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The Role of Family Communication Patterns and Sexual Quality in Predicting Attitudes toward Marital Infidelity in Women in Isfahan

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ARTICLEINFO

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Article History:
Received: 29 Dec 2017
Revised: 5 May 2018
Accepted: 14 May 2018

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Citation:
Kordbache Sh, Arefi M. The Role of Family Communication Patterns and Sexual Quality in Predicting Attitudes toward Marital Infidelity in Women in Isfahan. Social Behavior Research & Health (SBRH). 2018; 2(1): 199-209.

ABSTRACT

Background: The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of family communication patterns and sexual quality in predicting attitudes toward marital infidelity in women in Isfahan.
Methods: The statistical population of this descriptive-analytical study included married women in Isfahan in 2016. To this end, 50 married women were selected through voluntary sampling from married women in Isfahan women's garden. The research tools included Christensen and Solavi (1984), Samanie's Sexual Quality (2008) and Mark Watley's Marital Infidelity Patterns (2006) Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis (mean and SD) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis in a synchronous manner) by the SPSS software.
Results: The results of data analysis showed that in married women, family communication patterns (mutual constructive components (-41 / -0.4), mutual avoidance (0.35) and expectation / withdrawal (36.0)) and sexual quality (-0.51) has a significant relationship with attitude toward marital infidelity (P-value < 0.001). Furthermore, the results of regression analysis showed that family communication patterns (mutual constructivist, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality significantly predict marital infidelity in women (P-value < 0.001).
Conclusion: Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that enough attention should be paid to family communication patterns and couples' sexual quality in order to prevent the occurrence of marital infidelity.

Keywords: Communication Patterns, Sexual Behavior, Marital Infidelity

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.27832104.2018.2.1.6.9]

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Introduction

Human being as a social being and being involved in a social environment are participated in interactive communication, including friendship, love and family relationships. In the meantime, the family is of particular importance, because it is one of the main elements of society, and access to a safe society requires having safe families. A healthy family includes members who have good mental health and good relationships. Therefore, the health of family members and their relationships will have a positive impact on society.[1]

The high divorce rates in Iran and the increase in the percentage of women who demand divorce are due to increased dissatisfaction with marital life.[2] An increase in the number of divorces shows that the relationship between spouses has undergone many changes during the years of life, leading to an increase in differences between spouses and ultimately in divorce. In this regard, one of the most important factors in the formation of marital conflicts between couples is the infidelity of one of them.[3]

Marital infidelity is one of the most important causes of harm to couples and families, as well as a common phenomenon for family and marital therapists. Infidelity involves the sexual intercourse of a married person with the opposite sex outside the family framework.[3] The re-experiencing of individual and sexual intimacy is the most important motive for married women and men who are drawn to illegitimate relationships and marital infidelity; something they do not experience it in their shared life.[4] Studies in the United States have shown that 21%of men and 11%of women commit marital infidelity throughout their lives.[5]

Recent changes in the family institution affect the existence of family incompatibilities and infidelity. These changes and, consequently, the change in the roles and responsibility of family members over time, have created a new condition in relations among family members.[6] One of the most important determinants of marital dynamics is family communication patterns.[7] The importance of attention to communication patterns is not only more effective on marital satisfaction, but also the changing of communication patterns in comparison with other factors affecting marital incompatibility, such as personality traits and social and economic factors are practical.[8]

Interaction in a couple's relationship is a reciprocal relationship, including regular and repetitive patterns of behavior.[9] Communication in the family system is a process in which the husband and wife exchanged emotions and thoughts through verbal and non-verbal forms of listening, pausing, facial expression and gestures.[10] Christensen and Solavi1 introduced three communication patterns between couples, which include: (a) a mutual constructive communicative pattern, during which each couple attempts to discuss their communication problem, express their feelings about each other and they propose solutions to the problem, and both feel that they understand each other; (b) the mutual avoidance pattern, during which couples both try to avoid discussing the problem; and (c) The pattern of expectation / withdrawal, during which one of the couples attempts to criticize, annoy or suggest another should be changed while the other tries to finish the discussion. A common understanding of the patterns of communication between couples is, in fact, the enlightenment of positive marital interactions that helps couples in the path of growth and development of communication skills.[11]

The defective communication patterns reduce spouses' understanding of each other, make spouses unable to support each other, try to meet each other's need, and understand each other's perceptions of conflicting issues and ultimately cause marriage and dissatisfaction problems. On the contrary, healthy and constructive communication patterns are one of the most important factors in marital satisfaction.[7, 12]

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In addition to family relationships, sexual relationships is both emotionally and physically important in marital life,[13] and intimacy in sexual relationships is one of the indicators of proximity in relationships and a powerful indicator of love.[14] Men pay attention to sexual relationship as a means of communication and a way of expressing different types of emotions such as intimacy, love, anger and aggression.[15] Although humans have experienced sexual orientation throughout their lives and throughout the ages, but sexual experience is personal and private, and individuals have their own unique thoughts and feelings.[16]

Because the disturbance of couples' relationships causes the family to collapse and causes consequences for society and families, attention to marital life and doing research to help optimize couples' relationships are essential. Although the existence of favorable relationships between couples helps to enjoy the scene of life as good relationships between couples, the low quality of marital life leads to the cold and impoverished environment of the home and provides the context of conflict and infidelity. On the other hand, a number of families are involved in the tragedy of infidelity, which causes spiritual tensions and conflict in families and these lead to disruptions in society, which has a profound effect on families and, consequently, on society. Therefore, it was the motivation that the scholar, in order to have a community of healthy and tranquil families, pays attention to marital life which is effective. Considering the fact that researchers have paid attention less to the issue of infidelity in life, there is lack of enough research in this regard. Therefore, this research intends to examine the role of family communication patterns and sexual quality in predicting attitudes toward marital infidelity in women in Isfahan. Accordingly, the main issue of the present research is to investigate whether family communication patterns and the sexual quality in predicting attitudes toward marital infidelity in women in Isfahan have a significant role.

Methods

In this descriptive-analytical study, family communication patterns (mutual constructive relationship, expectation / withdrawal relationship, mutual avoidance relationship), and sexual quality as the predictor variables and marital infidelity of women as a criterion variable have been considered. The statistical population of the study consisted of all married women in Isfahan who were referred to Isfahan women's garden in the second quarter of 2016.

Different methods are used to determine the sample size in the study. One of these methods is to refer to the scientific and theoretical sources in the field of sampling for psychological studies as Delavar (2012) has been estimated 50 people as the minimum sample size for the correlation research method (considering the external validity of the research).[17] Due to the severity of the availability of the statistical population, available sampling was used. In this research, voluntary non-random sampling was used. In this way, the researcher, referring to the available women's garden, requested that married women who came to these centers to participate in the study. Then, 50 of these people volunteered to participate in the research were selected and questionnaires were submitted to them. Inclusion criteria of the study included marital status, satisfaction, and readiness to participate in research and not having physical and psychological illness (according to their self-declaration). Furthermore, the criteria for withdrawal from the research included a missed response to the questionnaires and a reluctance to continue the research process. It should be noted that in order to comply with research ethics, first, the voluntary consent of individuals to enter the research process was written in writing and then it was stated that the participants have the right to end their cooperation with the researcher at each stage of the research on the basis of their willingness.

In the present study, the following research tools have been used:

Christensen & Solavi Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)

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The Communication Patterns Questionnaire is an instrument of self-measurement developed by Christensen and Solavi (1984). The questionnaire of the communication model consists of 35 questions. The Couples rank each behavior on a 9-degree Likert scale, which is set to 1 (impossible) to 9 (very likely). Some of these practices include mutual avoiding, mutual talk, talk / avoidance, mutual negotiation, verbal abuse, physical violence and mutual resignation. The communication model questionnaire consists of three subscales: expectation / withdrawal relationship, constructive relationship and mutual avoidance relationship.

Christensen and Shank (1991) estimated the validity of the three subscales of this questionnaire. In this study, in which the three groups of non-helpless, helpless, divorced or separated couples compared with each other, the constructive mutual subscale could distinguish between the three groups, while the subscales of communication, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal could only be distinguished between non-helpless and helpless couples. Ebadatpour (2000) also obtained the correlation of scores with the scores obtained from enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire in order to obtain the validity of this subscale, which is 0.74 and it is significant at the alpha level of 0.01.[18] Furthermore, Christensen and Hui estimated the reliability of the questionnaire. The researchers also obtained the internal consistency of the mutual constructive communication subscales of seven questions. Cronbach's alpha for men and women in this subscale was respectively 0.84 and 0.18.[19] Ebadatpour (2000) calculated the internal consistency of the subscales of this questionnaire for the Iranian sample.[18] The reliability of the subscales of the relationship as well as the mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal was calculated 0.81, 0.80, and 0.84 in the present study, respectively.

Sexual Quality Questionnaire

Sexual quality was created by Samani (2011) to measure the moral quality of marital sexual relations. This questionnaire is a general criterion to measure the quality of couples' sexual relations. The content of this questionnaire is based on clinical interviews with couples and measures three dimensions of sexual intercourse, satisfaction with sex, sexual desire in 12 options (I totally agree to completely disagree). Each dimension includes 4 questions; of course some of the questions are scored in reverse. In order to clarify the structure of the scale, the analysis of the main and influential components was carried out. The analysis results showed a three-part solution; 1- Allowing for sex, 2- Sexual satisfaction, and 3- Sexual desire. These factors have a positive and significant correlation with marital satisfaction and have a negative and significant correlation with marital conflicts. In the study by Jahed Pari (2014), the reliability of the subscales of the questionnaire and the total score ranged from 0.79 to 0.85. The content validity of this questionnaire has also been reported desirable.[20] In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire is 0.92 and its sub-scales are 0.74 for desire, 0.78 for allowing and 0.95 for satisfaction.

Attitude toward Marital Infidelity Questionnaire

Attitude toward marital infidelity questionnaire was developed by Mark Watley (2006), translated by Abdollah Zadeh (2010). The questionnaire has 12 statements that each question in the seven ranges is scored from highly disagree (1) to highly agree (7). There is nothing as the right or wrong answer in these questionnaire statements, and the questionnaire only wants an honest response from the subject to the statements. The scoring in questions 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12 is reversed, so that the answer as disagree is score of 7 and the highly agree is score of 1, and the responses between them are 6, 5, 4, 3 and 2 points. The highest score is 84 and the lowest is 12 points. Forty eight points means the individual is between admittance and rejection of infidelity. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale (84%) was

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obtained from 383 single and married women and men in the cities of Ali Abad and Behshahr, who were randomly selected. The average for this sample was 39.15.[21] In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained 0.80 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Analysis of the raw data obtained from this study was done by $SPSS_{23}$ in descriptive and inferential sections using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. First, by means of Pearson correlation test, the relationship between the variables of family communication patterns (mutual constructive relationship, expectation / withdrawal relationship, mutual avoidance relationship) and sexual quality with marital infidelity of women were tested and then by multiple regression, the share of each of these variables were investigated in the prediction of marital infidelity.

Results

The results of demographic data showed that the subjects in this study had an age range of 25 to 50 with a mean and standard deviation of 35.90 (4.12) years old. Moreover, these people had different levels of education, with the highest level of diploma education (39.30%). The descriptive findings of the research (mean and standard deviation) are discussed below.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that in the sample group, the mean and standard deviation of the constructive component is 64.11 (95.63), the mutual avoidance component is 75.14 (29.77), the expected / withdrawal component is 84.8 (14.41), the quality of sexual relationship is 20.13 (13.46) and marital conflict is 44.7 (50.22).

Before providing the results of inferential test analysis, parametric tests were used. Accordingly, the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that the default distribution of data samples was established (P-value < 0.05). Furthermore, homogeneity of variance assumption was measured by Levin's test. The results of this study indicated that the value of significance was insignificant; indicating that homogeneity of variances was observed (P-value < 0.05). The inferential tables are presented for more information. In order to investigate the relationship between family communication patterns (mutual constructive relationship, expectation / withdrawal relationship, mutual avoidance relationship) and the quality of sexual relationships with marital infidelity, the analysis was performed in the form of Pearson correlation matrix, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

According to Pearson correlation matrix coefficients in Table 2, There is a significant relationship among mutual constructive components (-0.47), mutual avoidance (0.49) and expectation / withdrawal (0.54) and sexual quality (-53.5) with infidelity at the error level of 0.01. After verifying the correlation between the components, the regression tables are examined to determine the contribution of each of the predictor variables (mutual constructor, mutual avoidance, expectation / withdrawal and the sexual quality) in the prediction of the criterion variable (marital infidelity).

Based on the results of the above table, the F value of marital infidelity of women variables is significant. Therefore, predictive variables (family communication patterns: mutual constructive, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality can provide meaningful prediction of the criterion variable (marital infidelity). The model explanation coefficient also shows that the predictive variables (family communication patterns: mutual constructors, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality have been able to explain 50% of the changes in the component of marital infidelity in women.

First of all it is necessary to note that the study of the coherence of the predictive variables by the index of tolerance indicated that 92% of the variance of the constructive component by other dimensions of family communication patterns and the sexual quality, 93% of the variance of the mutual avoidance component by other dimensions of Family communication patterns and sexual

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quality, 95% of the variance of withdrawal component by other aspects of family communication patterns and the sexual quality and 88% of the sexual quality variance by dimensions of family communication patterns are not labeled, and this is a sign of a low correlation of predictive variables with each other that provides grounds for using Regression analysis.

In the marital infidelity variable, the regression coefficients of all four predictive variables (family communication patterns: mutual constructive, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality is significant. In this way, an increase unit in the constructive component with the condition of assuming the components of mutual avoidance, expectation / withdrawal and the sexual quality constant, showed a decrease in an average of 0.61 standard deviations, as well as an increase in the avoidance component with the condition of assuming the components of mutual constructive, expectation / withdrawal. The sexual quality constant showed the average increases of 0.36 standard deviations and an increase unit in the expectation / withdrawal component with the condition of assuming the components of mutual avoidance, mutual constructive and the sexual quality constant, showed an increase in an average of 0.66 standard deviations and eventually one increase in the component of the quality of the relationship of the sex with the condition of constant assumption of the components of family communication patterns showed a decrease of 62% standard deviation in the proportion of marital infidelity.

Table 1. Descriptive findings of family communication patterns, sexual relationship quality and marital infidelity

Variables	No.	Mean	SD	Minimum score	Maximum score
Mutual constructor	50	63.95	11.64	33	88
Mutual avoidance	50	70.29	14.75	41	90
Expectation/withdrawal	50	51.14	8.84	30	72
Quality of sexual relationship	50	46.68	13.20	16	60
Infidelity	50	50.22	7.44	19	67

Table 2. Pearson correlation matrix to examine the relationship between family communication patterns and attitudes toward marital infidelity.

Variables		Mutual constructor	Mutual avoidance	Expectation/ withdrawal	Sexual relationship quality
Mutual constructor	correlationn Significant	1			
Mutual avoidance	correlation Significant	**-0.39 0.001	1		
Expectation/withdrawal	correlation Significant	**-0.41 0.0001	**0.44 0.0001	1	
Quality of sexual relationship	correlation Significant	**0.48 0.0001	**-0.45 0.000	**-0.46 0.0001	1
Marital Infidelity	correlation Significant	**-0.47 0.0001	**0.49 0.0001	**0.54 0.0001	**-0.53 0.0001

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Table 3. Summary of variance analysis table of marital infidelity scores regression model based on family communication patterns (mutual constructor, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality

Component of criterion	Source of variation	Total squared	Degree of freedom	Frequency	F Value	Significance level	Multiple coefficient of correlation	Coefficient of explanation
Marital infidelity	Regression	2136.60	2	1069.30	46.25	0.0001	0.71	0.50
		1040.4	45	23.12				
	Total	3177	49					

Table 4. Regression coefficients of women marital infidelity scores based on family communication patterns (mutual constructivist, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and quality of sexual relationship

Criterion variable	Predictive variable	B	(Std. Error)	(β)	value t	P-value level	Linear Tolerance index
Marital infidelity	Mutual constructive	-0.29	0.07	-0.61	-4.14	0.0001	0.92
	Mutual avoidance	1.52	0.31	0.36	4.03	0.0001	0.93
	withdrawl	0.94	0.12	0.66	7.83	0.0001	0.95
	Quality of sexual relationship	-0.29	0.05	-0.62	-0.62	0.0001	0.88

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of family communication patterns and the sexual quality in predicting marital infidelity in Isfahan women. The results of data analysis showed that family communication patterns (mutual constructive components, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and the sexual quality with marital infidelity have a significant relationship (P-value < 0.001). Furthermore, the results of regression analysis showed that family communication patterns (mutual constructivist, mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) and sexual quality significantly predict marital infidelity in women (P-value <0.001).

Concerning the significant relationship between family communication patterns and marital infidelity, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Daryabar (2014), Gholamzadeh et al. (2009), and Thanaguee et al. (2011)[22-24] They showed that mutual constructive communication model improves marital satisfaction, family functioning, reduction of divorce and reduction of differences and marital conflicts, and there are negative relationships between expectation / withdrawal patterns and mutual avoidance in marital life which can increase the likelihood of infidelity and coldness in life.

In explaining this finding, it can be said that one of the most important factors affecting the survival and growth and quality of the family is healthy relationships based on consistency and understanding between family members, especially husband and wife (mutual constructive communication pattern). In this regard, many studies have shown that marital couples' relationships are a strong predictor of the quality of marital life.[23, 25] The importance of communication between couples is so much in which those who have marital disagreements have inadequate communication skills and are involved in untapped communication patterns.[26] It can be said that communicative problems are the most common and destructive problems in failed and deviated marriages because ineffective communication patterns make important life issues unresolved

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which this source is a repeated conflict among the couples. The advent of this frustration and disagreement in life increases the likelihood of committing infidelity and exaggerated relationships.

Researchers in field of couple also believe that the existence of communication deficits (a pattern of mutual avoidance and expectation / withdrawal) leads to a disturbance of relationship, often rushing and criticizing couples when discussing problems and they want to change each other.[27] The turbulent couples also do not listen to each other when they talk about problems; they refrain from discussing problems, and respond to negative behaviors of their spouse. As a result, it causes loss of satisfaction and undesirable effects on the functioning of couples' relationships. While raising the tension in the family, it is a stimulus for the exaggerating relationships and the departure of one of the couples or both seeking a third person who can meet with them and with their needs. Therefore, the positive prediction of marital infidelity is justified by mutual avoidance patterns and expectation / withdrawal.

Furthermore, in the area of meaningful relationship of sexual quality with marital infidelity, the results of this study are consistent with the findings of Nabovati and Shamsi (2014), Hamidi et al. (2014), Habibi Askarabad and Hajiheydari (2015) and Shirdel. (2006)[28-31] Nobovati and Shamsi (2014) indicated that infidelity can indicate the lack of sexual satisfaction that is searched elsewhere or in third parties.[28] Hamidi et al. (2014) believes unfavorable sexual relationship effective in marital infidelity.[29] Habibi Askarabad and Hajiheydari (2015), consider the incorrect relationships of spouses as one of the main causes of infidelity in the views of women and men.[30] The findings of Shirdel (2006) indicated that the factors of sexual dissatisfaction in marital relationships, emotional dissatisfaction in marital relationships, and the sense of revenge against spouses' insufficiency and diversity, are effective in the tendency of married women and married men to illegitimate sexual relationships.[31]

In justifying this finding, it can be said that a number of scholars support this idea that the participation in extra -marital relationships is due to the falsity of some of the issues in their initial sexual relations; for example, dissatisfaction and low satisfaction with sexual intercourse increase the tendency to engage in extra-marital relationships.[2] Studies have shown that lack of adequate security and sexual health has resulted in serious consequences such as blinded anger, excessive anger, depression, use of drugs, physical and mental disability for parental and child care, inability and lack of skill to have a healthy and emotional relationship, inability to flourish in the society and childbirth and even death.[32] This can lead to treason and tendency to another person. In addition, sexual and emotional deficiencies or lack of sexual attractiveness in spouses are the causes of infidelity. The low times or low quality of sexual relationships in marital relationships and the lack of similarity and understanding in marriage are the underlying causes of sexual relations outside marriage; perhaps the involvement of individuals in this regard is a means to restore balance.

People who have a high degree of satisfaction with their spouses' sexual relationship have a significantly better quality of life than those who are not satisfied. Therefore, sex is one of the most important causes of happiness or lack of happiness in marital life, which can prevent frustration and exaggerated relationships. Because this relationship is not persuasive, it leads to a sense of deprivation, failure, and lack of safety (mental health risk), and as a result leads to family disruption and extra-marital relationships and if persuasive it makes sense of intimacy and empathy between couples.[33] It is therefore justifiable to state that the desirable sexual quality and sexual satisfaction contributes to the continuity and reliance of sex between the husband and wife, and prevents couples from

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fulfilling the sexual and even emotional needs with the third person.

The present study was conducted with limited constraints such as limited research results about the statistical population and specific geographical area (married women in Isfahan), lack of control of effective variables such as economic, social and cultural status of married women, non-random sampling, non-causation of variables (due to the correlation research method).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, which indicates the significant role of family communication patterns and sexuality in the prediction of marital infidelity, it is recommended that family relationship patterns and couples' sexual quality can be taken into account in order to prevent the occurrence of marital infidelity. Furthermore, the necessary training in this area should be provided to couples.

Conflicts of Interest

In this study, did not report any potential conflicts of interest with the authors.

Acknowledgments

This article is from a master thesis (23820705951064). The researcher appreciates all women participating in the study and Isfahan women's garden authorities.

Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization, Sh.K. and M.A.; Methodology, M.A.; Formal Analysis, M.A., Investigation, Sh.K.; Data Curation, Sh.K. and M.A., Writing – Original Draft, Sh.K. and M.A.; Writing – Review and Editing, Sh.K.; Resources, Sh.K. and M.A.; Supervision, Sh.K.

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