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# Comparing early maladaptive schemas, sexual knowledge and attitude in applicant for divorce and ordinary couples

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The main purpose of this study has been to compare the early maladaptive schemas, sexual knowledge and attitude among applicant for divorce and ordinary couples.

**Materials and Methods:** In this descriptive study, a sample of 182 cases (91 divorce applicant and 91 ordinary couples) fulfilled sexual knowledge and attitude scale and early maladaptive schemas scale. Data analyzed through one-variable and multivariate of variance analysis.

**Results:** The results showed that there is a significant difference between applicant for divorce and ordinary couples in terms of early maladaptive schemas, sexual knowledge and attitude ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** Divorce applicant couples have higher primary maladaptive schemas, and lower scores in sexual knowledge and attitude compared to ordinary couples.

**Keywords:** Couples, Divorce, Knowledge, Primary maladaptive schemas, Sexual attitude

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**Introduction**

Divorce is the most common cause of severe conflict, and in the end, more than half of the couples who seek counseling are divorced (1). According to official statistics in Iran, out of every 1,000 marriages, about 200 cases conduce to divorced, and Iran is the fourth country in the world in prevalence of divorce (2,3). There are several factors that affect the occurrence of divorce, which can be attributed to economic, social, legal, psychological, and internal stressors and external factors. In this regard, individual and psychological factors are of particular importance because these factors are associated with all aspects of life such as training, jobs and interpersonal actions (4).

Sexual knowledge and attitude is a collection of data, information, knowledge and awareness of the person about sex and sexuality, including aspects of physiology, reproduction, performance, and interpersonal sexual behavior. Awareness of sexual issues improves life, but sometimes there is a gap between one's learning and one's connection with life. Some factors can impact on couples satisfaction and living together, including emotional needs, having skills for understanding and loving ways, satisfying the needs of couples, and matching and satisfaction of needs. Sexual behavior requires special training and specialty because this behavior is largely acquired and based on learning (5).

One of the most important differences between applicants for divorce and ordinary couples is initial maladaptive schemes. In the field of cognitive development, schemas are considered as shapes based on reality or experience to help people explain their experiences (3).

Initial maladaptive schemas are based on the child's basic experiences with the parent and the effects of the environment, gradually the system of beliefs (schema, assumptions, and

thoughts) forms in the mind of the child (6). In this regard, those who can easily adapt and motive themselves with severity, stresses, life problems, and pursue their common life goals without changing them with defense mechanisms (7), will be more successful in marital life and will report higher marital satisfaction.

With this interpretation, the present study seeks to compare couples applying for divorce and ordinary couples in terms of early maladaptive schemas, sexual knowledge and attitudes, and answer this important question: What is the difference between the divorce applicant couples and the ordinary couples in terms of early maladaptive schemas, sexual knowledge and attitude?

**Materials and Methods**

The statistical population of this causal study consisted of two groups: all applicants for divorce (husband and wife) in Rasht city in 2016-17 whether referrals from the family court of Rasht, (n= 628) and all ordinary couples in Rasht who are continuing their common life and have not yet referred to the court for their marital problems.

The criteria and conditions for entering this research were:

A husband or wife has higher academic degree. The marriage duration lasted 2-15 years. The range of couples' age is between 25 and 45 years. The married or self-referral petitioner had a divorce case. They were referred to the Divorce Center by the court.

Exclusion criteria included: The wife or husband uses alcohol or he/she is physically ill. A woman or husband decided to divorce for reasons of the murder of a spouse or a crime or misdoing of his or her mate. A husband or wife takes psychiatric medications. A husband or wife did not have higher education.

The sampling method was convenient. Thus, from couples referring to the divorce

reduction center in Rasht, 300 couples met the criteria. 91 couples of divorce applicants were selected according to the criteria for entering the study based on convenient sampling. Subsequently, in ordinary couples, 91 couples were selected according to the conditions through snowball sampling (chain referenced), which included 91 regular couples (182) and 91 couples on the verge of divorce. In total, 364 cases concluded the sample group (8). It should be noted that ordinary couples were matched with couples on the threshold of divorce according to the criteria for entering the research. Meanwhile, the researcher prior to the research had assured the subjects about the safety of the research data so that the subjects responded to the questionnaire questions in full sincerity.

Research instrument

A) *Primary Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire*: This questionnaire is a self-reporting tool designed to measure schemas by Yang. In this questionnaire, the subject, based on the description of each sentence, measures herself on a six-point Likert scale, which is graded from 1 to 6. This questionnaire is also available in both short form and long form. Its long form measures 205 questions and 18 initial maladaptive schemas, the short form (YSQ) 75 questions of the original maladaptive schema also measures 15 maladaptive schemas. The study (9) showed that for each initial maladaptive schema, the alpha coefficient was obtained from 0.38 (unchanged schema), up to 96% (for the defect / shame schema), and the retest coefficient in the non-clinical pattern 50% to 82%. In a research on 70 cases who completed the short form of the Yang Schema Questionnaire, the coefficient of internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire

of 0.94 and for the following five areas: cuts and exclusion 0.91, self-control and disrupted function 0.90, disturbance limits 0.73 and the other orientation 0.67 (10).

B) *Gender and Sexual Knowledge and Attitude Questionnaire*: The sexual knowledge and attitude questionnaire by Besharat and Ranjbar Clarigy in Iran has been constructed and used in the research on the construction and validation of sexual knowledge and attitude. This scale has 20 items that have been made and standardized in 2 components of sexual knowledge and attitude in Iranian society. This tool examines the sexual knowledge and attitude of a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. The minimum and maximum score in each subscale of sexual knowledge and attitude is 10 and 50, respectively. In this scale, in addition to two scores related to sexual knowledge and attitude, a total score of at least 20 and a maximum of 100 is calculated for each subject (11). The internal consistency of sexual knowledge and attitude were calculated according to the Cronbach's alpha coefficients and correlated with coefficients ranging from 0.84 to 0.94. The knowledge retention test and sexual attitude were calculated based on the results of the two tests, and the correlation coefficient was 0.76 to 0.87 was confirmed. Based on the results of the research, the knowledge and attitude level for measuring this structure in Iranian sample is sufficiently reliable (11).

### Results

In this study, out of 91 couples, 39% of couples studied were between 25-30 years old, 25% were between 30 and 35 years old, 15.9% were between 35 and 40 years old and 20.1% were between 40 and 45 years old. The marriage duration in 1.9% of respondents is 2 years while the duration in 3.8%, 2.7%, 12.4%, 10.4%, 5.2%, 22.5%, 15.4%, 7.1%, 8%, 7.1%, 1.4%, 1.6% and

03% 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14 and 15 years respectively.

Data analysis is initially descriptive that includes mean and standard deviations, and also inferential statistics methods, univariate analysis and multivariate analysis of variance are used to compare the variables studied.

The averages of sexual knowledge and attitude were 55.1456 and 54.0604 respectively. The standard deviations of sexual knowledge and attitude were 11.71885 and 10.09960 respectively while the variances of sexual knowledge and attitude were 137.331 and 102.002.

**Table 1.** Descriptive status of the index of early maladaptive schemas

Disturbing restrictions	Qui vive	Other orientation	Self-regulation	Cuts	
29.5824	31.5522	29.6016	45.6593	60.3308	Average
8.37426	9.10302	8.69268	15.79079	19.71664	Standard deviation
70.128	82.865	75.563	249.349	388.746	Variance

**Table 2.** The significance test of multivariate of variance analysis of early maladaptive schemas in the group of ordinary couples and divorce applicants

Square	Significance level	Error Degrees of freedom	Degree of free hypothesis	F Factor	Amount		
					.104	Pilay effect	
.104	.000	358.000	5.000	8.302	.896	Wilks Lambda	Ordinary couples
					.116	Hutchling effect	Divorce applicant couples
					.116	Biggest radical	

Based on the results of Table 2, the F-test of Multivariate Analysis of variance is a significant difference between the ordinary and divorced couples in the initial maladaptive schemas at the level of 0.000

(Wilkes Lambda: 0.869). Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant difference between divorced and ordinary marriage couples in at least one of the areas of early maladaptive schemas.

**Table 3.** Results of multivariate analysis of variance of early maladaptive schemas in the group of ordinary couples and divorce applicants

Square	Significance level	Test coefficient	Average square	Degree of free	sum of squares	Dimensions	
.075	.000	29.541	10646.665	1	10646.665	Cuts	Modified model
.070	.000	27.145	6313.890	1	6313.890	other Self-regulation	
.036	.000	13.682	998.926	1	998.926	Orientation	
.026	.002	9.792	792.223	1	792.223	qui vive	
.056	.000	21.326	1416.275	1	1416.275	Disturbing restrictions	
.910	.000	3676.068	1324887.825	1	1324887.825	Cuts	Cut point

.900	.000	3262.555	758858.242	1	758858.242	other Self-regulation	Ordinary couples Divorce applicant couples
.923	.000	4368.571	318957.761	1	318957.761	Orientation	
.925	.000	4479.016	362376.992	1	362376.992	Qui vive	
.930	.000	4796.652	318543.473	1	318543.473	Disturbing restriction	
.075	.000	29.541	10646.665	1	10646.665	cuts	
.070	.000	27.145	6313.890	1	6313.890	Other self-regulation	
.036	.000	13.682	998.926	1	998.926	orientation	
.026	.002	9.792	792.223	1	792.223	Qui vive	
.056	.000	21.326	1416.275	1	1416.275	Disturbing restrictions	

As the multivariate variance analysis shows, divorce applicants have higher grades than ordinary couples. There was a significant difference between the ordinary couples (27.60) and divorce applicants (31.55)

(meaningful level: 0.000; test coefficient: 21.32), indicating that divorce applicant couples have higher scores compared to the ordinary couples.

**Table 4.** Significance analysis of multivariate variance of sexual attitudes in divorced couples and ordinary couples

Square	Significance level	Error degree of free	Degrees of free hypothesis	F Factor	amount		
					.020	Pilay effect	Ordinary couples Divorce applicant couples
.020	.025	361.000	2.000	3.723	.980	Wilks Lambda	
					.021	Hutchling effect	
					.021	Biggest radical	
					.020	Pilay effect	

According to the results of Table 4, the F-test of multivariate analysis of variance showed a significant difference between the couples' divorce and ordinary couples (0.025) (Wilcox Lambda: 0.980, significant

level: 0.225). Therefore, it can be concluded that the couples applying for divorce and ordinary couples have a significant difference in at least one of the components of sexual awareness.

**Table 5.** Results of multivariate variance analysis of sexual attitudes in couples applying for divorce and ordinary couples

Square	Significance level	Test coefficient	Average square	Degree of free	sum of squares	Dimensions	
.020	.008	7.203	972.596	1	972.596	Sexual knowledge	Modified model
.016	.015	6.032	606.868	1	606.868b	Sexual attitude	
.958	.000	8198.081	1106937.717	1	1106937.71	Sexual knowledge	Cut point

.967	.000	10573.810	1063801.330	1	1063801.33	Sexual attitude	
.020	.008	7.203	972.596	1	972.596	Sexual knowledge	Divorce applicant and ordinary couples
.016	.015	6.032	606.868	1	606.868	Sexual attitude	

As the multivariate variance analysis shows, there is a significant difference in sex knowledge between ordinary couples (56.78) and divorce applicants (53.51) (meaningful level: 0.008; test coefficient: 7.20), indicating that the couples applying for divorce Compared to ordinary couples, they have lower grades. In the aspect of the

**Discussion**

The results of research in the field of early maladaptive schemas indicate that there is a significant difference between the couples applying for divorce and ordinary couples in terms of early maladaptive schemas. The results of this research were in line with the past researches (16-22).

Early maladaptive schemas are patterns or in-depth learning that are formed in childhood or adolescence, lasting in the path to life, are related to one's relationship with oneself and with others, and are highly ineffective (23). Early maladaptive schemas have features such as profound content, comprehensive recurring, inordinate, inefficient, recurrent memories, emotions, cognition, and physical emotions, and when activated, a high level of emotion is included which is the result of the interaction of the child's mood with his ineffective experiences with his family and his relatives in the early years of life that are on the path to life and has made deep and undeniable, unchangeable structures. Indeed, the original maladaptive schemas fight for their own survival, and this is the result of an individual's efforts for cognitive coordination. Inconsistent patterns and

attitude of sexual intercourse between ordinary couples (55.35) and divorce applicant (52.76), there was a significant difference (meaningful level: 0.015; coefficient of test: 6.032), indicating that the couples of divorce applicants have lower scores compared to ordinary couples.

schema can be created through initial annoying experiences, and later on in similar situations, it provokes the response that appeared in the past (5).

There is a significant difference between the applicants for divorce and the ordinary couples from the viewpoint of sexual orientation and with the results of the research (20-24), as well as between knowledge and attitude and relationship beliefs with the emotional divorce rate of women have a negative and significant relationship (25). There is a significant negative relationship between knowledge and attitudes with spouse abuse and annoying, in men and women (26).

Since this research has been carried out at a cross-sectional level and has a limited reciprocal of the results of the research, it is suggested that other studies be conducted in the statistical population. Re-use the scales of this research in different stratum and compare the results with each other is suggested. Another limitation of this research is the lack of comparison between different groups, for example, since this research is only among educated people between the ages of 25 and 45 years, there is no comparison between different social

groups (differences between educated and uneducated groups, different occupational groups and other age ranges) Therefore, it is recommended to conduct this research in the wider spectrum of the community, so comparisons can be made.

### Conclusion

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It seems that divorce applicant couples have less knowledge and sexual attitude than ordinary couples from higher initial maladaptive schemas.

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