Original Article

Predicting marital infidelity based on family conditions of couples referred to social emergency

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study is predicting marital infidelity based on family conditions of couples referred to social emergency.

Materials and Methods: The statistical population of this descriptive-correlational study consisted of all couples who referred to the social emergency center of Sari city (north part of Iran). Amongst them, 200 cases were selected by random cluster sampling. The participants fulfilled the questionnaires of Family Factors Scale and Marital Infidelity Tendency Scale. Data analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics by SPSS-21 software.

Results: The results showed that the relationships between family factors (economic factors, social factors, cultural factors, educational factors and religious factors) and the couples' tendency to marital betrayal were significant. Amongst family factors, economic factors are the best predictors of marital infidelity.

Conclusion: Based on the results, it seems that family conditions have significant impacts on tendency to marital infidelity.

Keywords: Couples, Family conditions, Marital infidelity.

Introduction

Marital infidelity is a shocking issue for couples and families and a common phenomenon for marriage and family therapists. Although a relationship with someone other than your spouse may be physical or emotional, the result is that time spent between one spouse and someone outside of the marital relationship will be a severe issue. Infidelity may act as a facilitator and reveal fundamental dissatisfaction in marriage, which may eventually lead to divorce (1). One of the factors that predict marital infidelity behaviors is the couple's family factors. The conducted studies on social harms show that two categories of external or social factors and internal or psychological factors affect occurrence of these behaviors. The family as one of the social factors and personality as one of the internal factors, can create a proper context for harmful behaviors, so these two categories need special attention (2). Socialization and unfavorable family environment will strengthen the structures that eventually lead to couples' expulsion and rejection by all social environments (3).Brown states that interaction of several factors leads to increase secret relationships outside

the marital framework. Expectations for emotional satisfaction in marriage, lack of communication skills, intimate relationships, the sexual revolution, and changes in daily life structure are among these factors (4). Fathi et al. studied the causes of women's extramarital affairs and concluded that women's emotional dissatisfaction is a significant and central category in the tendency to extramarital affairs. However, there are other influential factors (5). Also, Kalantari et al. reported that the most important causes of marital infidelity include the age difference between couples, economic issues, education status, family factors, couples´ different opinions, forced marriage, mental disorders, domestic violence, and communication skills (6).

The concept of "infidelity" is considered the contamination of the marital relationship, which is destabilized or disintegrated by adding an external factor (7). Marital infidelity is one of the most critical issues that couples face. Such relations can have different forms. There are several reasons for a person to do so, including dissatisfaction with the current relationship, desire for sexual diversity or excitement, revenge, anger or jealousy, insecurity. Alternatively, lack of confidence in the relationship, companionship and intimacy, immaturity and lack of commitment, excessive desire to have a romantic relationship with a person outside of marriage, sexual dissatisfaction, increased self-esteem, inability to control temptations, spouse unavailability, and substance or alcohol use (8). The studies on extramarital relationships indicate that there are predisposing factors to infidelity. It seems that women often prefer a type of emotional relationship, while, men prefer sex more (9).

From the therapists' view, extramarital affairs emphasize the concept of infidelity. The infidelity includes all the behaviors and actions of a married person in relationship with the opposite sex outside the family, leading to a friendly, sincere, emotional, and romantic relationship, in a way that this relationship has certain emotions for the acting spouse (10). However, today, due to changes in social relationships and also changes in attitudes, in addition to sex, in particular, having a intimate relationship with another person, unconventional infatuation and love, emotional relationships beyond normal friendship, use of pornography, unconventional communication, and Cyberspace is also included in this

definition (11). In sum, infidelity occurs when one spouse believes that his or her marital life is faithful, while the other spouse has secretly broken the covenant (12). Marital infidelity is one of the most critical factors threatening the performance, stability, and continuity of marital relationships; research shows that about one-third of men and a quarter of women are likely to engage in extramarital affairs at least once during their life together (13). Various sociological and psychological studies in the field of divorce indicated marital infidelity as one of the main reasons for seeking divorce and separation of each couple. Marital infidelity in Iranian society is a growing concern associated with instability in relationships and high divorce rates.

This problem causes the disintegration of the family and the indecision of children. In Iran, no official statistics have been reported on the rate of extramarital affairs and breach of contract, and such cases are considered social taboos and ignored (8). To express the official statistics of relationships outside the marital framework in Iran, we can only refer to a research conducted by Kaveh on 200 women seeking a divorce and referred to counseling centers in Kurdistan province, 48% of them stated that they had relationships outside of marriage other than their husbands (10). Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative growth of the phenomenon of betrayal in Iranian society has become one of the serious social issues. Therefore, considering the various effects and consequences of marital infidelity in everyone's life and its effects on society, it is necessary to properly understand family conditions and strive to provide appropriate conditions for the healthy life. Reviewing the research in the field of factors related to extramarital relationships shows that personality can also play a role in extramarital relationships. Malik et al. studied why married women engage in extramarital affairs. They concluded that the most influential factors were avoiding forced marriage and getting rid of men's oppressive domination over them, and gaining more economic security (14).

Fair provided a model that considers the time spent between work and leisure, time spent with a spouse, and time spent with an extramarital partner. The results of estimating the equation for the distribution of time spent with the extramarital partner are usually

corroborative, although more evidence is needed before any definitive conclusions can be made (15). Ogocadem and Ishola show that the factor related to sexual issues in these people has the most significant impact on extramarital relationships (7). Omarzu et al. asked 77 (22 males and 55 females) adults actively involved in marital relationships to express their motivations and emotions. They found that sexual, emotional, and love needs were the main reasons for starting relationships. However, they did not observe a significant difference in sexual motivations versus emotional motivations between males and females (16).

Given the importance of balanced family functioning and preventing its disintegration, it seems necessary to recognize the factors related to marital infidelity. Therefore, the present study aimed to determine which family factors predict the tendency to marital infidelity.

Materials and Methods

The statistical population of this descriptive-correlational study included all couples who were referred to the social emergency in Sari city (north part of Iran) in 2018, from which 200 eligible people were selected based on the Krejcie and Morgan table by random cluster sampling. In this method, the city was first divided into four districts (the criterion was the municipal districts), then from each district, a social emergency was selected. Then, with the visit of each emergency, 50 cases were randomly selected. Before conducting the research, the researchers ask participants to write consent form and they emphasized confidentiality of the information.

Inclusion criteria included: having at least a diploma, a spouse who was divorced in court and referred to counseling centers by the court or themselves. Exclusion criteria included incomplete questionnaire (non-responded questions more than 20%) and unwillingness to continue cooperation.

Research instrument
A) Family Factors Scale: This scale was created by Nourbakhsh and consisted of 22 questions. Each question is graded in a Likert system (strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree= 5). This scale includes five subscales of economic, educational, cultural, social, and religious (17). Nasri, Teymouri, and Hamidi

Maljaj obtained its reliability using Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 (18). In the present study, the reliability of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for economic function (0.69), academic function (0.59), cultural function (0.66), emotional function (0.71) and religious function (0.70) was obtained.
B) Marital Infidelity Tendency Scale: It was developed by Watley and concluded 12 phrases including sentences about negative and positive feelings about infidelity that are scored in a seven-point Likert scale (very opposite= one and very agree= 7). The highest score (84) means the acceptor of betrayal, and the lowest score (12) means the rejecter of betrayal (25). Abdullahzadeh obtained the reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 (26). In the present study, the instrument's reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84.
Data analyzed through descriptive statistics and inferential statistics by SPSS-21 software.

Results

Based on the findings, the participants aged 33.8± 9.7 years. In term of education, 14.5% had a diploma and a sub-diploma degree, 37% had a bachelor degree, 29% had a master degree, while 19.5% had a higher degree.

In term of employment, 28.5% were housewives / unemployed, 15.5% were workers, 19% were employees, and 37% were personal employees.

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the scores in terms of family factors and tendency to marital infidelity.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of family factors and tendency to marital infidelity

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Economic factors	4.37	2.23
Educational factors	4.62	2.31
cultural factors	4.12	2.56
Religious factors	2.56	2.47
Social factors	4.42	2.37
Tendency to marital infidelity	9.15	6.74

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the distribution of the population (normality of the data). The results of Table 2 showed that the research variables have a normal distribution.

Table 2. Normality results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Variables	P	Degrees of freedom	Z
Economic factors	0.521	199	0.054
Social factors	0.534	199	0.052
Cultural factors	0.517	199	0.056
Educational factors	0.547	199	0.053
Religious factors	0.535	199	0.055
Tendency to marital infidelity	0.571	109	0.057

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between family factors and its components (economic, social, cultural, religious, and educational factors) with the tendency to marital infidelity.

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficients between family factors with a tendency to marital infidelity

Variable	The correlation coefficient	P
Economic factors	**-0.721	0.001
Social factors	**-0.613	0.002
Cultural factors	*-0.602	0.001
Religious factors	**-0.523	0.001
Educational factors	**-0.505	0.002

$P<0.05^{**}$, $P<0.01^{*}$

As seen in Table 3, the results of Pearson correlation coefficients show significant and inverse relationships between family factors and tendency to marital infidelity. In other words, with increasing family factors, the tendency to betrayal decreases.

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine multiple correlations between variables. So, family variables (economic, social, cultural, religious, and educational factors) as independent variables and the tendency to marital infidelity as a dependent variable were entered into the regression equation simultaneously with the method of repeated entry. Table 4 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient between the variables is equal to 0.564, and the adjusted coefficient of determination is equal to 0.324, which indicates that 32.4% of the variance of the tendency to marital infidelity is the independent variables together.

To evaluate the significance of the obtained correlation coefficient, the results of the analysis of variance in Table 4 show that the obtained F value is significant ($P<0.001$; F= 14.52). To investigate the predictive role of each family factor, regression coefficients and their significance have been investigated.

Table 4. Significance of regression model based on analysis of variance test

Regression model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t	P
	B	The standard error	Beta		
Constant number	65.540	5.143		10.998	0.000
Economic factors	-0.731	0.241	-0.724	-3.159	0.000
Social factors	-0.321	0.244	-0.632	-4.79	0.000
Cultural factors	-0.234	0.132	-0.541	-3.541	0.000
Religious factors	-0.231	0.232	-0.242	-2.957	0.001
Educational factors	-0.201	0.268	-0.281	-2.400	0.001

Table 4 shows the regression coefficients based on the contribution of each independent variable in explaining the dependent variable. As seen, economic factors with the highest beta value are the best predictors of marital infidelity ($P<0.001$; t= -15.15; β= -0.731). Also, the share of each of the independent variables in predicting the tendency to marital infidelity is as follows: social factors: 72.4%, cultural factors: 63.2%, religious factors: 24.2%, and educational factors: 28.1%.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to predict the tendency to marital infidelity based on family factors of couples referring to the social emergency in Sari city. The results of the present study showed that the significant relationships between family factors and the tendency to marital infidelity. Amongst family factors, economic factors are the best predictors of marital infidelity. This finding is consistent with the results of studies conducted by Navabi and Mohammadi and Shansoul et al. they concluded that unfavorable economic factors also affect marital infidelity.

In a society where people cannot achieve a proper level of well-being by performing job duties, they inevitably choose the most important needs. In this case, the needs of leisure, welfare, and entertainment may be forgotten, and sexual pleasure through

illegitimate relationships can be considered instead of all these needs and failures (21,22).

According to the results of the study, there was a significant and inverse relationship between the two variables of social factors and the tendency of marital infidelity of couples. This finding is consistent with the findings of Fathi et al. and Malik et al. It can be said that the cause of infidelity in women is often emotional and is more related to the relationship with the spouse such, while in the case of men, sexual need is one of the main causes of infidelity, and individual category such as diversity also plays a key role in infidelity (14,23).

Also, the correlation test between cultural factors and the tendency to marital infidelity was significant and inverse. The results of this finding are consistent with the findings of Sami et al. study which considering the changes in beliefs and behaviors of today's Iranian society. The family has always been one of the most important bases of Iranian society in history but it is facing significant problems today. The increase in the divorce rate and the frequency of related cases in family courts show that the marital relationship in the Iranian family has become very vulnerable today, and this vulnerability can be a heavy and sometimes irreparable burden for society and its members. Developing individualism and the increasing emphasis on individual values have led to a decline in collectivism values among members of society (24).

Also, the relationship between religious factors and the tendency of marital infidelity of couples is significant and inverse. The results of this finding are consistent with the findings of Yousefi et al. study.

In this line, reduced commitments, moral values and consequently, religious beliefs may lead to losing control of effect and pursue new behaviors and serious experiences (25). Finally; the results showed that there was a significant and inverse relationship between the two variables of educational factors and the tendency of marital infidelity of couples. This finding was consistent with the results of Ajam research which explained that in most betrayed couples, there was no intimate and strong family and educational relationship (26). This study has some limitations such as participants were selected from one city. Therefore the generalization of the results to other regions is limited. The results of the present study should be provided to family counselors, family therapists, and counselors based in the Family Dispute Resolution Council. Promoting the value of commitment and the preservation of the Family by appropriate media programs and public information about the harmful consequences of infidelity is another way to reduce the tendency to infidelity.

Conclusion

Based on the results, family factors directly affect the tendency to marital infidelity in relationships between couples. It is suggested that cultural affairs officials, institutions, and organizations related to family issues can prevent marital infidelity by educating and training professionals, couples, and families.

Acknowledgement

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