

The Comparison of Relationship Beliefs and Couples Burnout in women who apply for Divorce and Women Who Want to Continue their Marital Life

Anahita khodabakhshi Koolae, PhD¹
Nastaran Adibrad, PhD¹
Bahram Saleh Sedgh poor, PhD¹

1. University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences

Corresponding author:

Anahita khodabakhshi Koolae, PhD, University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences
Evin, Kudakyar Ave.,
Tehran, 19834, Iran.
anna_khodabakhshi@yahoo.com

Objective: The aim of this study was to examine the comparison of relationship beliefs and couples burnout in women who apply for divorce and women who want to continue their marital life.

Method: for this study, 50 women who referred to judicial centers and 50 women who claimed they wanted to continue their marital life were randomly selected. Participants were asked to complete the relationship beliefs inventory and marital burnout questionnaires. In this study, descriptive statistical methods such as standard deviation, mean, t- students for independent groups, correlation, multi-variable regression and independent group's correlation difference test were used.

Results: The comparison between the relationship beliefs of the 2 groups (those wanting to divorce and women wanting to continue their marital life) was significantly different ($p < 0/1$). In addition, the comparison of marital burnout was significantly different in the 2 groups ($p < 0/1$).

Discussion: Women who were about to divorce were significantly different from those who wanted to continue their marital relationship in the general measure of the relationship beliefs and factors of "believing that disagreement is destructive and their partners can not change their undesirable behaviors". In other words, women who were applying for divorce had more unreasonable thoughts and burnout compared to those who wanted to continue their marital life.

Keywords: Belief, Burnout, Couples, Divorce, Marital relationship, Women

Iran J Psychiatry 2009;5:35-39

Many couples start their marital life with love. At the time, they never think the fire of their love puts off one day. Ellis stated that newly married couples rarely think that one day their fictional love may wear off, but it usually happens (1). Burnout is gradual, and rarely happens suddenly. In fact, love and intimacy wear off gradually and with that comes a general exhaustion. In the worst case, burnout means the break down of the relationship (2).

Burn out is a physical, mental and emotional exhaustion which happens when there is not compatibility between expectations and reality.

Burn out has symptoms such as physical exhaustion which is shown by tiredness, boredom, weakness, chronic headaches, stomachache, loss of appetite and over eating. Emotional exhaustion is recognized by annoyance, unwillingness to solve problems, disappointment, sadness, feeling to be meaningless, depression, loneliness, lack of motivation, feeling trapped, worthlessness, emotional disturbance and even suicidal thoughts (3). Mental exhaustion has such symptoms as decrease in self confidence, negative opinion about spouse, disappointment and posthumous toward

spouse, self-dissatisfaction and lack of self-love (2).

Many factors play a role in marital burnout; one of them is unreasonable expectations. People have Different reactions towards different situations. It is possible that some event would make someone anxious or nervous, but the same event might be exciting and challenging for someone else. Couple burnout depends on their adjustment to one another's' beliefs.

From Beck's point of view, when couples lose their passion and love, even one disappointing event is enough for them to put negative labels on their spouses. In this case, lack of understanding from the husbands makes him unemotional in his wife's mind; and if the wife does not grant the husband's expectations, then the husband thinks the wife is being unkind.

This study investigates the relationship between marital burnout and relationship beliefs and compares it in women who want to continue their marital life and in women referred to judicial centers.

With emphasis on reasonable relationship's role in avoiding marital burnout, recognized that the failure to have a reasonable relationship is the most common problem mentioned by dissatisfied couples. Anxiety, disappointment, posthumous, anger and finally burnout will occur if spouses would not talk about their needs or not reach a positive solution to achieve their needs

(4,5). Stackert et al. analyzed the relationship beliefs and dependence type (feeling safe, mutual eagerness and withdrawal) and dissatisfaction in marital relationships and they found that unsafe people (those between eagerness and withdrawal) showed less reasonable beliefs compared to those who were safe. Unsafe and strong dependence had a significant relationship with unreasonable beliefs; and relationship dissatisfaction had a relationship with unreasonable beliefs (6).

Moller and Vanzeyl investigated the hypotheses of a relationship between relationship beliefs and marital adjustment. In this study, 46 couples filled the Relationship Beliefs Inventory (IBR2) and Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The results showed that there was a correlation between Dyadic Adjustment Scale's mark and believing the destructiveness of disagreement's factors (D) and sexual perfectionism (7). Sullivan and Schwebel investigated the relationship between the youngsters' expectations and levels of unreasonable beliefs on the kind of relationship and satisfaction with marital relationships, and concluded that there was a relationship among dissatisfaction of the current life situation and levels of unreasonable beliefs and expectations of satisfaction in the future (8).

Soleimanian studied the effect of unreasonable thoughts on marital dissatisfaction and found that people with unreasonable thoughts have a significantly lower level of marital satisfaction (9).

The study conducted by Pines et al. in which 18 factors of marital relationship was analyzed showed that positive opinion about marital life includes 0.5 predict in variables of marital burnout. In this study, the relationship constant coefficient of Pearson for burnout from 18 factors of marital relationship was $r = -0.72$ for positive opinion and $r = -0.64$ for relationships (10).

The study's hypotheses were:

1. There is a difference between relationship beliefs of women who wanted to divorce and those who wanted to continue their marital life.
2. There is a difference between marital burnout of women who wanted to divorce and women who wanted to continue their marital life.

There was a difference between marital burnout relationships and relationship beliefs of women who wanted to divorce and those who wanted to continue their marital life.

Materials and Methods

In this study, the descriptive correlative method was used because the present variables were measured by the researcher without any interference. The correlation method was also used as the relationship between burnout factors and relationship beliefs was studied.

Participants:

Statistical population of this study included all Tehranian women who were about to divorce and had

gone to judicial centers. Fifty women who referred to judicial centers and 50 women who claimed that they wanted to continue their marital life were selected to participate in this study.

Measurements

The relationship beliefs inventory was used to measure relationship beliefs. It includes a 40-item questionnaire made by Eidelson and Epstein to measure marital life's understandable beliefs (11) and it has 5 factors of : 1) believing disagreement is destructive (acceptance, sadness and negative description of disagreements); 2) believing the partner can not change their undesirable behaviors and will repeat them in the future; 3) expecting mind reading (expecting means that individuals should know their spouses' feelings, thoughts and needs without any needs of stating them); 4) sexual perfectionism which means expecting the spouse to have a complete sexual relationship in all cases without considering his situation. ; 5) believing that meaning the sexes are different (not having a correct understanding of physiological differences between men and women and having some expectations or knowing the congenital differences the reason of difference.) The relationship beliefs inventory with likert spectrum had completely wrong to completely right items. By adding the marks of every individual for each factor, the factor's mark was accounted and by adding marks of the 5 factors, the total mark of the relationship beliefs was calculated. In this inventory, higher marks showed more unreasonable relationship beliefs. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this measure was 0.18, and each factor had a significant relationship with marital factors. The Persian version of this instrument was prepared by Mazaheri and Pouretamad (12).

To measure marital burnout, a 21-item questionnaire was used (10). It has 3 main parts: Physical exhaustion (tiredness, sleeping problems); emotional exhaustion (depression, disappointment, trapped); and mental exhaustion (worthlessness, anger towards spouse). All of these questions were answered using likert's 7 degree measure (1=never, 7=always). This spectrum shows the Pearson's marital burnout's degree. The reliability coefficient was 0.89 and in a month period it was 0.76. The alpha coefficient was between 0.91 and 0.93. In this study, such descriptive statistical methods as standard deviation, mean, independent means comparison, correlation, multi-variable regression and independent groups correlation difference test were used.

Results

According to Based on the hypothesis the results were as followed follows:

The result of the t-test for the first hypothesis is shown in Table 1. As you can see the calculated t, is significant from statistical point of view in level ($p < 0.001$) is significant as followed. The level of

general unreasonable beliefs in women willing to divorce was significantly more than those women who wanted to continue their

Marital life ($t=2.71$). The degree of the relationship belief that of " the partner can not change his undesirable behavior) was higher in women who wanted to divorce in compare to those who wanted to continue their marital life ($t=3.14$). As it is seen in the table, the calculated t is significant which means that the degree of the relationship belief that of " disagreement is destructive", was higher in women who wanted to divorce in compare to those who wanted to continue their marital life ($t=3.37$). The degree of the relationship belief about mind reading expectations was significantly higher in women who wanted to divorce in compare to those who wanted to continue their marital life ($t=3.93$). The relationship beliefs about sexual perfectionism and sexual differences were not significantly higher in women who wanted to divorce in compare to women who wanted to continue their marital life. Thus,

Among the hypotheses, there was a significant difference between the relationship beliefs and the its factors of (the partner can not change, disagreement is destructive and mind reading) in women who wanted to divorce and those who wanted to continue their relationship.

As it is shown in Table 2, there was a significant difference between the mean mark of marital burnout in women who wanted to divorce and women who wanted to continue their marital life ($p<0.001$). There was a significant difference between the total mark for marital burnout ($t=2.77$) and the three factors of physical exhaustion ($t=3.14$), emotional exhaustion ($t=2.68$) and mental exhaustion ($t=3.11$) in women who wanted to divorce and in women who wanted to continue their marital life. Therefore, the hypothesis of a difference between marital burnout and its factors in women who wanted to divorce and in those who wanted to continue their relationship was confirmed .

As it is demonstrated in Table 3, the difference between the 2 correlation coefficients of relationship beliefs and marital burnout in women who wanted to divorce and women who wanted to continue their marital life was significant in the level of $p<0.05$ and $p<0.01$.

This means that women who wanted to divorce had unreasonable relationship beliefs and more marital burnout in compare to women who wanted to continue their marital life . As it is clear from the results of the regression's analysis, in the second step, the variable of "the partner can not change" was predicted and the stated coefficient was 54 percent. In the third step, the mind reading variable was taken in to account and it

Table1. The comparison between relationship beliefs of 2 groups of women (those whoWanted to divorce and women who wanted to continue their marital life

Relationship beliefs	Groups	Mean	Sd	F	t	N	sig
Partner can not change	Willing to continue marital life	15.04	5.67	50	3.14	98	0.002
	Willing to divorce	19.6	6.84				
Disagreement is destructive	Willing to continue marital life	17.71	5.91	50	3.37	98	0.001
	Willing to divorce	21.98	6.15				
Expecting mind reading	Willing to continue marital life	21.27	4.53	50	3.93	98	0.001
	Willing to divorce	23.05	6.08				
Sexual perfectionism	Willing to continue marital life	17.75	6.71	50	0.11	98	0.190
	Willing to divorce	17.61	5.6				
Sexual differences	Willing to continue marital life	20.7	5.14	50	0.38	98	0.700
	Willing to divorce	20.25	6.64				
Total score	Willing to continue marital life	103	16.2	50	2.71	98	0.800
	Willing to divorce	113	17.07				

Table2. The comparison of marital burnout in the 2 groups of women; those who wanted to Divorce and women who wanted to continue their marital life

Marital burnout	Groups	Mean	Sd	F	t	N	sig
total mark	Willing to continue marital life	3.64	3.2	50	2.77	98	0.002
	Willing to divorce	4.94	2.13				
Physical exhaustion	Willing to continue marital life	2.98	2.43	50	3.14	98	0.001
	Willing to divorce	5.1	1.96				
Emotional exhaustion	Willing to continue marital life	3.36	3.6	50	2.68	98	0.002
	Willing to divorce	5.64	2.56				
Mental exhaustion	Willing to continue marital life	3.28	2.90	50	3.11	98	0.005
	Willing to divorce	4.85	2.1				

Table3. The comparison of the difference between the 2 correlation coefficients of relationship beliefs and marital burnout in women who wanted to divorce and those who wanted to continue their marital life

Sample's women	measures	mean	Sd	rx _y	f
Women willing to divorce	Relationship beliefs	111	18	0.66	50
	burnout	4.89	1.29		
Women willing to continue marital life	Relationship beliefs	103	16	0.45	50
	burnout	3.65	0.64		
Z r1-r2=9.75 > 1.6		0.05			
Z r1-r2=9.75 > 2.33		0.01			

Table4. Step by step regression of marital burnout based on relationship beliefs factors

Step	Variable	R	R2	F	Sig	Error	B
1	Total	0.48	0.23	22.87	0.001	74.15	0.48
2	Total	0.54	0.29	19.96	0.001	73.61	0.57
	Partner can not change						0.25
3	Total	0.60	0.36	13.35	0.001	74.03	0.78
	Partner can not change						0.39
	Mind reading						0.33

The other variables of the relationship beliefs were not considered since they didn't have any significant roles in predicting burnout.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between relationship beliefs and their comparison in women who wanted to divorce and in women who wanted to continue their marital life. The results confirmed Ellis's point of view about the role of beliefs and thoughts in relationships(1). Women who were about to divorce were significantly different from women who wanted to continue their relationship in the general measure of the relationship beliefs and factors of believing that disagreement is destructive and the partner can not change. In other words, women who were about to divorce had more significant unreasonable thoughts in compare to those who wanted to continue their marital life. This result approved the results of Moller and Vanzeyl's research. Moller and Vanzeyl found that there was a relationship between marital incompatibility and the relationship belief of "disagreement is destructive" (7). The difference of this study with Moller and Vanzeyl's research was that they reported a relationship between sexual differences and marital incompatibilities. However, this finding was not observed in the current study. The result of this study approved the results of Sullivan and Shwebel study which reported the relationship between marital dissatisfaction and unreasonable relationship beliefs. This study also showed that the mark for unreasonable beliefs of women who were about to divorce was significantly higher than the mark for those willing to continue their marital life (5).

The results of this study confirmed Soleimanian study, which was also done in Iran. It showed that those with unreasonable thoughts were at higher level of

significance from marital dissatisfaction points of view (9).

The results of this study also approved the findings of Pines study which had showed the predictable role of positive opinion towards life in marital burnout. In other words, negative and unreasonable beliefs can predict marital burnout in women (2).

The predicting results in this research that showed the total mark of relationship beliefs predicted almost half of burnout and two other factors including believing that disagreement is destructive and mind reading that predict 0.60 of marital burnout's mark showed the importance of relationship beliefs in causing marital burnout in women who wanted to divorce. It was consistent of the Pines research (10).

The last finding was that relationship beliefs played a vital role in satisfaction or dissatisfaction of life and finally marital burnout. It means that changing these beliefs can help couples to have long marital lives. Yet, considering the hypothesis being rejected, it could be said that it might be due to the fact that in our culture people are not comfortable talking about their sexual problems. Thus, it was likely that the participants' answers to these questions were affected by their cultural background and therefore the results were not significant.

References

1. Ellis A & Dryden W. The practice of Rational Emotive Therapy. New York: Spring, 1987.
2. Pines AM. Teacher burnout: a psychodynamic existential perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 2002; 8:121-40.
3. Azvita L, Krokrit A. Burnout in couples. *Journal of Family Therapy* 1995; 5: 28-34.
4. Jacobson NS, Waldron H, MooreD. Toward a behavioral profile of marital distress. *Journal of*

- Counseling and Clinical Psychology 1980; 49: 269-277.
5. Young ME, Long LL. Counseling and Therapy for Couples. Brook/Cole Publishing Company, 1998.
 6. Stackert R, Bursik K. Why am I unsatisfied? Adult attachment style, gendered Irrational Relationship beliefs & Young adult romantic relationship satisfaction. *Personality & Individual Differences* 2003; 34(8): 1419, 11.
 7. Moller A, Vanzeyl PD. Relationship Beliefs. Interpersonal Perception & Marital Adjustment. *Journal of clinical psychology* 1991; 47(1): 28-36.
 8. Sullivan B, Shwebel A. Relationship Beliefs & Expectations of satisfaction in marital relationship, Implication for Family. *Journal of Family Therapy* 1995; 3: 298-318.
 9. Soleimani A. An investigation of the effect of the unreasonable thoughts, on basis of cognitive perspective, on marital dissatisfaction. Master's thesis, unprinted, Tarbiat Moalem University in Tehran, 1994.
 10. Pines AM. Gender differences in burnout: Israeli's response to the intifada. *European Psychologist* 1998; 2: 28-34.
 11. Eidelson RJ, Epstein. Cognitive and relationship maladjustment: Development of a measure of dysfunctional relationship beliefs. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 1982; 5:715-20.
 12. Mazaheri M. Pooretamad H. Relationship beliefs scale. Unprinted report from Family Research Center. Shahid Beheshti University. Tehran 2003.