

## Prediction of Marital Satisfaction based on Sexual Self-esteem in Women Wanting divorce

### Abstract

The present study aims to predict marital satisfaction based on sexual self-esteem in women that want a divorce. This study is descriptive (non-experimental) and correlational research. The statistical population of research included all the women between 20 and 40 years wanting divorce who were referred to the physiological counseling centers in Qazvin city in 2021. Approximately 100 people were selected for this research to estimate the sample size using the Plant-based formula. The Convenience Sampling technique was employed. The measurement tools included ENRICH [1] Marital Satisfaction scale (2007) and Sternberg Thinking Styles Questionnaire (1991). A hierarchical regression test was used for data analysis. The findings showed that the research hypotheses were accepted. Sexual self-esteem explains 42.2% of the variance of marital satisfaction in women wanting a divorce. This relation shows that sexual self-esteem alone explains 42% of marital satisfaction variance in women that want a divorce. Mental well-being has increased the described variance of marital satisfaction by 19.4%. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted, and sexual self-esteem predicts marital satisfaction in women seeking divorce and has a significant role in marital satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *Marital satisfaction, Sexual self-esteem, Women seeking divorce*

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### Introduction

Today, high population growth, rural migration, marginalization, poverty, and unemployment, in addition to the development of mass communication tools have transformed traditional societies. These challenges are the source of social damage to these societies. During the 19th-21th century, changes in the socioeconomic structure of the society gradually occurred because of Iran's wider communications with the western industrial civilization. In other words, women play a social role that was previously the duties and responsibilities of men. People acquire traits related to them by participating and playing roles. Therefore, it is possible to strengthen masculinity in women by playing social roles and entering male-dominated domains. These changes can affect the satisfaction of couples and create challenges in their marital satisfaction. Sexual problems are one of the most important problems in marital life. One of the important components of a successful sexual relationship is sexual knowledge and awareness. The position of knowing the interaction of people with each other has a prominent role as a mediating variable. If couples are more aware of this important dimension of a relationship in their lives, they will be able to change their communication methods and improve and adopt a constructive solution when conflicts and marital problems occur (Nadri, 2018). Sexual activity is considered one of the important dimensions of people's lives. It can be affected by individual characteristics, interpersonal relationships, family, social and cultural conditions, the environment, the spouse's sexual activity records, physical and mental health, and hormonal levels (Gutman and Korkoff, 2017). Marital satisfaction plays

an important role in normal family functions. Although when describing and defining marital satisfaction, it seems that it is a simple problem, when considering the importance and consequences of the presence or absence of marital satisfaction, the idea of simplicity is ignored, and complexity becomes important instead. Marital satisfaction is an emotional-cognitive and mental evaluation that a person has about a marital relationship. In the definition of compatibility and marital satisfaction, Griff states that compatible couples are husbands and wives who mostly agree with each other, satisfied with the type and quality of spending leisure time, and have good management of their time and financial problems (Sprecher, Wenzel and Harvey, 2012).

In addition to sex hormones, psychological factors also affect sexual satisfaction and self-esteem and its components, such as attractiveness, skill, experience, control of thoughts, emotions, and sexual behaviors. Choosing a suitable educational method is important in strengthening the sense of value and sexual self-esteem. Self-worth plays an important role in strengthening psychological factors. McCormack (2013) claims that women are better able to express their feelings, which can be used to improve their sexual satisfaction. Therefore, therapists are seeking to provide more sexual satisfaction to those who seek treatment with treatment methods or combining different treatment techniques, or developing existing treatments. However, researchers have recently become increasingly interested in the study of mental and psychological well-being (Dastjerdi et al., 2011). The main goal of mental health is to help all people to achieve a more complete, harmonious life and wide knowledge and to prevent the prevalence of mood,

emotional, and behavioral disorders. Diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses to build a healthy society are one of the main duties of governments and society, and every community that wants the well-being and happiness of its people must train compatible and harmonious people (Yeganeh, 2013).

Rif (2018) believes that marital disorder and lack of satisfaction in marital life have a significant relationship to the prevalence of emotional and behavioral disorders in the general population, while satisfactory marriages improve the health of couples and prevent negative life events and psychological problems in marital life. Problems and disorders in marital life have negative consequences on the emotional and physical health of couples (Golbar et al., 2012). It seems that marital satisfaction has a significant relationship with sexual self-esteem. One of the important points in maintaining health, behavior, and sexual performance is to control it. Research evidence shows that when sexual behavior is under the supervision and control of mental processes, and there is a necessary environment for it, a person has better health and sexual performance. On the other hand, if a person does not have the necessary control over his sexual behavior so that sexual performance is out of his control, it weakens not only the mental-sexual health but also the physical health of the people (Kaveh, 2018).

Bakshaish and Mortazavi (2019) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and general health, and marital satisfaction. The results showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. In addition, Rahmani et al. (2021), in their research mentioned sexual satisfaction and its relationship with marital happiness. They found that marital happiness and satisfaction have a significant relationship with sexual satisfaction. In this respect, sexual self-esteem and sexual self-efficacy have a reciprocal relationship with this problem, and sexual self-esteem training by experienced staff in couples, especially women, can be one of the strategies to increase marital satisfaction. Nematzadeh Khamsi et al. (2019) investigated the effect of marital skills training on increasing sexual performance and sexual self-efficacy in women. They found that this training is effective in sexual self-efficacy. Researches about the level of sexual knowledge indicate that the level of sexual knowledge is very low, especially in Iran, due to cultural and ideological problems, and this challenge is more common in women. The sexual and marital satisfaction of women is lower than that of men. It needs more attention and training. Women's sexual satisfaction has increased more than men's after training, which shows their greater influence and their greater need for information and awareness about sexual problems. At the same time, training in sexual skills and contraception increases sexual and marital satisfaction and reduces sexual violence and marital incompatibility among

married women (Qasemizad et al., 2019). Furthermore, this model can be formed and expanded through the integration of different theories of personal growth on adaptive performance. In Rif et al.'s model, psychological well-being consists of six variables: The variable of self-acceptance means a positive attitude towards oneself and past life. If a person is satisfied in evaluating his/her talents, abilities, and activities in general and is satisfied in referring to his/her past, it will have a favorable psychological function. All humans try to have a positive attitude toward themselves despite the limitations they see in themselves, and this attitude is self-acceptance. The autonomy variable refers to the feeling of independence, self-sufficiency, and freedom from norms. A person who can make decisions based on personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs is autonomous. A person's ability to handle social pressures is related to this component. Positive relationship with others is another variable of this model, which means having a high-quality and satisfying relationship with others. People with this trait are mostly pleasant, altruistic, and capable of loving others. They try to create a warm relationship based on mutual trust with others. The variable of purposefulness in life means having long-term and short-term goals in life, and knowing them is meaningful. A purposeful person shows interest in life activities and events and engages effectively with them. Finding meaning for the efforts and challenges of life is placed in this variable. Control of the environment is another variable of this model, which means the ability of a person to manage life and its necessities. Therefore, a person who has a feeling of overcoming the environment can manipulate, change and improve the various dimensions of the environment and its circumstances as much as possible. The personal growth variable leads to the development of new experiences and continuous personal growth. A person with these traits is always trying to improve his/her personal life through learning and experience (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2018). Considering the above explanations and existing research gaps, the researcher tries to answer this research question Do psychological well-being and sexual self-esteem play a role in the marital satisfaction of women wanting a divorce?

The results of this research can help officials and planners in planning to prevent the spread of unhealthy behaviors that are caused by weak self-esteem and psychological well-being and are problematic in adapting to the changes and necessities of life. These results can be used by patients, doctors, nurses, and psychologists. Educational planners and technologists can also use these results to provide preventive services and psychological and educational support to help patients adapt to life after diagnosing their disease. Therefore, it is necessary to research how to reduce students' problems and improve their mental health, and on the other hand, control the consequences of student life, which is highly dependent on their stress and

anxiety. In addition, this research is novel and innovative in Iran and is a ground for developing research in this field.

## **Methodology**

The current study is applied developmental research with a descriptive correlational design. The statistical population of research included all the women between 20 and 40 years wanting divorce who were referred to the physiological counseling centers in Qazvin city in 2021.

The number of 85 people is enough to estimate the sample size according to the Plant-based formula in this research; therefore, 100 people were considered as the research sample and our base, which were selected from women between 20-40 years old who want a divorce to cooperate and in research. Convenience Sampling was used as a sampling technique.

The measurement tools included Enrich Marital Satisfaction scale (2007) Sternberg Thinking Styles Questionnaire (1991). A hierarchical regression test was used for data analysis. The findings showed that the research hypotheses were accepted. Sexual self-esteem explains 42.2% of the variance of marital satisfaction in women wanting a divorce. This relation shows that sexual self-esteem alone explains 42% of marital satisfaction variance in women that want a divorce. Mental well-being has increased the described variance of marital satisfaction by 19.4%. First, explanations were provided regarding the intervention in the research sample after selecting the sample, then the questionnaires were provided to the participants as a pre-test, and they were asked to answer the questionnaires.

## **Research tool**

### **ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale**

A Modified Enrich questionnaire was used to measure marital satisfaction, which measures the 12 Life Categories. The first scale has five questions, and the other scales have ten questions. The activities of the main version of the test are 47 questions from which several norms have been extracted. The number of scale questions was 35 questions, considering the large number of words in each scale question and the form used in the research (Almassi, Khabiri, Farahani, and Hemayat Talab, 2019). Enrich couple scale is a general measure of the marital relationship. The sub-scales of this scale questionnaire include 1-ideal distortion, 2-marital satisfaction, 3-communication, and 4-conflict resolution. A questionnaire with a 5-point scale, well-known as a Likert scale, was used. This questionnaire has five choices for each item: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, neither agree nor disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree. Olson et al. estimated the Cronbach's Alpha of this questionnaire at 0.92. According to the results obtained by Soleimanian in Iran, the alpha reliability is 0.95. the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the questionnaire for the subscales of

marital satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and ideal distortion were 0.83, 0.84, 0.80, and 0.86, respectively, and the values of retest validity of the questionnaire for each subtest were 0.92, 0.90, 0.81, 0.86 respectively. The alpha coefficients of the questionnaire in Asoodeh (2010) with the number of 365 couples (total of 730 people) were 0.68 (by deleting question 24, the alpha becomes 78/78 and 77/62), respectively (quoted from Almasi, Khabiri, Farahani, and Tahir Talab, 2019). Mirkheshti (1986), in "Study between marital life satisfaction and mental health," proved that Cronbach's alpha coefficient shows the validity, stability, and internal consistency of the test. This research has been done for 60 sample people, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92 has been obtained, which indicates a high coefficient. The correlation coefficient of ENRICH Questionnaire with family satisfaction scales is from 0.41 to 0.60, with marital life satisfaction scales from 0.32 to 0.41, which is a symbol of construct validity. All the subscales of Enrich Questionnaire differentiate between satisfied and dissatisfied couples, and this shows that the questionnaire has a suitable criterion validity (quoted from Saatchi, Kamkari, and Asgarian, 2018).

### **Sexual self-esteem questionnaire**

This questionnaire was created by Zina and Schwarz (1996) and included 81 questions and five subscales of skill/experience, attractiveness, control, moral judgment, and adaptiveness. This questionnaire measures the emotional reaction to their mental evaluations of thoughts, feelings, and sexual behaviors. Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) reported by the questionnaire makers was 0.85, which indicates the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha of subscales of skill/experience, attractiveness, control, moral judgment, and adaptiveness were 0.94, 0.93, 0.85, 0.85, and 0.88, respectively. Questionnaire creators believe that the two subscales of skill and experience and control provide better information about sexual self-esteem (Danesh et al., 2011). The correlation of this questionnaire was calculated for construct validity with the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and its value was acceptable. Correlation of some variables, such as sexual experience, frequency of sexual intercourse, and the number of sexual partners, as well as the activity level of romantic appointments, including the number of appointments and the number of sexual partners, have also been confirmed. In this research, the data were analyzed in two categories: descriptive and inferential levels, and at the level of statistical description, average, frequency, frequency percentage, and standard deviation were used. Mean, frequency, frequency percentage, and standard deviation were used for statistical descriptions. For statistical inference, Pearson's correlation test and hierarchical regression test were used, using SPSS software while respecting the assumptions of the statistical

test. Pearson's correlation test and hierarchical regression test were used for statistical inference using IBM SPSS software with statistical test hypotheses.

## Results

### Demographic characteristics

**Table 1: Frequency distribution and proportion of participants (age)**

Age	Frequency	percentage	Cumulative percentage
20-25	34	34	34
26-30	23	23	57
31-35	25	25	82
36-40	18	18	100
Total	100	100	-

Table 1 shows that out of 100 participants, 34 people (34 percent of the respondents) were 20-25 years old, 23 people were 30-26 years old, 25 people were 31-35 years old, and 18 people were 36-40 years old.

### The statistical description of research variables

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha of the research variables (marital satisfaction, sexual self-esteem) among the research subjects.

**Table 2- Mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha of research variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Marital satisfaction	55.46	9.95	0.77
Sexual self-esteem	54.93	5.35	0.81

Table 3 shows the correlation coefficients of marital satisfaction and sexual self-esteem in women who want a divorce. This table shows that there is a correlation between marital satisfaction and sexual self-esteem at a significance level of 0.01.

**Table 3- Correlation coefficients of marital satisfaction, sexual self-esteem**

Variable	Marital satisfaction	Sexual self-esteem
Marital satisfaction	-	
Sexual self-esteem		0.31**

P<0.01\*\*

Multi-criteria regression analysis was used to test research hypotheses. Before the multivariate analysis, its pre-hypotheses, including normality of distribution, equality of variances, and linearity of data, were examined. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test the normality of the distribution.

Table 4 shows the results of this test for the main research variables.

**Table 4: The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to evaluate the normality of the distribution of predictor and criterion variables**

Variable	Marital satisfaction	Sexual self-esteem
Marital satisfaction	-	
Sexual self-esteem	0.31**	-

(P > 0 / 05 )

The results of Table 4 show that the criterion and predictor variables have a normal distribution. The collinearity of the Variance Inflation Factor and tolerance coefficient was investigated to evaluate the hypothesis.

**Table 5-variance tolerance index and variance inflation factor**

Multi collinearity indicators		
Predictor variables	Tolerance	VIF
Marital satisfaction	0.722	1.20
Sexual self-esteem	0.386	1.62

Since the tolerance index is close to 1, none of the predictor variables has a linear effect on other predictor variables (Table 5). According to this table, considering that the value of the VIF index is less than 2, there is no collinear effect between the default variables.

**Table 6-Watson camera test to check the independence of the error**

Statistics	Watson camera
Marital satisfaction	1.54
Sexual self-esteem	

According to the results of Table 6, in this research, this statistic is 1.54, which is less than two, which indicates this default is true.

**Table 7- Hypothesis of homogeneity of regression slopes**

Source of changes	F	Mean square	Sum of squares	Significance
Marital satisfaction	16.11	7291.09	14238.22	0.23
Sexual self-esteem	15.8	2647.11	7829.76	0.09

The results show that the calculated F is not statistically significant because the significance level of the interaction between the two groups is greater than  $p < 0.01$ . Therefore, the regression slope homogeneity hypothesis is accepted because the relationship is not significant (Table 7).

### Hypothesis test

Multi-criteria hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis "Sexual self-esteem can predict marital satisfaction in women who want a divorce." In this way, the sexual self-esteem variable was included in the prediction equation of marital satisfaction as a predictor variable in the first step (table 8).

**Table 8- Multi criteria regression predicting marital satisfaction based on sexual self-esteem**

Variables	b	SE	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	
sexual self-esteem	0.65	0.19	0.271*			
					$R^2=0.422$	$F=21.07$
						$\Delta R^2=0.194$
						$AdjR^2$

As the table shows, sexual self-esteem explains 42.2% of the variance of marital satisfaction in women who want a divorce. The evaluation of results showed that sexual self-esteem significantly predicts marital satisfaction at the level of 0.01 ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $F=21.07$ ). The squared multiple correlations showed that the value of  $R^2$  is equal to 0.42. This shows that sexual self-esteem alone explains 42% of the variance of marital satisfaction in women wanting a divorce.

### Discussion and conclusion

The hypothesis test showed that sexual self-esteem could predict marital satisfaction in women wanting a divorce. The findings of this research are consistent with other similar studies such as Ali Mohammadi (2019), Vaziri, Kashani, and Hosseinian (2019), Mohebi et al. (2017), Rosenthal, Moore, and Flynn (2016), Nezami (2014).

Every person is vital as a criterion for evaluating sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the evolution of norms. A person's emotional response to mental evaluations creates the

basis of sexual self-esteem and its five variables. Personal traits such as self-esteem, autonomy, personal independence, and empathy play an important role in health and sexual satisfaction, and people with low self-esteem suppress their ability to express their sexual desires. Dialogue and communication help women change their views toward their husbands, and it becomes easier for them to understand the level of sexual interest. This strengthens the emotional-sexual relationship of women and increases the intimacy between them and their husbands, and improves the quality of their sexual relations.

Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sex and sexual intercourse, and at the same time, it requires the possibility of increasing safe and enjoyable sexual experiences and freedom from force, discrimination, and violence in marital relationships. Sexual intercourse meets a wide range of psychological, emotional, and sexual needs of couples. Therefore, it is different from other interpersonal communication. Marital satisfaction is maximum when the rewards are high and the costs of a marital relationship are low, so the rewards are preferable to the costs. Therefore, the sexual satisfaction of couples is at its optimal level when the benefits obtained in the marital relationship are equal for couples. Lack of sexual information, lack of sexual skills, and unrealistic expectations and performance play a significant role in sexual problems. Most people do not have access to appropriate resources for information on marital problems and sexual performance. One of the features of this treatment is Self-disclosure, and emotional self-disclosure during sex can increase sexual satisfaction.

In all human behaviors, including sexual satisfaction, memories, and future predictions are experienced only in the present. We inevitably take refuge in the past or the future if we do not have a correct understanding of ourselves in this time and place; both have negative effects on human education. Over time, increases in sexual satisfaction are associated with relationship satisfaction, love, and commitment, and vice versa. Sexual satisfaction in the present predicts marital satisfaction in the next situation for both men and women. However, marital quality in one situation does not predict greater sexual satisfaction in the next situation. High sexual satisfaction one time is associated with a low level of marital instability in the next. This expects women to avoid premarital sex, which affects women's sexual behavior and creates a situation where women who have sex before marriage feel guilty. Women have sex not because they are sexual beings or because they emphasize more on the emotional and rational aspects of relationships but because they care about emotional intimacy and are less likely to engage in sexual intercourse without an emotional attachment. In fact, sexual satisfaction is

important for women because they have sex to achieve emotional intimacy before sexual intimacy.

The formal integration of family education can be considered by experts and institutions that participate in this field.

It will be useful to include family education in the educational program from a young age for better learning and institutionalization in society. Moreover, the active cooperation of psychology experts and specialists with associations and centers related to the family.

It should be noted that the convenience and non-random research sample cannot be representative of all women wanting a divorce. Therefore, before generalizing the findings further investigations need to be done. The use of random sampling is recommended in later research.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

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#### **Ethics statement**

None

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