

Emotional Maturity and Mental health among people who are going to marry

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Abstract: Here we aimed to study the emotional maturity score and mental health status determined by a questionnaire among engaged couples living in Alborz area. We performed a cross sectional study on the established groups of men and women consisting of 547 newly engaged couples. 547 couples participated in the study, with the mean age of 27.8±6.1 in men and 23.9±4.9 in women. Most of the participants were Shea, living in the cities, the first child of the family, were living in the big cities in recent 10 years, had permanent job, had university education and were not married before. Emotional maturity score was better in Shea, those who did not had any relationship before marriage. Mental health score was worse in those living in Urban area, in divorced and those without permanent job. Our findings from 547 engaged couples showed that, most of the participants were emotionally unstable. We also showed that the situation is worse in women, and those who had a pervious relationship.

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1. Introduction

Marriage is the most important social union between men and women (Anderson et al., 210; Clark and Etile, 2011). It is a legal and social contract describing intimate and sexual interpersonal relationship. Factors which are important in the outcome of a successful marriage are so wide and include commitment, honesty, trust financial and social maturity, mutual understanding, not humiliating and reproaching, premarital experience and education, patience, not behaving sentimentally and valuing each other (Kumar, 2010). Emotional Maturity and mental health are the big categorizes that cover most of the mentioned factors.

Maturity is the intelligent state in which one knows how to responds to the circumstances or environment in an appropriate manner, correct time and place to behave and when to act appropriately, according to the circumstances and the culture of the society one lives in (Manganotti and Del Felice, 2012). Maturity is a comprehension of life purpose, directedness, and intentionality which, contributes to the feeling that life is meaningful (Koscik and Tranel, 2012). Emotional Maturity is reshaped by aging, and is influenced by many factors including social, factors (Barchas and Barchas, 2011).

Many studies have demonstrated that nowadays couples are less satisfied with their marriages compared to many years ago (Boland and Follingstad, 1987), on the other hand recent studies have shown that married people are happier than the singles (Murray et al., 2011; Nes et al., 2010). Mental health is the state in which how well the patient feels emotionally and is able to think, reason, and remember (cognitive functioning). Getting along with others is an important parts of mental health assessment. We presumed that emotional maturity and mental health are among important factors affecting the marriage durability among couples. Emotional maturity and mental health are among the most important factors determining the outcome and lasting of the marriage (Mosavi SE, Irvani MR, 2010), however if the couples are mature enough when they plan to marry each other, is not known. Here we aimed to study the emotional maturity score and mental health status determined by a questioner among engaged couples living in Alborz area.

2. Material and Methods

We performed a cross sectional study on established groups consisting of 547 people who attended premarital assessment in a health center. According to the Law of Iran, people are required to

attend and examined in a Health Center for the routine checkup of thalassemia and drug abuse, before marriage. The couples were screened for the drug abuse. The sampling frame was a community dwelling population representing a range of occupational, educational and economic background. The questioner was designed by the authors consisting of three parts. 1: demographics of the participants and 2: the emotional maturity designed by Dr. Yashurburge and collaborators and mental health assessment designed by the Goldberge mental health assessment (Goldberg et al., 1997). The emotional maturity questionnaire consist of 48 questions which are classified according to the likert scale, which measures the emotional instability, emotional return, social maladjustment, corrupted personality and lack of independence. Total score is the sum of all parts. The scoring for this questionnaire is (1 2 3 4), in which a lower point (1) shows a better emotional maturity. The final score is the sum of three parts separately. A point between 50-80 means very stable, 81-88 is semi stable, 89-106 is unstable and 107-240 is very unstable. Mental health status was assessed using General Health questionnaire (GHQ-12) by Goldberg (1978). This questionnaire is a reliable instrument. The scale consists of 12 items and was rated on the 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (better than usual) to 4 (much less than usual). In this study, the bimodal method was applied (0-0-1-1) and the cut-off point of 5/6 was used. Scores below 5 indicate a positive mental health while scores above 6 indicate a mental health problem. Higher scores indicate a poor mental health status and potential of mental health issues. Both questionnaires were standardized before using in Iran. All the participants signed written informed consent before participation in the study. The study was approved by the local ethics community of the Alborz University of Medical Sciences.

Statistical Analysis

The package for SPSS version (16) was used for analysis. Mean scores in 95% CI was used for quantitative variables. Analysis of variance, T-test, Pearson and linear regression were used in analysis of data.

3. Results

There were 547 couples participated in the study, with the mean age of 27.8 ± 6.1 in men and 23.9 ± 4.9 in women. Most of the participants were Shea, living in the cities, the first child of the family, were living in the big cities in recent 10 years, had permanent job, had university education and were not married before (Table 1).

Emotional Maturity

The findings of the current study demonstrate that mental health is significantly correlated with

gender, place of birth, previous marriage and relationship ($p < 0.05$). Men, those born in the rural area, those who had a previous marriage and with a permanent job had a lower mental health status. We did not observe significant differences in other studied variables. While studying mental health and emotional maturity, we observed a significant correlation between them (Tables 2, 3).

Emotional maturity among men and women:

Table 4 compares the scores in each studied field between men and women. Women were more emotionally unstable, more personality destroyed disorders and in general had worse situation.

Emotional Score:

Emotional score was better in shea, those who did not had any relationship before marriage (Table 5).

Psychological Score:

Psychological score was worse in those living in Urban area, in divorced and those without permanent job (Table 2). Psychological level and having a job were important variables predicting emotional maturity (Table 3).

4. Discussions

To date we are unaware of any other studies demonstrating mental health and emotional maturity from Iranian population. Our findings from 547 couples who were recently engaged showed that, most of the participants were emotionally immature. We also showed that the situation is worse in women, and those who had a pervious relationship. There are also a few studies showing mental health and emotional maturity in the population. In a study among Japanese teachers, showed that, female teachers have poor mental health, which was found to be associated with job dissatisfaction (Nagai et al., 2007). In consistent with our findings, other studies have shown the emotional stability is not as high as it is expected to be (Nes et al., 2010).

There are also studies which have shown the role of mental health among married couples. Ucker and collaborators showed that early marriage, which is nonnormative, could have no, or even negative, mental health consequences for young adults. They showed that married young adults have levels of psychological distress, which is similar to those of young adults in any kind of romantic relationship, have higher life satisfaction than those in any other type of romantic relationships, those with no romantic relationship, and those who married prior to age 22 (Uecker, 2012; Friedman, 1992; Hahlweg and Richter, 2010).

Studies have shown that women report lower marital happiness, marital interaction, and marital power than do men, on average. These differences

remained after controlling for a number of life-course events and transitions. Further, results show that gender differences are also evident in the relationship of employment, childrearing, caregiving, and health factors with marital quality and power (Clark and Etile, 2011; Bulanda, 2011). We showed that women are more emotionally immature, and these differences, may in part be explained by the differences in the beginning of the marriage. It was consistently related to increasing psychological maturity, interpersonal maturity, and the mutuality of the marital relationship, to effectiveness in fulfilling various adult roles, and to marital happiness (Dean, 2012; Hoppmann et al., 2011). It is also shown that maritally happy women reported fewer sleep disturbances, with the association evident among caucasian women and to a lesser extent among African American women (Troxel et al., 2009).

The results from previous studies have shown the decrease of marital satisfaction over time in the long-term course of depression (Kronmuller et al., 2011). Positive partner perception have important role in preventing this long term consequences and they are correlated with the emotional maturity (Monin et al., 2009; Murray et al., 2011).

In conclusion we showed a worse emotional maturity in newly married couples. This was correlated with the job status, and their previous relationships. The principal limitation of the current study was its cross sectional nature, which preclude the determination of the direction of causality, however we took advantage of a relatively large sample size and close similarity between groups in most of the potentially confounding variables.

Table 1: Demographic of the studied participants

	Number	Stages	Percent	Number
Age	546	20<	7.10	53
		24-20	9.32	163
		29-25	4.35	175
		34-30	4.15	76
		39-35	6.2	13
		39<	3	15
Gender	546	Male	6.50	275
		Female	4.49	268
Religious	546	Shea (Muslim)	8.89	424
		Sonia (Muslims)	5.1	7
		Minorities	6.7	36
		Others	1.1	5
Birth Place	546	Rural	12	57
		Urban	88	417
History of divorce	546	Yes	1.11	58
		No	9.88	465
		300>	2.22	82
Mean Income	546	500-300	9.37	140
		800-500	1.24	89
		800<	7.15	58

Table 2: Emotional maturity between men and women

Stages	Total	Dependency	Personality Close	Social Adjustment	Emotional Return	Emotional instability
Male	.2±21.888	17.5±4.8	15.3±5.3	18.8±5.2	17.4±6	19.2±5.6
Female	94.5±20.7	17.4±3.8	16.9±5.6	19.6±4.5	18.6±5.8	22±6.1
P value	00.0	811.0	001.0	41.0	13.0	00.0

Significance was set at P <0.05

Table 3: Comparing the scores from the emotional maturity between the groups

Variables	Stages	Standard Deviation	Mean	P value
Age	20<	1/18	6/95	268/0
	24-20	3/20	91	
	29-25	6/20	9/89	
	34-30	6/24	2/91	
	39-35	16	3/82	
	39<	6/13	6/85	
Religious	Shea	9/19	7/89	006/0 *
	Others	5/24	2/100	
	Illiterate	4/28	3/117	
Education	Primary school	8/35	7/93	229/0
	Middle School	5/25	6/91	
	Secondary School	8/20	9/89	
	University	19	91	
Divorced	Religious Studies	5/20	5/93	035/0 *
	Yes	7/26	5/97	
	No	3/20	7/89	
Job	Permanent Job	20	1/86	*00/0
	Others	6/21	4/94	
Living with grand parents	YES	1/25	1/91	928/0
	No	5/20	1/90	
Which Child	First Child	9/20	5/91	717/0
	Others	2/20	7/90	

Significance was set at P <0.05

Table 4: Comparing the mean of the Mental Health scores between the groups

Variables	Stages	Standard Deviation	Mean	P value
Age	20<	3/10	3/18	511/0
	24-20	10	2/16	
	29-25	1/10	4/15	
	34-30	5/9	3/17	
	39-35	8/8	2/16	
	39<	1/8	3/15	
gender	Male	1/9	7/14	*000/0
	Female	4/10	8/17	
Religious	Shea	7/9	9/15	087/0
	Others	8/9	2/16	
Living Place	Rural	6/7	5/13	*009/0
	Urban	10	5/16	
Divorced	Yes	2/13	3/20	*021/0
	No	3/9	8/15	
Job	Permanent Job	5/9	9/14	*010/0
	Others	2/10	3/17	

Significance was set at P <0.05

Table 5: Linear Regression modeling showing the value of each of the studied variables predicting the emotional maturity

Variables	Beta	error	R-Square	P value
Mental Health Score	536/0	8/16	301/0	000/0*
Having a job	111/0-	7/16	313/0	014/0*

Significance was set at P <0.05

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