



The Study of Depression as the Antecedent of Guilt feeling, and Anxiety as its Consequence in Divorced Women

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Abstract: *This study aims to examine depression as the antecedent of guilt feeling, and anxiety as its consequence in 30-40-year-old divorced women in Isfahan. The statistical population of this quasi-experimental study included the women who had gotten divorced in 2015 in Isfahan. The sample of study involved 30 divorced women who were selected through random sampling method. The design of the current study was the pretest-posttest with control group as well as random assignment. The tools used in this study included 1) Beck Depression Inventory, 2) Kugler and Jones Guilt feeling Inventory, and 3) Beck anxiety inventory. To analyze data, simple and multiple correlation coefficient was used. The results indicated a positive significant relationship ($P < 0.01$) between depression and guilt feeling. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between guilt feeling and anxiety ($P < 0.01$). The result of multiple regression showed that depression predicts 17% of guilt feeling variance. Generally, the outcome of this study confirmed the prediction power of depression for guilt feeling and anxiety as it consequent.*

Keywords: *Guilt Feeling, Depression, Anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

Divorce breaks down the structure of the most fundamental section of society, i.e. family, and it is one of the major deficits of family life. After spouse's death, divorce requires the most change for adaptation again in involved people. Iran possesses the fourth rank of divorce in the world. It is considered as a warning for society and families (Hosseini Yazdi, Mashhadi, Kimiaei and Asemi, 2015). Some people can adapt with divorce and its outcomes and some cannot. The most common evaluation of compatibility after divorce is through the indicators of divorce incompatibility such as depression, emotional disorders, mental disease, anxiety, loneliness, personal failure, guilt feeling and identity crisis. Guilt feeling can be unpleasant such that it leads to anxiety, extreme discomfort, depression or self-hatred. According to some of researchers, guilt feeling is only exclusive to human being. People, by feeling guilty, think that "I have done something wrong". Guilt feeling can be unpleasant such that it leads to anxiety, extreme discomfort, depression or self-hatred. According to some researchers, guilt feeling is only exclusive to human being. Based on the scientific psychological discussions, "self-conscious emotions", like other phenomena, are not absolutely compromised or not compromised. Most researchers claim that guilt feeling is a compatible emotional reaction because it

provokes the guilt feeling person to compensate his wrong deed. Yet, the guilt feeling can be also as incompatible emotion. In their study, Bruno, Lutwak and Agin (2009) argued that guilt feeling may be an incompatible emotion, cannot be modified easily, and causes stress, inhibition and mental damage. Such feeling emerges when the done or not done deed cannot be compensated. Severe mental ruminations occur. Through compensatory activities, the person is somehow relieved but not completely. It may lead to disorder in those, prone to mental disorders. Loneliness, alienation and sense of duality can be referred as the outcomes of guilt feeling. "Loneliness" means that from guilt feeling, the person reaches to a negative perception of his social relations with others. The studies have shown that people, who cannot forgive their mistakes about others, may feel worthless and have mental rumination about themselves or negative events. As the result of withdrawing from social relations, feeling lonely is created. Alienation includes "personal alienation", referring to the perception of an instability and duality between the image of person from himself and his behavior. "Social alienation" is looking for separation or the difference between self and others which has a high relationship with "loneliness".

Why do women feel guilty more?

The answer of such question is probably hidden in "socialization". Women and girls have been socialized for intimacy with others, not hurting other feelings and caring their beloved people for thousands years. In many families, in comparison with men, women are more responsible for maintaining the relationship with families and friends, coordination with the program of others and caring home and its issues.

Given that various antecedes and consequents are considered for guilt feeling in different studies, the current study is sought to investigate whether depression has relationship with guilt feeling or not and if guilt feeling, as Bruno et al (2009) state, is an incompatible emotion and causes stress and anxiety or not. In other word, can depression be the antecedent of guilt feeling and anxiety as its consequent?

The term depression was stated by Adolf Meper for the first time (Mostafizi, 2008, p9). Yet, proposing a definition of depression and the scheme, accepted by all experts and researchers, seems difficult. In the limited definition of medicine, depression is an affective disorder or mood action disorder. In usual clinical level, depression is the syndrome, dominated by depressed mood. It is shown by verbal or non-verbal statement of depressed emotions, anxiety or arousal modes. Depression is also an unpleasant mental mode, specified with boredom, disappointment and fatigue. In most cases, it is along with more or less severe anxiety (Dadsetan, 1986; cited in Akabari, 2008, p209). Generally, depression has been used in three different types:

- To specify the normal feelings of sadness, disappointment and express them as the symptoms of a disorder
- To describe a syndrome briefly which includes emotional, cognitive, motor, physiologic symptoms and endocrine glands
- To determine depressive disorders in the framework of mental disorders which have some reasons and are a type of development and answer to some treatments

Although the different definitions of depression refer to various symptoms, it can be admitted that depression is along with mental and physical symptoms (Dadsetan, 2001). For example, depression is a mood, affecting the quality of person's mood deeply and transforming the manner of his perception of self and environment (cited by Pourafkari, 1994).

Seligman (1999) also defined depression as mental cold. Its tangible sign is reducing the personal self-esteem. According to Stampfl (1967), depression does not merely mean the feeling of miss and sadness. It is far beyond that. In fact, depression not only affects our feelings but also on the way of our thinking about things, levels, energy, concentration, sleeping and even sexual interests. Beck (1967) defined depression as an expression, referring to a set of behaviors, the clear symptoms of which are in movement and words. Crying, sadness, lack of active reactions, lack of interest, worthlessness, insomnia and anorexia are of other symptoms of it.

According to Beck (1976), clinical depression can be defined as a kind of morbid disorder, including the changes in five major behavioral areas. The morbid symptoms of such changes may involve all or one of following expressions:

- Negative emotions: it usually includes sadness, unhappiness, guilt feeling with less frequency, sensitivity, boredom and other negative feelings and emotions
- Negative cognitions: it usually includes negative self-impression, pessimism and hopelessness.
- Negative motivation: it includes lacking or losing interest in the activities, preferred by the person before, as well as suicide thoughts
- Behavioral changes: it usually includes reduction in the rate of doing things and normal behavioral activities of the person
- Physical changes: it usually includes loss of appetite and losing interest in sexual activities (Dashtizadeh, 2015).

The emotions can affect the human cognitions. Human beings can be aware of emotions as the source of information about external events, though that emotion might not be related to the situation. This mechanism is known in psychology as “emotional reasoning”. This mechanism, is used to justify the relationship between depression and guilt feeling. Depressed people tend to use their negative feelings for confirming their thoughts. Starting a faulty loop keeps depression fixed.

Excessive guilt feeling is a mental burden, disturbing the life feelings and quality. For example, a person, who is going to divorce, may feel guilty because it overlaps his/her belief of commitment to marital life. If a person, who considers him/herself faulty in previous events due to any reason, whether justified or unjustified, does not face his feeling of being guilty rationally, he will be so immersed in this excruciating feeling that he will not attend in family effectively and establish healthy social relations. Guilt feeling after a mistake means blaming yourself for a legitimate reason. In fact, it is an opportunity for person to figure out his mistakes and modify them.

Given the information above, investigation of antecedents and consequents is necessary. Therefore, it is tried in this study to investigate the relationship between guilt feeling with depression and anxiety in divorced women of 30 to 40 years old in Isfahan. Therefore, the aim of current study is to investigate depression as the antecedent of guilt feeling and anxiety as its consequent in divorced women.

Given the aim of study and research literature, the following hypotheses were raised and investigated:

- There is a positive relationship between depression and guilt feeling in divorced women.
- There is a positive relationship between anxiety and guilt feeling in divorced women.
- Depression predicts guilt feeling in divorced women.

Methodology

Statistical population, sample and sampling method

The statistical population of this study includes divorced women of 30 to 40 years old, who had referred to psychology clinics of Isfahan. The sample was randomly selected as 60 divorced women, given that “the minimum sample volume in correlation-based studies is 50 for expressing the relationship” (Delavar, 1996, p113). To select the samples, 100 patients were first randomly selected and contacted among the people having files in psychological clinics. They were asked to refer to the center for completing their files. They were briefed with the aim of study and they accepted to participate in the research. They were then ensured that the information will be confidential. After completing the questionnaire of Beck and interview, those with the scores of 30 to 63, were detected as depressed ones. The number was 60.

This is correlational study. In the first section of the study, depression has been considered as predictor and guilt feeling as criterion variable. In the second section of research, guilt feeling was regarded as predictor and anxiety as criterion variable.

Research tools

To collect data in the current study, the following questionnaires were used:

The questionnaire of guilt feeling: one of the latest provided tools in this field is “guilt feeling questionnaire”, developed, completed and modified by Kugler and Jones within 1988 to 1992. This questionnaire is a self-evaluation tool based on the obtained scores of three moral subsidiary scales”, “mood”, “and guilt feeling”. The scale of guilt feeling includes twenty cases, guilt feeling mood ten cases and moral criteria fifteen cases. Guilt feeling feature has been defined as the sustainable field of guilt feeling, remorse and self-blaming. Guilt feeling mood is the immediate experience of person from this feeling, in which he has recently violated one of his moral criteria or he thinks so. Moral criteria have been defined as the degree of person’s commitment to a set of moral principles. In none of these scales, the particular behaviors or special features have not been discussed but the general moods, emotions and commitments of person are considered. The responses are scored in a 5-degree Likert scale. In all three scales, almost half of cases are directed reversely, indicating the less guilt feeling or less commitment to criteria. It is considered in scoring. In two broad studies (with 823 young and single students as well as 209 married adults), its convergent and divergent validity has been shown, the internal consistency of this questionnaire has been reported as 79% in guilt feeling mood and 89% in guilt feeling feature. Its content and face validity in Iran was investigated by Naziri (1995) and surveying 15 psychologist professors, assistants of the last year of psychiatry and senior experts in psychology. All of them confirmed the content and face validity of that. The obtained reliability of retesting in an interval of 10 weeks have been mentioned for micro scales of moral criteria, guilt feeling feature and guilt feeling mood respectively as 81%, 72% and 56%.

Beck Depression Questionnaire: it was first developed by Aron Beck, Ward Mandelson, Muck and Erbarf in 1961. It was revised in 1971 and published in 1978 (Beck et al, 1979, cited by Mehrabizade Honarmand, 1996). Several forms have been developed out of this questionnaire, including a cart form, some computer forms and two forms of pen and paper (21-article form and short 13-article one). Its short form has been used in this study. Each article has 4 items, scored based on 0 to 3. It determines different degrees of depression from mild to severe. The results of conducted meta-analysis in case of Beck Depression Questionnaire indicate the internal consistency of it within 73% to 93% with average 86% for its long form. The obtained reliability coefficients from retesting, based on distance between the times of execution and type of population, is in the range of 48% to 86%. The short form of this questionnaire has been normalized in Iran by Dadsetan and Mansour (1990). The short questionnaire of Beck has been used by different researchers such as Noorbala and Shaddel (1994). Rajabi et al (2001) have reported Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for whole questionnaire as 87% and split-half coefficient as 83% and retesting coefficient of three weeks as 49%.

Research Findings

The descriptive findings of this study have been proposed in table 1.

Table 1: The mean and standard deviation of participants’ scores in research variables

Statistical indicators	Guilt feeling	Depression	Anxiety
Mean	77.66	7.89	44.62
Standard deviation	11.46	8.07	11.34

As table 1 shows, the mean of participants’ score in the variable of guilt feeling is equal to 77.66, depression 7.89 and anxiety 44.62.

The related findings to the research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between depression and guilt feeling in divorced women.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between anxiety and guilt feeling in divorced women.

The obtained results of investigating hypotheses 1 to 3 have been shown in table 2.

Table 2: The simple correlation coefficients between research variables

Variables	1	2	3
Guilt feeling	1		
Depression	0.28	1	
Anxiety	0.41	0.43	1

** $(P=0.01)$

The content of table 2 indicates that the correlation coefficient between depression and guilt feeling is equal to 0.28 ($P=0.01$). Therefore, the hypothesis 1 of current study is confirmed. The correlation coefficient of guilt feeling with anxiety is 0.41 and significant in level of $P=0.01$. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also confirmed that is there is a positive and significant relationship between guilt feeling and anxiety.

Hypothesis 3: Depression predicts guilt feeling in divorced women.

Table 3: multiple correlation coefficients of depression and obsession with guilt feeling (through entry method)

Criterion variable	Predictor	Correlation	Coefficient of determination	F-statistic P possibility	Regression coefficients
					Depression
Guilt feeling	Depression	0.28	0.082	7.8 $P=0.004$	B=0.28 t=2.95 $P=0.004$

According to table 3, correlation coefficient of depression with guilt feeling is $MR=0.28$ which is significant in level of $P=0.001$. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study is confirmed. Moreover, $RS=0.082$. This determination coefficient shows that the variable predicts almost 0.082 variance of criterion variable that is guilt feeling in divorced women.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of current study show the significant correlation between depression and guilt feeling. In other word, people with high score in depression, feel guiltier as well. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of many other researches such as Ghatavi et al. (2002). Based on the obtained results, depression can be probably the antecedent of guilt feeling. In case of relationship between depression and guilt feeling, Beck (1967) state that depressed people feel responsible for negative events with negative consequences. It leads to guilt feeling, self-blaming, self-deficiency and sadness. Based on the study findings, low self-efficiency has also relationship with depression (Pirbazari and Maleki, 2011, p26). According to Stampfl (1967), depression is not merely feeling sad or miss. It is far beyond that. In fact, depression not only affects our feelings but also on the way of our thinking about things, levels, energy, concentration, sleeping and even sexual interests. Moreover, Rozenhan and Seligman (1989, translated by Seyed Mohammadi, 1996) state that depressed people not only have low self-esteem but also blame themselves and feel guilty because of problems, arising from them. In case of failure, they feel responsible for it. When there is no failure yet, they imagine that they will fail soon and the reason is themselves.

According to the related section to the findings, there is a positive and significant relationship between depression and guilt feeling.

Another noticeable result was obtained in this study based on that guilt feeling has a positive and significant relationship with anxiety. It is consistent with the results of Bruno et al (2009). Guilt feeling and shame often refer to the overlapping emotions. Until recently, there were a few experimental information about the nature

and roots of such emotion. According to Lazarus (1991), guilt feeling means violating a moral action and feeling shame means failure in achieving an ideal goal.

Based on the findings of this study, guilt feeling can make the person anxious. Given such results, the person's depression and anxiety can be controlled using different treatments through reducing the feeling of being guilty.

Given the special statistical population of this study (divorced women), the results shall be generalized to other populations cautiously. This study is recommended to be conducted for depressed and anxious people as well.

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