

Original Articles

The comparison of marital satisfaction between fertile and infertile women

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Objectives: This research studied and compared marital satisfaction level of the women who have infertility problem with those who does not have this problem.

Method: Totally 180 persons participated (90 infertile women and 90 fertile women) were participated in this study. Participants were comprised of those referring to 3 Tehran city infertility centers. For data gathering in this research, the constructed questionnaire and Enrich Marital Satisfaction questionnaire have been used. Data analysis has been done with use of two independent t-tests and one way variance analysis has been done.

Results: results showed significant difference in satisfaction level of the fertile and infertile women, while, our research hypotheses were not confirmed in this regard by studying factors effective on marital satisfaction of the infertile women. The number of unsuccessful pregnancies whether in fertile women or infertile women didn't have considerable effect on the marital satisfaction, while, effect of this factor on marital satisfaction level of the infertile women was higher than that on the fertile women.

Conclusion: Generally, by inclusion of limitations in this plan, it is impossible to generalize the present research results with difficulty, though it is inevitable to emphasize on negative consequences of the spouses' life and it is important to pay attention to its different dimensions.

Key words: marital satisfaction, infertile women, fertile women

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Introduction:

Infertility is an essential problem and one of the bitterest living experiences. One of the important reasons for marriage of each woman and man is to wait for birth of a child during their common life. When a person is deprived of important product of this common life, not only concept of life but also their relations will be put into question (16).

Motherhood is a divine perfection, fine and technical art which have been endowed with behavioral and mental accurate fundamentals and are formed simultaneously with fertility in them(14).

In confirmation of fertility importance, Dannie Look(7) considers role of the parent as one of the most important goals in the life. May and Salimto9 write also that due to important role of parent for the spouses, infertility can be regarded as one of the major crises of life which can decrease their self confidence in case of the spouses' tendency to have child and their unsuccessfulness in fertility and can make their marital life problematic or damage their feministic and masculine feeling.

Infertility can cause deficiency, decrease of self value, decrease of self confidence and disorders

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of self imagination and sex appeal in the person. Generally, infertility has been estimated to be 15%. (13) In this regard, Shutrex and Schwartz (17) wrote about process of diagnosis and treatment of infertility that although it has been proved that percentage of womanly and manly factors leading to infertility is equal, many tests of infertility diagnosis have been undertaken on the women and led to physical, mental and spiritual damages in them. In addition, in many societies, value is put on the time which they have fertility capability and consider infertility as a factor of their rejection.

Form the traditional social view, in many societies, there is no belief in manly factor effect on infertility. High pressures are imposed on the women in this regard so that this pressure leads to abandonment of marital life and remarriage of the husband (1).

The above cases have so high effect on mind and spirit of the women that its effects remain on them even in case of curing the infertility.

In a longitudinal study, marital relation, sex satisfaction and mental disorders level of the spouses were investigated. The obtained information, indicate high degree of sexual dissatisfaction between these spouses. This kind of dissatisfaction was with the women whose infertility was diagnosed with specified reason. Regarding intrapersonal aspect, the results showed that infertility diagnosis was very stressful for the women and they had higher level of mental disorders (7).

With regard to the described material and with emphasis on negative consequences of infertility in the marital life, it is very important to pay attention to the infertility aspects so that the researchers consider its different aspects as valuable part of caring for the infertile spouse which shall not be ignored.

Materials and method:

Population of this research includes infertile women who have themselves infertility problem or whose husbands have this problem or don't know the reason for their infertility and are

qualified for the research. Sample of this research is included of two infertile man and woman groups and one fertile women group.

The first group includes the women who have been infertile due to the womanly factor and the second group includes those who have been infertile due to the manly factor and the third group includes the men and women who don't know any sign for their infertility.

In this research, 180 persons participated of which 90 persons were infertile and 90 were fertile. For selection of the infertile samples, all the qualified volunteers who had referred to infertility centre for 2 weeks were researched and totally the research sample is comprised of those referring to 3 Tehran City infertility centers. In this study for gathering the information Enrich marital satisfaction scale and personal information questionnaire was used. Enrich questionnaire has been used as one of the reliable research tools in different researches for marital satisfaction. This tool can be also a diagnosis tool for the spouses who seek to strengthen marital relationship.

This tool includes four scales including arbitrary response, personality subjects, marital relationship, conflict settlement, financial supervision, activities relating to leisure time, sex relationships, marriage and children, relatives and friends, roles relating to equality of man and woman and religious orientation. Validity of this questionnaire has been reported to be 0.92 with alpha coefficient method.

Results:

The women who were aware of their and their husband infertility problem 5 years ago were selected as members participating in this study. Age of them was at least 25 and until now they didn't have child up and didn't adopt a child. In 90% of the cases, the reason for infertility had been recognized in the researched units. Research environment was comprised of all governmental infertility centers.

Generally, out of 180 questioners which were studied, 90 persons were fertile and 90 persons were infertile. In terms of age, 88.30% of them

were 20 to 30 years old while 10% of those were 31 to 40 years old and 1.7% of them were 41 to 50 years old.

In terms of literacy, 1.1% was illiterate, 9.4% had preliminary education, 15.6% has guidance school education and 38.3% had university education.

Among the spouses participating in the study, 50% got married 5 years ago, 38.3% got married 5-10 years ago and 10% of them got married 11 to 15 years ago and only 1.7% declared that they got married more than 15 years ago.

In addition, among 90 infertile women, 36.7% reported that infertility was due to manly factor and 63.3% reported that infertility was due to womanly factor. The status of these two groups in age, education, the length of their common life and the infertility factor showed in table 1 to 4.

Table 1: age of fertility and infertility women and their husband

Age	Women		Husbands	
	fertile	infertile	fertile	infertile
20-30	(42.8)77	(45.6)82	(30)54	(29.4)53
31-40	(5.6)10	(4.4)8	(17.2)31	(20.6)37
41-50	(1.7)3	0	(1.7)3	0
51-60	0	0	(1.1)2	.

Table 2: Education of fertility and infertility women and their husband

Education	Women		Husbands	
	fertile	infertile	fertile	infertile
illiterate	1(600)	1(0.6)	0(0)	0(0)
preliminary education	10(5.6)	7 (3.9)	7(3.9)	(2.2)4
guidance school	8(4.4)	20(11.1)	19(10.6)	20(11.1)
High school	30(16.7)	34(18.9)	28(15.6)	37(20.6)
university	41(22.8)	28(15.6)	36(20)	29(16.1)

Table3 :the length of their common life

The length of common life	Women	
	fertile	infertile
Less than 5 years	55 (30.6)	35(19.4)
5-10	24(13.3)	45(25)
11-15	8(4.4)	10(5.6)
More than 15 years	3(1.7)	0/0

Table 4: the infertility factor in sample

Infertile factor	frequency
manly	33(36.7)
womanly	57(63.3)

Table 5: comparison of the mean of fertile and infertile sample in marital satisfaction

variable	fertile		infertile		PV
	mean	SD	mean	SD	
Marital satisfaction	155.9	36.06	130.6	31.312	000/0

Regarding first hypothesis that there is significant difference in marital satisfaction between fertile and infertile women, one should say that with regard to the obtained results ($t=5.083 \alpha < 0.01$), it was found that there was significant difference in marital satisfaction between fertile and infertile women. With regard to average satisfaction level of the fertile women, one can conclude that marital satisfaction of fertile women is higher than that of infertile women. also infertility factor whether manly or womanly doesn't have any effect on marital satisfaction of the spouses .

As shown in table 6, there is no significant difference between two groups in satisfaction level ($t=0.294 \alpha < 0.01$). It means that kind of the womanly or manly infertility doesn't have effect on marital satisfaction. The results of the third and fourth hypotheses which relate to effect of unsuccessful pregnancies on marital satisfaction, in accordance with results presented in table 7 which studies this factor between the fertile spouse by inclusion of $t=0.177$ in level lower than 0.05 showed that it is not significant.

Similarly, result of the fourth hypothesis with $t=1.094$ in level lower than 0.05 was not confirmed. In accordance with this result, unsuccessful pregnancy experience doesn't have any effect on marital satisfaction of the infertile spouses.

Table 6: the comparison of marital satisfaction means on the basis of infertility factor

variable		mean	SD	PV
Infertility factor Marital satisfaction	man	131.64	29.372	0.77
	woman	129.61	32.613	

Table 7: The comparison of marital satisfaction means on the basis of unsuccessful pregnancy in fertile women

variable		means	SD	PV
Unsuccessful pregnancy Marital satisfaction	negative	156.18	36.421	0.865
	positive	154.10	34.829	

Table 8: The comparison of marital satisfaction means on the basis of unsuccessful pregnancy in infertile women

variable		mean	SD	PV
Unsuccessful pregnancy Marital satisfaction	negative	133.89	29.934	0.276
	positive	126.66	32.621	

Table 9: Comparison of marital satisfaction means on the basis of infertile women's idea about success in treatment program.

Marital satisfaction	SS	d.f	MS	F	PV
Ss b	8284.89	4	2071.223	2.229	0.073
Ss w	78971.731	85	929.079		
Ss t	82225.622	89			

The fifth hypothesis relates to effect of belief in success of therapeutic plan on marital satisfaction of the infertile women.

Rate of belief in success of therapeutic plan was compared in very high, high, relatively high, very low and not at all levels. On the basis of the obtained results from one way variance analysis test, rate of marital satisfaction doesn't show significant difference in level less than 0.05 with regard to view of the people about success

of therapeutic plan and by inclusion of $F=2.229$. This indicates that levels of belief in success of therapeutic plan don't have any effect on marital satisfaction of the infertile women.

Discussion and conclusion:

Purpose of this research is to compare between marital satisfaction between fertile and infertile women. Different researchers have different ideas about the effect of infertility on relations of the spouses. Many of them have reported that decreased performance and compatibility of the marital adjustment are as a result of infertility while some others believe that tolerance of diagnosis stages and treatment of infertility lead to better relationship and sincerity between the spouses and they will feel closer to each other. (4) On the basis of the present research finding, difference between marital satisfaction of the infertile spouses and fertile spouses is significant. With regard to higher average of the fertile group in marital satisfaction, one can conclude that the fertile women feel more satisfied. This is an emphasis on finding of Dannie Look's study which was done on the in fertile women.

Issue of infertility especially in our culture which the families are more expanded and with regard to role of parent and the relatives has deeper dimension. Because, immediately after marriage, families of wife and husband wait to hear pregnancy of the woman and delayed pregnancy, curiosity and pressure of the relatives cause their worry.(15) Certainly, this stress will have negative effect on living quality of the persons and satisfaction of the women with themselves and their common life.(1) The second purpose of this research is to study variables which have been recognized to have effect on mental reaction of the infertile persons. Of these variables is a factor of infertility. Factor of infertility and its effect on the mental reaction of the studied persons have been regarded as important subject of research. Results of the present research don't show significant difference in stress of the persons in terms of infertility's factor. In one study, Colony (6)

reported that infertility with manly factor leads to more stress in the infertile spouse. While Nakingal (10), Dannie Look (7), Ebi (6) and Biotel (5) are of the researchers who believe that stress of the infertile women doesn't have relationship with factor of infertility and the infertile women were more stressful than the infertile men. Generally, infertile women have experienced more mental pressure than the men and more subject to danger. (5)

With regard to these different results, one can say that results of the present research confirm claim of the researchers who believed that stress of the fertile women had no relationship with stress of the infertile women and they experience high stress due to infertility. (2, 10, 4)

The number of unsuccessful pregnancies is one of the variables of which effect on marital satisfaction in two fertile and infertile women has been studied. Research results have not shown any significant difference in marital satisfaction between those with unsuccessful pregnancy and those without such experience. It was not found in fertile and infertile women, though rate of marital satisfaction of the infertile women who have had unsuccessful pregnancy experience is much lower than that of the fertile women so that difference between them was significant in this regard. Infertile spouses regard infertile as the most stressful event in their life and describe repetitive and successive periods of treatment as crisis repetitive periods.

Among the different findings, results of this study are similar to those of Dannie Look's (7) research emphasizing on decrease of the patients stress after passage of time. On the other hand, Benazon (4) believes that result of treatment is effective on compatibility of the spouse. Like these results obtained from a study on 165 infertile spouses, could have not found significant relationship between result of the treatment and marital compatibility.

Although results of other studies are different from results of the recent study, Biotel, (5) Firink (12) and Biory Pear (3) believe that increase in the number of unsuccessful cycles leads to more

mental pressures on women. Blorine found in a study that the women who were classified into two groups with highly and lowly unsuccessful therapeutic cycles have experienced more mental pressure than those with averagely unsuccessful therapeutic cycles.

The present research results regarding effect of the number of successful pregnancy on marital satisfaction of the fertile women are consistent with finding of Timor's research. (11) Timor empathizes on effect of different side factors on rate of marital satisfaction and doesn't regard abortion (unsuccessful pregnancy) as the only factor of dissatisfaction, though, it seems that one should repeat the research under the conditions that the number of persons in each group is higher for receiving better results and doing more accurate study on relationship of this variable with marital satisfaction among the fertile spouses.

Besides other variables, hope for success is one of the other variables of which relationship with marital compatibility of the infertile women has been studied. No significant relationship was found in this regard.

This finding was obtained with slight difference from findings of Najingal and the colleagues. (10) Najingal showed that women hardly believed in treatment in comparison to men and finally face more problems, while, there was no significant difference between the persons who believed in success of therapeutic plan in very high, high, relatively high and very low and not at all levels in terms of marital satisfaction, while, rate of hope for success of the treatments is one of the variables effective on intensity of stress resulting from infertility. Ebi (2) and this researcher emphasized on giving hope to patients with regard to stressfulness of infertility and its effect on marital satisfaction. Andrios (1) write about necessity of thinking to solve mental and family problems of such persons that even in case that we can not remove stress of fertility; we should try to decrease its effects. Decrease in family conflicts and making women and their husbands satisfied with sex and relationships and life are

of the suitable methods for reducing problems of the spouses.

This research tries to present some information about marital satisfaction of infertile spouses and its relationship with different variables in this field with regard to the available limitations. Of the important variables which can be effective

on reduction of the infertile spouses stress is promoting awareness, introducing therapeutic actions, elevating hope for success of treatment among the spouses as well as taking the affective actions regarding comparison of infertile spouse with infertility problem.

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