

Relationship between Emotional Expression and Marital Maladjustment: The Mediating Role of Empathy among Divorce Applicants

Zahra Nazemi¹, Mojgan Sepahmansoor², Parvaneh Mohammadkhani³ & Sadegh Taghilu⁴

1. PhD. student, Psychology Department, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Center Branch, Tehran

2. Department of psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Center Branch, Tehran,
s3.nazemi@yahoo.com

3. Prof, Psychology Department, Rehabilitation and welfare university, Tehran

4. Assistant prof. Psychology Department, Islamic Azad University, Astara Branch, Rasht

Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate causal explanation of the relationship between emotional expression and marital maladjustment based on the mediating role of empathy among divorce stage couples. This research conducted through a descriptive method and the study design was correlation in the form of path analysis. The statistical population consisted all couples applied for divorce (aged 30-50) who referred to the counseling centers of the Judiciary in Tehran during 2020-2021. The sample size determined 396 cases and selected through convenience sampling method. In order to collect the information, standard questionnaires of marital maladjustment, couple empathy, and emotional expression were used. Data's analyzed in the SPSS 21 and AMOS 24 software's. Data analysis showed the model fit of emotional expression relationship with marital maladjustment by mediated role of couple's empathy. The model explained about 34% of the variance of marital maladjustment in divorce applicants. Based on these findings, it can be said that the relationship between marital maladjustment and emotional expression is not a direct relationship and factors such as marital empathy can strengthen or weaken this relationship, so in trainings related to emotional expression, it is suggested to consider these variables.

Keywords: Couple Empathy, Divorce Applicants, Emotional Expression, Marital Maladjustment

Introduction

Divorce is prevalent and increasing social phenomenon in Iran today. Although divorce is associated with variation of factors, personal and psychological causes play a significant role in the broken relationships (Nazari, Rasouli, Davarniya, Hosseini, & Babaei Gharmkhani, 2015). According to the statistics of the Civil Registration Organization, in the first six months of 2015, more than 790 thousand couples separated (Saadati, Rostami, & Darbani, 2017). Marital maladjustment is one of the broadest concepts and affects aspects of family life (Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014). Marital adjustment is an adaptive behavior in which couples respond to each other's need therefore identifying the influential factors and determining the impact of these variables on marital adjustment is necessity of today's research (Chaudhari & Patel, 2009; Davoodi, Etemadi, Bahrami, & Shahsiah, 2012).

Low marital adjustment is potentially leads to higher stress, which in the long run causes physical and psychological symptoms in couples and has an adverse effect on many aspects of their individual and social life (Holland, Lee, Marshak, & Martin, 2016). Emotional expression is one of the factors affecting the level of marital adjustment. Adjustment and marital satisfaction are constantly associated with emotional expression in the family (Maher & Cordova, 2019). The ability to recognize, share and express emotions has a significant role in maintaining interpersonal relationships, including marital relationships and marital satisfaction (Abidin, Ismail, Hassan, & Sudan, 2018). One of the constant problems of couples is the inability to develop intimacy and share emotions, which can be changed by increasing emotional awareness, emotional symbolism, awareness of agency in experience and changing processing (Najafi et al., 2015). Where positive - negative emotions transmitted properly and consequently among couples marital adjustment increases. The presence of negative emotions decrease the relationship quality (Soleimani & Habibi, 2015). This emotional skill directly and indirectly, with the mediating role of intimacy and empathy, affects marital satisfaction and adjustment (Karimi & Esmaeili, 2020). Research has shown the effect and relationship between positive -negative emotions and marital quality consequently with marital adjustment (Shahsiah, Bahrami, Mohebi, & Tabarraei, 2012). Studies have shown that marital relationship dimensions associated with high positive emotional expression, so that people who use emotional expression are more likely to effectively resolve (Lomoriello, Maffei, Brigadoi, & Sessa, 2021; Pietrzak, Hauke, & Lohr, 2016).

Empathy is a main component of quality of the interpersonal communication (Bartek & Scholar, 2019). Empathy is an ability that harmonizes one with the feelings and thoughts of others in the social world others (Mohammadreza, 2012) . The empathy expressed towards the spouse specifically refers to marital empathy (couple empathy) which is the activity of couples to understand and share each other's feelings (Levesque, Lafontaine, Caron, Flesch, & Bjornson, 2014)

The way of expressing emotions and empathy has an effect on the occurrence of marital conflicts (Papp, Kouros, & Cummings, 2010). The evidence show empathy negatively related to depression as a most prevalent negative emotion (Jütten, Mark, & Sitskoorn, 2019). Emotional suppress leads to a decrease in marital empathy (Franco et al., 2020) and commitment (McDonald, Olson, Lanning, Goddard, & Marshall, 2018). The study of Gavar and Baharduj (2015) suggests high levels of empathy in couples positively related to their marital satisfaction and adjustment (Gaur & Bhardwaj, 2015). Lack of empathy leads to negative feelings such as misunderstood, insignificant, and neglected by partner (Amani & Khosroshahi, 2020). Levesque et al. (2014) state that a high level of empathy between couples significantly predicts the improvement of coping and coping skills thus increases satisfaction in their relationships (Levesque et al., 2014). Marital adjustment is associated with empathy and emotional expression such as: expressing positive/negative emotion and intimacy (Schmidt & Gelhert, 2017).

Considering the emotion-focused approach and literatures, it can be concluded that emotional expression and empathy of couples are effective on marital adjustment. Previous studies have examined the effect of emotional proficiency, nausea, and emotional regulation and emotional expression (Ahmadi Ardakani & Fatemi Oghada, 2019; Razmjouyi, Refahi, & Sohrabi, 2017); Couples' empathy, empathy skills is associated with conflict (Kim, Kang, Chung, & Park, 2013), intimacy and the quality of marital relationship separately. In this study, the trend and direction of these effects on marital maladjustment in couples divorce applicant in Iranian culture investigated and the direct and indirect relationship of variables are determined. The main question of the study was whether the prediction of emotional expression on marital maladjustment mediated by the empathy of couples has a good fit.

Methods

This research conducted through a descriptive method with correlation of path analysis design. The statistical population consisted of all men and women applied for divorce (aged 30-50) who referred to the counseling centers of the Judiciary in Tehran during 2020-2021. The sample size determined 396 cases according Klein method 20cases per observed variable (Klein, 2010) and select by convenience sampling method. The instruments used were Spanier Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (DAS), Couples Empathy Questionnaire (MES) of Julif & Farrington (2004) and Emotional Expression Questionnaire (EEQ) of King & Emmons (1990).

Spanier Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (DAS): used to assess marital adjustment. This scale developed by Graham B. Spanier in 1976 and widely used in research on couples. The scale has 32 questions. The scale provides three subscales: Marital Satisfaction: 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31, 32; mutual agreement: 24, 25, 26, 27, 28; mutual agreement: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15; Expressions of love: 4, 6, 29, 30. Scoring is based on the Likert scale. Higher scores indicate a better adjustment. Scores above 110 indicate higher compatibility and lower scores indicate

lower compatibility. Factor analysis confirmed four dimensions and validity have been tested with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.96 (Spanier, 1976). In Iran, Mollazadeh tested the validity of the scale with retest method ($r=0.86$) and Cronbach's alpha (0.89) (Kazemian, Esmaeily, & Ezzatollah, 2012). In this study confirmatory factor analysis confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis.

Couples Empathy Questionnaire (MES): developed by Julif and Farrington (2004) consists 20 items. The items scores in 5 likert options, 7 items of this scale are scored reversely. The minimum and maximum scores are 20 to 100, and a low score indicates lower empathy. Subscales included emotional empathy 11 questions (1-2-4-5-7-8-11-13-15-17-18) and the cognitive sub-scale consists of 9 questions (3-6-9-10-12-14-16-19-20). The Basic Empathy Questionnaire is an attitude measurement tool that is a 5-point Likert scale with a range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and questions (1-6-7-8-13-18-19) in reverse Scored. This tool includes two factors: cognitive empathy and emotional empathy (33). Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the 2-factor model, emotional empathy was 0.84 and cognitive empathy factor was 0.71. Cronbach's alpha level of 0.90 and convergent validity coefficient of this instrument with Baston empathy questionnaire were reported $r=0.68$. Carré et al., (2013) obtained Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the 2-factor model of cognitive empathy as 0.71 - 0.84. They used structural validity to determine the validity of the questionnaire. Results showed the validity of high structures (Carré, Stefaniak, D'ambrosio, Bensalah, & Besche-Richard, 2013). In this study, in order to evaluate the factor structure of the couple empathy questionnaire, confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS software and maximum likelihood estimation (ML) used. The results showed that the measurement model of the couple empathy questionnaire has an acceptable fit with the collected data.

Emotional Expression Questionnaire: developed by King and Amons in 1990 to assess the emotional expression. Questionnaire has 16 items and three subscales. Items 1-7 are related to the positive emotion expression (questions 1–7), intimacy expression (questions 8–12), and negative emotion expression (questions 13-16). Items scored in 0 (completely real) and 4 (completely opposite) in the Likert spectrum. King and Emmons (1990) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire of 0.70. Validity achieved a significant convergence between the Emotional Expression Questionnaire, the Multidimensional Personality Questionnaire, and the Positive Emotion Scale. Hassani showed Cronbach alpha for subscales of positive emotion expression, intimacy expression, negative emotion expression and total score respectively 0.76, 0.74, 0.82, 0.78 (Hasani, 2015). In this study, the factor structure of the emotion expression questionnaire examined by confirmatory factor analysis. The fitness indicators of the model showed the emotion expression questionnaire and the three factors of the questionnaire confirmed

Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of data. In inferential statistics in SPSS 21 and AMOS software calculated through Pearson correlation and structural equations method.

Results

In this study, participants included 128 males and 268 females mean age and marriage duration were 37.28 ± 6.18 and 5.57 ± 3.65 , respectively.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of research participants

| Demographic variables | frequency | percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| | Gender | |
| Female | 319 | 54.8 |
| Male | 263 | 45.2 |
| Total | 582 | 100 |

The table (1) shows 54.8 percent of participants were female and rest male (45.2%)

Table2. Pearson correlation between variables

| variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1.emotion express-positive | - | | | | | | | | |
| 2.emotion express-negative | -0.28* | - | | | | | | | |
| 3.emotion express-intimacy | 0.63* | -0.29* | - | | | | | | |
| 4.emphaty-cognitive | 0.50* | -0.29* | 0.61* | - | | | | | |
| 5.emphaty-emotional | 0.48* | -0.23* | 0.49* | 0.61* | - | | | | |
| 6.adjustment- marital satisfaction | 0.33* | -0.19* | 0.38* | 0.47* | 0.25* | - | | | |
| 7.adjustment- mutual agreement | 0.32* | -0.15* | 0.47* | 0.40* | 0.22* | 0.49* | - | | |
| 8-adjustment- mutual correlation | 0.24* | -0.21* | 0.36* | 0.36* | 0.18* | 0.55* | 0.62* | - | |
| 9-asjstment-affection express | 0.20* | -0.04 | 0.30* | 0.25* | 0.24* | 0.45* | 0.48* | 0.36* | - |
| Mean | 21.80 | 9.78 | 18.40 | 32.16 | 34.63 | 30.07 | 27.32 | 10.06 | 12.81 |
| SD | 5.76 | 2.82 | 4.50 | 7.41 | 6.92 | 5.86 | 6.01 | 2.64 | 3.07 |

Table 2 shows that positive emotion expression and intimacy expression are positively correlated with the four components of marital adjustment at a significance level of 0.01. Expressing intimacy in marital adjustment negatively correlated with negative expression of emotion at a significant level of 0.01. In addition, both components of the couple's empathy positively correlated with the components of marital adjustment at a significant level of 0.01.

In this study, in order to evaluate the normality of the distribution of univariate data, the kurtosis and skewness of the variables investigated, the values of inflation variance (VIF) and the tolerance coefficient were investigated (Table3). Table (3) shows that the kurtosis and skewness values are in the range of $2\pm$. This indicates that the data distribution is normal. The values of the tolerance coefficient of all predictor variables

are greater than 0.1 and the values of the VIF are less than 10. Therefore, the assumption of alignment established among the data of the present study. It should be noted that the analysis of information related to the "Mahalanobis distance" and the evaluation of the scatter plot of standardized variances of errors showed that the assumptions of normal distribution of multivariate data and homogeneity of variances are also established among the data.

Table 3. Assumptions of alignment (values of inflation variance and normality)

| Variable | Normality | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------------------|------|
| | Kurtosis | Skewness | Tolerance coefficient | VIF |
| 1.emotion express-positive | 0.69 | -0.28 | 0.51 | 1.95 |
| 2.emotion express-negative | 0.70 | -0.62 | 0.70 | 1.42 |
| 3.emotion express-intimacy | -0.45 | 0.05 | 0.42 | 2.36 |
| 4.emphaty-cognitive | -0.73 | -0.23 | 0.46 | 2.16 |
| 5.emphaty-emotional | -0.52 | -1.21 | 0.54 | 1.83 |
| 6.adjustment- marital satisfaction | 0.33 | 0.18 | - | - |
| 7.adjustment- mutual agreement | 0.53 | 0.19 | - | - |
| 8.adjustment- mutual correlation | -0.12 | -0.47 | - | - |
| 9-asjustment-affection express | -0.38 | -0.65 | - | - |

After ensuring that the assumptions met, the measurement model was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis method using version 24 of AMOS software and maximum likelihood estimation method. It should be noted that in the research measurement model, assumed that the latent variable of couple empathy is measured by indicators of cognitive empathy and emotional empathy and the latent variable of marital maladjustment is measured by indicators of marital satisfaction, mutual agreement, mutual solidarity and expression of affection.

Table 4. fitness of modelindexes

| Indexes | Initial model | Edited model |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| χ^2 | 39.85 | 23.28 |
| Df | 8 | 8 |
| df ² / χ^2 | 4.98 | 3.32 |
| GFI | 0.97 | 0.98 |
| AGFI | 0.92 | 0.94 |
| CFI | 0.96 | 0.98 |
| RMSEA | 0.100 | 0.077 |

Table 4 shows that, expect to RMSEA fit index and $\chi^2=3.32$, other fit indices support the acceptable fit of the initial measurement model with the aggregated data (df/ $\chi^2=4.98$, CFI=0.960, GFI=0.970, AGFI=0.920 and RMSEA=0.100). by creating covariance between the errors of two indicators of two-way agreement and marital satisfaction, the correction measurement model and better fit indices were obtained (df/ $\chi^2=3.32$,

CFI=0.980, GFI=0.981, AGFI=0.94 and 077.0=RMSEA=0.077). Table 4 shows the standard and non-standard factor loads for markers in the measurement model.

Table 5. Parameters of research measurement model in confirmatory factor analysis

| Indicator | B | B | SE | t |
|-----------------------------|------|------|-------|--------|
| Empathy-emotional | 1 | 0.58 | | |
| Empathy-cognitive | 1.23 | 0.93 | 0.18 | 6.82* |
| Adjustment-mutual agreement | 1 | 0.72 | | |
| Adjustment-mutual solitary | 1.87 | 0.82 | 0.15 | 12.49* |
| Adjustment-affect express | 0.45 | 0.58 | 0.041 | 11.15* |
| Adjustment-satisfaction | 1.45 | 0.78 | 0.12 | 11.74* |

Table 5 shows that the smallest factor load belongs to the emotional empathy ($\beta=0.580$) and the largest factor load belongs to the cognitive empathy ($\beta=0.932$). Thus, due to the fact that the factor loads of all indicators were higher than 0.32, so all of them had the necessary power to measure the latent variables of the present study.

The structural model was analyzed after obtaining acceptable fit indices for the measurement model. In the structural model, it was assumed that the dimensions of emotional expression, both directly and through the mediation of the couple's empathy, predict marital adjustment in divorce applicants. The analysis model and the resulting fit indices showed that the structural model has an acceptable fit with the collected data ($df/\chi^2=3.70$, CFI=0.92, GFI=0.86, AGFI=0.934 and RMSEA=0.083) Based on this, it was concluded that the structural model of the present study has an acceptable fit.

Table 6. Path coefficients in the structural model

| Path coefficients | B | SE | B | sig |
|---|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Couple empathy → marital adjustment | 0.13 | 0.033 | 0.37 | 0.001 |
| Intimacy express → Couple empathy | 0.87 | 0.11 | 0.51 | 0.001 |
| positive express → Couple empathy | 0.29 | 0.09 | 0.23 | 0.001 |
| negative express → Couple empathy | -0.31 | 0.13 | -0.11 | 0.021 |
| direct Intimacy express → marital adjustment | 0.14 | 0.057 | 0.24 | 0.007 |
| Direct positive express → marital adjustment | 0.002 | 0.030 | 0.005 | 0.87 |
| Direct negative express → marital adjustment | -0.018 | 0.049 | -0.014 | 0.77 |
| indirect Intimacy express → marital adjustment | 0.11 | 0.036 | 0.19 | 0.001 |
| indirect positive express → marital adjustment | 0.039 | 0.013 | 0.087 | 0.001 |
| indirect negative express → marital adjustment | -0.042 | 0.020 | -0.044 | 0.021 |
| total effect Intimacy express → marital adjustment | 0.26 | 0.044 | 0.44 | 0.001 |
| total effect Direct positive express → marital adjustment | 0.041 | 0.029 | 0.092 | 0.15 |
| total effect Direct negative express → marital adjustment | -0.056 | 0.05 | -0.058 | 0.26 |

Table 6 shows that the path coefficient between marital empathy, expressing intimacy and positive express with marital adjustment was positive ($p<0.01$). There was indirect

path coefficient between negative emotion expression and marital adjustment ($p < 0.05$, $\beta = -0.04$). Overall, the results of the present study showed that couples' empathy mediates the relationship between expressing intimacy and expressing positive emotion with marital adjustment in a positive way and the relationship between expressing negative emotion and marital adjustment was negative. Figure 1 shows the structural model of the research.

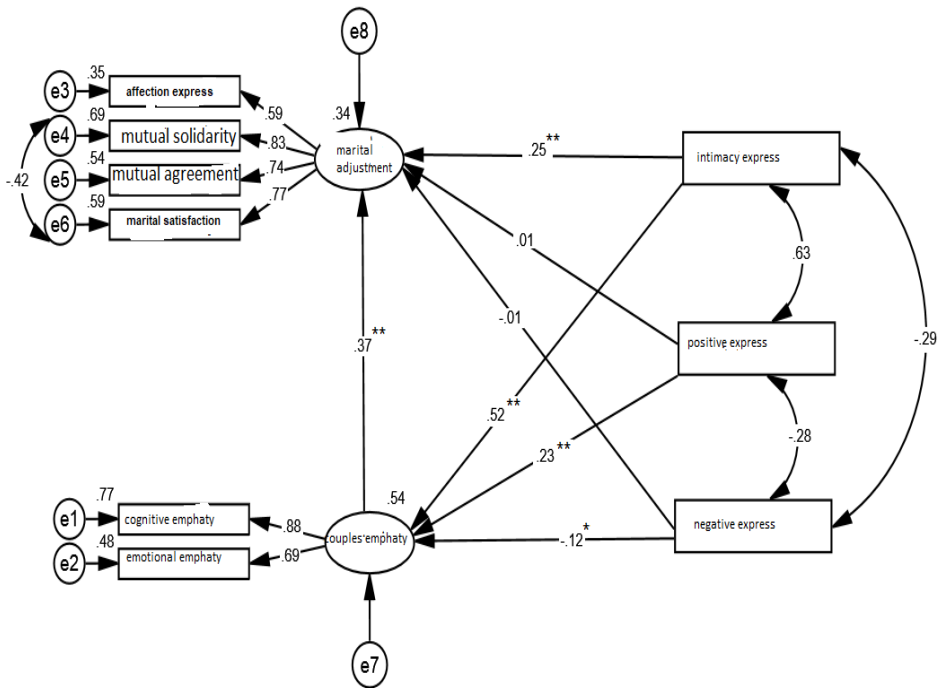


Figure 1. the final model of study

The above figure [1] shows that the sum of the squares of multiple correlations for the variable of marital adjustment is equal to 0.34. This finding indicates dimensions of emotional expression and empathy of couples explain a total of 34% of the variance of marital adjustment in divorce applicants.

Discussion

Findings of the present study showed that the model of relationship emotional expression and marital maladjustment mediated by the empathy of couples. This model explains about 34% of the variance of marital maladjustment of divorce applicants. The findings of this study are consistent with the studies of Yedirir & Hamarta (2015); Pietrzak et al., (2016); Karimi & Esmaeili (2020); Froyen, Skibbe, Bowles, Blow & Gerde, (2013).

This finding is explainable as emotions interaction has a significant role in maintaining interpersonal relationships, including marital relationships and marital satisfaction (Crawley & Grant, 2005; Froyen et al., 2013) and expressing emotion, which is opposed to the suppression of emotion (Perry & Hayaki, 2014). One of the most common problems among couples are the inability to share emotions, so negative emotions affect the type of relationship and its quality. Proper expression of negative and positive emotions more likely leads to the marital maladjustment and improper expression of emotions reduces marital adjustment (Haris & Kumar, 2018). Expression of emotions with high empathy leads to increased marital adjustment (Chung, 2014).

Marital adjustment is constantly associated with emotional expression between spouses (Froyen et al., 2013). Recognizing, sharing, and expressing emotions has a significant role in maintaining interpersonal relationships such as marital relationships and increasing marital adjustment (Pietrzak et al., 2016). One of the problems between couples is the inability to share emotions (Najafi et al., 2015). The presence of negative emotions affects the type of relationship and its quality. If the expression and expression of emotions and feelings (positive and negative) done properly, then marital adjustment is increased (Gaur & Bhardwaj, 2015). On the other hand, since empathy helps to maintain and promote intimate and satisfying relationship between couples over time, and lack of empathy causes to misunderstand and feeling neglected by partner. This adversely affects the relationship and the level of marital satisfaction (Pietrzak et al., 2016).

Expressing emotion works through emotional discharge function (Perry & Hayaki, 2014). In the meantime, the empathy expressed towards the spouse leads to understanding and sharing their feelings. This gives them a sense that they understood and experience a greater sense of intimacy, enjoy being together more, and ultimately increase their satisfaction with their lives. Proper expression of emotions along with appropriate and high empathy leads to increased marital adjustment and inappropriate emotional expression and low empathy reduces marital adjustment (Holland et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The present study shows the importance of mediating variables in the study of interpersonal relationships: According to the findings of this study, the relationship between emotional expression and marital adjustment is not a direct relationship and factors such as couple empathy can contribute to intensifying or weakening this relationship. The findings of this study, in addition to showing the direct and indirect paths between the variables of emotional expression with marital adjustment and empathy, provide new information in the field of these relationships, based on which interventions of emotion tools based on promoting intimacy designed and improved. Therefore, it suggested that this variable be considered in relation to emotional expression. This study was associated with limitations, including the fact that the questionnaires were difficult and time consuming due to the number of questions and the number of subjects in the epidemic of covid-19. Due to the large difference in the sample size of men and women, it was not possible to compare the model in the two sex groups.

According to the explained variance, it is necessary to use other variables. It suggested that other variables be added to this model and examined.

Disclosure Statements

The authors declared no conflict of interest. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ORCID

Zahra Nazemi: 0000-0002-0575-4018

References

- Abidin, R.Z., Ismail, K., Hassan, S.S.S., & Sudan, S.A. (2018). Marital Satisfaction, Communication and Coping Strategy Among Malaysian Married Couples: Factors Prediction and Model Testing. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 7(3.21), 408-414.
- Ahmadi Ardakani, Z., & Fatemi Oghada, N. (2019). Examining the model of relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction: The mediating roles of forgiveness and empathy. *medical journal of mashhad university of medical sciences*, 62 (December), 15-25.
- Amani, R., & Khosroshahi, A.S. (2020). The structural model of marital quality based on secure attachment style through the mediating role of self-compassion, resilience, and perspective-taking. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 49(1), 16-36.
- Bartek, M.E., & Scholar, M. (2019). Marital Instability and Spousal Empathy Mediate Childhood Parental Affection Predicting Adulthood Depression. *The Penn State McNair Journal*, 1.
- Carré, A., Stefaniak, N., D'ambrosio, F., Bensalah, L., & Besche-Richard, C. (2013). The Basic Empathy Scale in Adults (BES-A): Factor structure of a revised form. *Psychological assessment*, 25(3), 679.
- Chaudhari, N., & Patel, H. (2009). A study about marital adjustment among female of urban & rural mehsana (Gujarat). *Journal of personality & clinical studies*, 1(2), 70-75.
- Chung, M.S. (2014). Pathways between attachment and marital satisfaction: The mediating roles of rumination, empathy, and forgiveness. *Personality and Individual differences*, 70, 246-251.
- Crawley, J., & Grant, J. (2005). Emotionally focused therapy for couples and attachment theory. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 26(2), 82-89.
- Davoodi, Z., Etemadi, O., Bahrami, F., & Shahsiah, M. (2012). The effect of brief solution-focused couple therapy approach on couples' marital adjustment in men and women prone to divorce in 2010-2011 in Isfahan. *Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health*, 14(55), 9-190.
- Franco, P., Tesio, V., Bertholet, J., Gasnier, A., Del Portillo, E.G., Spalek, M., . . . Thorwarth, D. (2020). Professional quality of life and burnout amongst radiation

- oncologists: the impact of alexithymia and empathy. *Radiotherapy and Oncology*, 147, 162-168.
- Froyen, L.C., Skibbe, L.E., Bowles, R.P., Blow, A.J., & Gerde, H.K. (2013). Marital satisfaction, family emotional expressiveness, home learning environments, and children's emergent literacy. *Journal of marriage and family*, 75(1), 42-55.
- Gaur, P., & Bhardwaj, A.B. (2015). Relationship between empathy, forgiveness and marital adjustment in couple. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(1), 145-151.
- Haris, F., & Kumar, A. (2018). Marital satisfaction and communication skills among married couples. *Indian journal of social research*, 59(1), 35-44.
- Hasani, J. (2015). The relationship between emotional expression styles and Type D personality. *Medical Sciences*, 17, 14-24.
- Holland, K.J., Lee, J.W., Marshak, H.H., & Martin, L.R. (2016). Spiritual intimacy, marital intimacy, and physical/psychological well-being: Spiritual meaning as a mediator. *Psychology of religion and spirituality*, 8(3), 218.
- Jütten, L.H., Mark, R.E., & Sitskoorn, M.M. (2019). Empathy in informal dementia caregivers and its relationship with depression, anxiety, and burden. *International journal of clinical and health psychology*, 19(1), 12-21.
- Karimi, S., & Esmaeili, M. (2020). The relationship between emotion regulation and resilience strategies with marital adjustment in female teachers.
- Kazemian, S., Esmaeily, M., & Ezzatollah, F. (2012). Evaluation of the effectiveness of stress coping skills training based on therapeutic common factors on marital adjustment and conflict resolution styles in infertile women. *Life Science Journal*, 9(4), 3225-3229.
- Kim, S.Y., Kang, H.W., Chung, Y.C., & Park, S. (2013). Empirical application of empathy enhancing program based on movement concept for married couples in conflict. *Journal of exercise rehabilitation*, 9(4), 426.
- Levesque, C., Lafontaine, M.F., Caron, A., Flesch, J. L., & Bjornson, S. (2014). Dyadic empathy, dyadic coping, and relationship satisfaction: A dyadic model. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 10(1), 118–134-118–134.
- Lomoriello, A.S., Maffei, A., Brigadoi, S., & Sessa, P. (2021). Altering sensorimotor simulation impacts early stages of facial expression processing depending on individual differences in alexithymic traits. *Brain and Cognition*, 148, 105678.
- Maher, E.L., & Cordova, J.V. (2019). Evaluating equanimity: Mindfulness, intimate safety, and relationship satisfaction among meditators. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 8(2), 77.
- McDonald, J.E., Olson, J.R., Lanning, A.H., Goddard, H.W., & Marshall, J.P. (2018). Effects of religiosity, forgiveness, and spousal empathy on marital adjustment. *Marriage & family review*, 54(4), 393-416.
- Mohammadreza, K. (2012). Relationship of forgiveness and empathy among medical and nursing students. *Behavioural Sciences*, 1, 20-30.
- Najafi, M., Soleimani, A., Ahmadi, K., Javidi, N., Hoseni, E., & Pirjavid, F. (2015). The study of the effectiveness of couple emotionally focused therapy (EFT) on increasing marital adjustment and improving the physical and psychological health of the

- infertile couples. *The Iranian Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Infertility*, 17(133), 8-21.
- Nazari, A., Rasouli, M., Davarniya, R., Hosseini, A., & Babaei Gharmkhani, M. (2015). Effectiveness of solution-focused brief therapy (SFBT) on couple burnout and divorce tendency in married women. *Iranian Journal of Psychiatric Nursing*, 3(3), 41-52.
- Papp, L. M., Kouros, C. D., & Cummings, E. M. (2010). Emotions in marital conflict interactions: Empathic accuracy, assumed similarity, and the moderating context of depressive symptoms. *Journal of social and personal relationships*, 27(3), 367-387.
- Perry, R. M., & Hayaki, J. (2014). Gender differences in the role of alexithymia and emotional expressivity in disordered eating. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 71, 60-65.
- Pietrzak, T., Hauke, G., & Lohr, C. (2016). Connecting Couples Intervention: Improving couples' empathy and emotional regulation using embodied empathy mechanisms. *European psychotherapy*, 13, 66-98.
- Razmjouyi, M., Refahi, Z., & Sohrabi, N. (2017). Investigation of the mediating role of self-assertiveness in the relationship between cognitive emotion regulation and marital adjustment.
- Robles, T. F., Slatcher, R. B., Trombello, J. M., & McGinn, M. M. (2014). Marital quality and health: a meta-analytic review. *Psychological bulletin*, 140(1), 140.
- Saadati, N., Rostami, M., & Darbani, S. A. (2017). Comparing the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) on improving self-esteem and post-divorce adaptation in women. *Journal of family psychology*, 3(2), 45-58.
- Schmidt, C. D., & Gelhert, N. C. (2017). Couples therapy and empathy: An evaluation of the impact of imago relationship therapy on partner empathy levels. *The Family Journal*, 25(1), 23-30.
- Shahsiah, M., Bahrami, F., Mohebi, S., & Tabarraei, Y. (2012). Correlation between mental well-being and marital life quality of couples. *Qom University of Medical Sciences Journal*, 5(4), 61-67.
- Soleimani, E., & Habibi, Y. (2015). The relationship between emotion regulation and resiliency with psychological well-being in students. *Journal of school psychology*, 3(4), 51-72.
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 15-28.
- Yedirir, S., & Hamarta, E. (2015). Emotional Expression and Spousal Support as Predictors of Marital Satisfaction: The Case of Turkey. *Educational sciences: theory and practice*, 15(6), 1549-1558

