



Evaluating the relationship between sexual function and marital satisfaction in married Kurdish women in year 2016

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Original Article

Abstract

BACKGROUND: Sexual satisfaction and ultimately marital satisfaction have a significant role in couples' adaptation. The aim of this study was to evaluate the relationship between sexual function and marital satisfaction of married Kurdish women referred to health centers in Sanandaj, Iran, in 2016.

METHODS: This cross-sectional study was conducted on 500 married women referred to health centers in Sanandaj City in 2016. Sexual function information was collected using the standard Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) questionnaire. In order to investigate the marital satisfaction, the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) was also used. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Pearson correlation test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used.

RESULTS: In terms of adultery scales, the sexual satisfaction for majority of women was moderate. The average score of sexual satisfaction was 20.37 ± 8.40 from 36. Between sexual satisfaction with age ($r = 0.223$) and spouse's age ($r = 0.26$), correlation was inversely significant ($P = 0.0001$). Sexual function was significantly correlated with the level of adultery scales including sexual satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and ideal distortion ($P < 0.0500$).

CONCLUSION: Given that sexual performance in this study was moderate and there was a relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, sexual education and counseling to women and men during marriage by health and social systems is recommended.

KEYWORDS: Coitus, Sexual Behavior, Orgasm

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Introduction

All laws and social organizations are working to preserve the family and its sanctity. Marriage, as the most important social contract, has always been approved to meet the emotional and security needs of individuals.¹ Marriage is a

social union and the first step to form family,² and it has been described as an event which involves the cohabitation of two people with different characteristics and needs.³ In religious societies such as Iran, marriage is the only social system that provides a place for satisfying sex.¹ Personal characteristics, intellectual maturity, mental balance, mutual understanding, financial factors, adaptability, sexual satisfaction, love,

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and affection are the most significant factors affecting marital satisfaction.⁴

Marital satisfaction is considered as the important factor that affects the family completely⁵ and has been described as a sense of happiness that couples have most of the times.⁶ Safe and pleasurable sexual relationship is among the most important factors affecting marital satisfaction.⁷ Considering the importance of marital satisfaction, several studies have been conducted previously.^{8,9} Therefore, marital satisfaction is the important and fundamental factor that sustains the marital life and is affected by sexual satisfaction.¹ Previous studies introduced a variety of variables that predicted the marital satisfaction and the most widely-documented variable in the research literature associated with marital satisfaction was sexual satisfaction.¹⁰

Dogan et al. evaluated the relationship between sexual quality of life and life satisfaction in married Turkish women. They concluded that high sexual quality of life had a positive effect on life satisfaction in married Turkish women.¹¹ In a study by Ziaee et al., marital satisfaction was significantly associated with sexual satisfaction in employed married women at Golestan University of Medical Sciences, Gorgan, Iran.⁷

Many of the sexual disorders such as reduced sexual desire, sexual disability, and premature ejaculation which remain hidden because of fear, anxiety, shame, and embarrassment or feelings of incompetence and sin, cause other complications such as physical impairment, depression and dissatisfaction with marital life, and finally divorce.¹² Basson et al. showed that 25% to 63% of the general population had a sexual problem,¹³ while another study found this to be 25%.¹⁴ Pasha and Hadj Ahmadi showed that sexual desire and sexual intercourse were significantly decreased in pregnant women in Iran,¹⁵ and in a study by Mohammadi et al., 83% of Iranian women had

sexual dysfunction.¹⁶

One of the major problems is the lack of adequate information on sexual issues and inappropriate attitudes and beliefs about this issue among families, particularly in newly-married couples which has resulted in the ruin of many families.¹⁷ Considering the influence of many factors such as race, culture, religion, and etc. on sexual satisfaction,¹⁸ this study was conducted to evaluate the relationship between sexual function and marital satisfaction of married Kurdish women referred to health centers in Sanandaj, Iran, in 2016.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted on 500 married women referred to health centers in Sanandaj City in 2016. To distribute samples in Sanandaj City, 8 out of 20 health centers of Sanandaj were selected randomly; then 65 women were selected from each health center. The purpose of the project was explained to all married literate women. With respect to the confidentiality of information, standard questionnaires including Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) and ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) were delivered to women. Adequate explanations on how to complete them were given to women.

The FSFI is a brief, self-report measure of female sexual function. It has 19 items and six domains of sexual function including: desire (2 items), arousal (4 items), lubrication (4 items), orgasm (3 items), satisfaction (3 items), and pain (3 items). For desire domain, scores 1-5 were considered, while for other domains (arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction, and pain) scores 0-5 were considered. Zero score indicates that the person has not had sexual activity during the last 4 weeks. By scaling up the scores of the six domains, the total score is obtained. Higher scores mean better sexual performance.¹⁹

In order to investigate the marital satisfaction, ENRICH MSI was used. This tool

is a brief measure of marital quality for married adults. The ENRICH inventory is a multidimensional inventory for measuring marital satisfaction that includes 12 category scales including: idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation. The MSI was evaluated for internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Cronbach's alpha revealed an internal reliability of 0.86. Test-retest reliability was assessed with 115 individuals over a period of 4 weeks. The reliability coefficient over time was 0.86.²⁰ Likert scale was used for scaling MSI including: (fully agree), (agree), (neither agree nor disagree), (disagree), and (completely disagree).²¹

The principle of confidentiality of information was observed and also written consent was obtained from participants. Data were analyzed using SPSS software (version 18, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Pearson correlation test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used.

Results

Demographic characteristics showed that the mean and standard deviation (SD) of women's age was 32.4 ± 8.4 years and for their spouses was 36.1 ± 8.5 years. Total of 218 (43.6%) women had academic education and 348 (69.6%) were housewife, while 243 (48.6%) of their spouses were self-employed and 224 (44.8%) had academic education. The mean and SD of women's marriage age was 22.6 ± 4.8 years (Table 1).

According to marital satisfaction scales, in 455 (91.0%) women sexual satisfaction was moderate. Also communication for 347 (69.6%), conflict resolution for 362 (72.4%), and ideal distortion for 312 (62.4%) women were moderate (Table 2).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of women

Variable	Mean \pm SD
Age (year)	32.40 \pm 8.40
Spouse's age (year)	36.10 \pm 8.50
Marriage age (year)	22.60 \pm 4.80
The age of the first pregnancy (year)	24.80 \pm 4.60
Gravida	1.54 \pm 1.02
Number of children	1.03 \pm 0.83
Abortion	0.37 \pm 0.75
n (%)	
Women's education level	
Elementary	30 (6.0)
Middle school	36 (7.2)
High school	216 (43.2)
Academic	218 (43.6)
Men's education level	
Elementary	34 (6.8)
Middle school	48 (9.6)
High school	194 (38.8)
Academic	224 (44.8)
Women's job	
Housewife	348 (69.6)
Employed	152 (30.4)
Men's job	
Unemployed	14 (2.8)
Worker	70 (14.0)
Employed	173 (34.6)
Self-employed	243 (48.6)
Household income	
Enough	99 (19.8)
Somewhat enough	317 (63.4)
Inadequate	84 (16.8)
Forced marriage	
Yes	25 (5.0)
No	475 (95.0)

SD: Standard deviation

The mean of sexual satisfaction was 20.37 ± 8.40 out of 36 (Table 3). There was an inversely significant correlation between sexual satisfaction with age ($r = 0.223$) and spouse's age ($r = 0.260$) ($P = 0.0001$) (Table 4).

Table 2. The frequency of marital satisfaction scales levels in women

Adultery scales	Low [n (%)]	Moderate [n (%)]	High [n (%)]	Very high [n (%)]
Sexual satisfaction	3 (6.0)	455 (91.0)	42 (8.4)	0
Communication	13 (2.6)	347 (69.4)	140 (28.0)	0
Conflict resolution	8 (1.6)	362 (72.4)	126 (25.2)	4 (8.0)
Ideal distortion	107 (21.4)	312 (62.4)	67 (13.4)	14 (2.8)

Table 3. The mean of sexual function indices in women

Sexual function indices	Mean \pm SD
Arousal	3.31 \pm 1.82
Lubrication	3.16 \pm 1.46
Orgasm	3.88 \pm 2.02
Satisfaction	4.12 \pm 2.07
Pain	2.37 \pm 1.22
Total	20.37 \pm 8.40

The maximum score of each item was 6, and the maximum total score was 36.

SD: Standard deviation.

Sexual function was significantly correlated with the level of marital satisfaction scales including sexual satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and ideal distortion ($P < 0.0500$) (Table 5).

Discussion

The aim of the present study was to evaluate the relationship between sexual function and marital satisfaction of married Kurdish women referred to health centers in Sanandaj City in 2016. The results of our study showed that the marital satisfaction in 0.6% of women was low, in 91.0% was moderate, and in 8.4% was high. In terms of marital satisfaction scales, the sexual satisfaction was 91.0%, communication was 69.6%, conflict resolution was 72.4%, and ideal distortion was 62.4%, which showed moderate satisfaction level in women. The results of a study by Ziaee et al. showed that the majority of the participants (63.6%) were very satisfied and none of them were very unsatisfied in terms of marital satisfaction scale.⁷ Baneian et al. showed that 36.6% of women referring to health care centers in Borujen City, Iran, were

relatively satisfied with their marriage, 14.2% were strongly dissatisfied, and 13.9% had strong marital satisfaction.²² Moreover, Sadegh Moghadam et al. showed that the mean of marital satisfaction score in employed women and their husbands was 3.6 and in housewives and their husbands was 3.7 out of 5.²³ In a study by Jamali et al., the marital satisfaction in 19.5% of women was low, in 70.4% was moderate, and in 10.1% was high.²⁴ According to mentioned previous studies and our findings, it seems that married Kurdish women are satisfied with their marital life.

In our study, the average score of sexual satisfaction for most participants (91.0%) was 20.37 \pm 8.40 out of 36, which was moderate. Sexual function indices for arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction, and pain were 3.30, 3.16, 3.89, 4.24, and 2.32 out of 6, respectively, which were moderate. In a study by Tavakol et al., the majority of study subjects (58.2%) had moderate sexual satisfaction.¹⁸

In a meta-analysis conducted by Ranjbaran et al. based on the random effects model, the prevalence of Iranian female sexual dysfunction was 43.9%. The prevalence of desire, arousal, lubricating, orgasmic, satisfaction, and pain disorders were 42.7%, 38.5%, 30.6%, 29.2%, 21.6%, and 40.1%, respectively.²⁵

In a study by Raeisi et al., 80.6% of women reported sexual dysfunction. Sexual function indices were reported as: 50.0% low sexual desire, 58.3% low sexual arousal, 36.1% decreased lubrication, 44.0% orgasmic disorder, 52.8% sexual pain disorder, and 41.7% sexual dissatisfaction.²⁶

Table 4. The correlation between sexual function indices in women

Sexual function indices	Lubrication	Orgasm	Satisfaction	Pain	Total score
Arousal	0.802	0.917	0.888	0.642	0.938
Lubrication	1	0.853	0.864	0.840	0.916
Orgasm		1	0.945	0.661	0.964
Satisfaction			1	0.733	0.970
Pain				1	0.790

The calculated P values were as < 0.0001 for all the studied items.

Table 5. The relationship between sexual function score and marital satisfaction scales

Marital satisfaction scales		Sexual function score Mean \pm SD	f	P
Sexual satisfaction	Low	3.00 \pm 0.00	6.54	0.0020
	Moderate	20.43 \pm 8.47		
	High	20.71 \pm 6.98		
	Very high	0		
Communication	Low	18.94 \pm 8.50	17.17	0.0001
	Moderate	22.14 \pm 2.60		
	High	26.70 \pm 7.64		
	Very high	0		
Conflict resolution	Low	18.98 \pm 8.82	13.12	0.0001
	Moderate	20.35 \pm 1.44		
	High	24.27 \pm 6.20		
	Very high	21.50 \pm 0.00		
Ideal distortion	Low	52.48 \pm 3.00	22.78	0.0001
	Moderate	19.35 \pm 9.12		
	High	16.32 \pm 8.15		
	Very high	14.91 \pm 2.08		

SD: Standard deviation

The findings of our study were not inconsistent with those of Raeisi et al.,²⁶ because the population of study in Raeisi et al.²⁶ study was women with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and ours was healthy women.

In our study, we found an inversely significant correlation between sexual satisfaction with women's age and their spouses' age. Rahmani et al. found that marital satisfaction significantly related to sexual satisfaction. They also reported that the age difference of couples related to marital satisfaction significantly.⁴ Ziaee et al. also reported a significant association between sexual satisfaction and age.⁷ In a review study by Shahhosseini et al., age was reported as one of the important factors in sexual satisfaction in women.²⁷

Sexual function was significantly correlated with the level of marital satisfaction scales including sexual satisfaction, communication, conflict resolution, and ideal distortion. Baneian et al. showed that the most difficult problem for women in marital satisfaction was their communication with their husbands. They also reported that as the level of education increased (men and women), their marital satisfaction also

increased.²² In contrast, Mazloomi Mahmoodabad et al. found no relationship between marital satisfaction and education level of women and their husbands.²⁸

Conclusion

Given that the sexual function in this study was moderate and there was a relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction, sexual education and counseling to women and men during marriage by health and social systems is recommended.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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