consists of 15 items and a sense of emotional loneliness is obtained from the sum of the scores. Opposite each item, there is a 5-

range range from strongly disagree (score 1) to strongly agree (score 5). All Items except items 14 and 15 are scored in reverse (reduced to 14 items in the Iranian form) (20).

De Tomasso, Brennan, and Bast reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 indicating good internal consistency of the scale. Jokar and Salimi used factor analysis and correlation with social support perception and life satisfaction scale to determine scale validity. Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the scale, which was 0.84 (20). In the present study, its reliability coefficient was measured as 0.80.

C) Sexual Self-efficacy Questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed based on general self-efficacy by Schwarzer (1993). Waziri and Lotfi Kashani (9) validated Persian version on adult population. The questionnaire has 10 questions ranged from zero (not at all correct) to 3 (completely correct). Reliability of sexual self-efficacy questionnaire was obtained by Cronbach's alpha (0.86), Spearman-Brown split (0.811), and Gutman (0.811). Also, the validity of the sexual self-efficacy questionnaire in Iran has been confirmed by content validity method. The score 0-10 indicates low sexual self-efficacy, while the scores 10-20 and above 20 indicate moderate and high sexual self-efficacy respectively (9). In the present study, its reliability coefficient was measured as 0.80.

D) Marital Satisfaction Scale (CBM): This questionnaire is a self-assessment tool designed to measure marital sadness among couples. The CBM was designed by Pines in 1996 (21).

This questionnaire consists of 21 items that indicate the symptoms of depression and all of which are answered on a seven-point scale. CBM validation showed that the internal consistency of the questionnaire was 0.87. The validity of CBM was confirmed by negative correlations with positive communication

characteristics, such as: positive attitude about communication, quality of conversation, sense of security, self-actualization, sense of purpose, attraction, and emotional attraction to spouse and their sexual quality. Translated versions of CBM have been used successfully in cross-cultural studies in different countries (21). In Iran, Navidi reported a reliability coefficient equal to 0.86 (22). The reliability coefficient was 0.84 in the present study.

In the present study, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between variables and regression analysis model to predict variables and SPSS software was used for data analysis.

Results

In this present study, 152 married women were participated. The descriptive data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Optimism	19.22	9.47
Sexual self-efficacy	43.60	12.79
Loneliness feeling	14.70	6.82
Couple burnout	4.14	1.33

In Table 2, the correlation between marital burnout with optimism is -0.672 and with the variable of sexual self-efficacy is -0.591, which according to the negative coefficient, there is an inverse relationship between these variables. Also, the correlation coefficient between loneliness and marital burnout is positive and significant ($P < 0.01$).

A positive coefficient indicates that people who feel more loneliness also experience more marital burnout. In order to predict marital burnout in married women through the variables of optimism, sexual self-efficacy and loneliness, multiple regression was used.

Table 2. The relationship between optimism, sexual self-efficacy and loneliness with marital burnout

Variable	Marital burnout	
Optimism	Correlation coefficient	-0.672
	<i>P</i>	0.001
Sexual self-efficacy	Correlation coefficient	-0.591
	<i>P</i>	0.001
Loneliness feeling	Correlation coefficient	0.548
	<i>P</i>	0.001

Table 3 shows the results of stepwise regression analysis to predict marital burnout

through optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and loneliness. According to the results of the table,

the multiple correlation coefficient between the predictor variables and the criterion variable is equal to 0.576. Also, the value of the coefficient of determination (R square) is equal to 0.32, which shows that predictor variables have explained 32% of the variance of marital burnout. According to the results, among the predictor variables, only the variables of sexual

self-efficacy and loneliness can predict marital burnout.

The optimistic variable is not able to predict marital burnout and it is out of the regression equation. As can be seen, loneliness ($P < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.636$) positively and sexual self-efficacy ($P < 0.01$, $\beta = 0.359$) negatively predict marital burnout.

Table 3. Regression analysis for predicting marital burnout through optimism, sexual self-efficacy and loneliness

Mode	-Non standardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	t	P	R	R squared	F	P
	B	standard error	Beta						
Constant	2.293	0.604		3.798	0.01	0.567	0.32	127.439	0.01
Loneliness feeling	0.56604	0.008	0.636	7.787	0.01				
Sexual self-efficacy	-0.070	0.016	-0.359	-4.398	0.01				

Discussion

The results showed that with increasing optimism, marital burnout decreases in married women. In this regard, the findings of Mousavi (23), Homaei et al. (4), and Mincu and Taşcu (5) showed that with increasing optimism, the level of couples' marital satisfaction is increasing same as the findings of the present study. In the field of the mechanism of influence of optimism, Machaty (7) reported that optimism in couples increases marital adjustment in them and this causes couples to be more satisfied with their married life, and this is an important barrier to marital boredom. It is considered. In this regard, it can be said that optimistic people, even if they face problems and stressful events in life, because they are optimistic about the future and believe that they can solve problems with their efforts. Optimistic people use positive coping strategies to deal with these situations and therefore this can lead to their mental and physical health (24). The results showed that with increasing sexual self-efficacy, marital burnout decreases in married women. Previous results of research have shown that sexual satisfaction leads to increased marital satisfaction (11,25,26).

These findings are concordant to the present study. Sexual satisfaction is one of the most important factors in happiness in married life, and sexual dissatisfaction will lead to feelings of failure (11), which can lead to marital burnout in couples. The results showed that marital burnout increases in married women by increasing the feeling of loneliness. Lack of

intimacy may lead to this feeling in couples. Previous studies have reported that the lovemaking and intimate relationships between couples play a role in marital satisfaction (11) and with increasing marital intimacy, marital burnout decreases. Conversely, the lack of intimate relationships between couples leads to marital boredom, which is consistent with the findings of the present study (12,15). Bardoudeh et al. (14) also reported that the feeling of loneliness indicates a lack of communication and emotional bonds that can lead to conflicts in couples and consequently marital burnout.

Miri and Najafi (15) also reported that with increasing feelings of loneliness, the couple's satisfaction decreases, which is in line with the findings of the present study. Among the limitations of the present study, it can be pointed out that only married women working in this study participated in the sample selection. It is suggested that in future research, the present issue be examined in the sample of married men. It is also suggested that in completing theoretical knowledge in this field, other researchers use experimental research projects to test the role of optimism, loneliness, and sexual self-efficacy in improving marital relationships. It is also possible to investigate the underlying causes of marital burnout and the lack of sexual self-efficacy between spouses by conducting comparative causal studies. It is worthwhile to hold workshops to increase life skills training and raising awareness among couples as much as possible, and the concepts

of sexual self-efficacy, loneliness and optimism, and in turn recognizing the relationship between these variables and marital burnout should be introduced in those workshops. According to the findings, it is suggested that administrators and planners to reduce the feeling of loneliness of married women, and conducting practical measures, especially holding training workshops and providing counseling and support services for married women teachers who are at risk. This research was done with a quantitative method. It is suggested that a qualitative method (such as in-depth interviews and focused group discussions) be used in future research.

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Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that enhancing sexual optimism and self-efficacy along with feelings of loneliness in married women can reduce marital burnout and more marital satisfaction.

Acknowledgement

This article is part of the MS. dissertation in the field of family counseling. It approved by Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch without financial support. The authors declare any conflict of interest. The authors thank all participants.

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