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Prediction of Pessimistic Attitude towards Remarriage based on Insecure Attachment Style and Fear of Intimacy in Divorced Women

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This study was done to explain the pessimistic attitude toward remarriage in divorced women based on insecure attachment style and fear of intimacy. The present study was a descriptive correlational study. All divorced women in Tehran city in 2020 made up the population of this research, 158 of them were chosen through a convenient and snowball sampling method from among the educational groups formed on social networking sites (Telegram and WhatsApp). Participants completed the attitude to remarriage and Fear of Intimacy Questionnaire and Adult Attachment Scale. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, and SPSS22 software. The results indicated that fear of intimacy had a positive and significant relationship with a pessimistic attitude towards

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remarriage (r = .204; p = .010). Also, avoidant attachment style showed a positive and significant relationship with pessimistic attitude towards remarriage (r = .272; p = .001). However, the relationship between anxious, insecure attachment style and pessimistic attitude towards remarriage was not significant. According to the findings, failure in the first marriage can create a pessimistic attitude towards remarriage in divorced women by creating a sense of insecurity in them and increasing their fear about intimate relationships with others.

Keywords: insecure attachment style, fear of intimacy, attitude to remarriage, divorced women

Divorce is one of the most stressful events in people's lives, which affects their physical and mental health in different ways, such as severe depression, psychophysical diseases, and an even higher rate of death (Stroebe & Stroebe, 2021; Ayadi, Fatehizade, Zare & Ebrahimi, 2022). In other words, divorce is the outcome of an unsuccessful marriage, which influences the divorcees' psychophysical health and many aspects of life (Jaberi, Etemadi, Fatehizade & Rabbani Khorasgani, 2021). Moreover, divorcees are usually misjudged, misunderstood, and misbehaved by others (Saleh & Luppicini, 2017).

Despite the detrimental effects of divorce, some experts believe that divorce can be viewed as a proper technique to manage unsuccessful marriages, which might help the divorcee improve their life. According to some experts, divorce laws have been simplified, and divorce is a potential for those suffering from despondent marriages (Khan & Hamid, 2021). However, it cannot be denied that although getting divorced is just a way to lessen the negative effects of fruitless or unhappy marriage, on the one hand, it is nothing but a frustrating and complex process for those involved, and on the other hand, divorce is yet regarded as an undesirable phenomenon in several cultures (Oren & Hadomi, 2020; Shazia, 2014). Therefore, such people

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need to exercise other approaches to protect their mental health and enhance their mental adaptability. Some researchers state that one helpful way to enhance mental adaptability has new intimate relationships or remarriage after divorce (Kulik & Heine-Cohen, 2011); but this is not as simple as it is said because there are many socio-cultural factors along with some factors related to the previous marriage that influences the divorcee's inclination to remarry. Researchers believe that expectations and beliefs about remarriage affect the perceived quality of remarriage. Some believe that experiences of the previous marriage can help choose a new partner and simplify remarriage, though (Abdollahi, Einipour & Souri, 2021). Research on investigating the obstacles to the head-of-household divorcees' remarriage was done by Dalilgou, Vahida, Mohajerni, and Esmaili (2017) in Iran, which showed that child's custody, along with operational and structural factors such as unhappy experiences of the previous marriage, mental damages, and reviewing the nasty memories of the previous unsuccessful marriage are the major obstacles of remarriage for head-of-household divorcees.

Regarding the factors related to the previous marriage which affect the divorcees' decisions for remarriage, experts have indicated that failure in previous romantic relationships can lead to fear of intimacy which is a threatening factor in peoples' emotional problems (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006). Fear of intimacy is hand in hand with features including mistrusting partner, concerning separation, reluctance to share personal worries, and uneasiness in emotional interactions (Lyvers, Pickett & Needham, 2021). Researchers have reported that fear of intimacy severely disrupts inter-personal communications and

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the general health of the individuals. Following that, building and maintaining relationships, being optimistic, and showing emotions will face problems (Shafiee, Salehzadeh, Dehghani & Motazavizadeh, 2019). Crawford and Anger (2004) indicated in a study that emotional relationships are basic needs of human beings. Not satisfying such needs contributes to more conflicts, less intimacy in married life, and emotional and mental issues. Fischer (2014) claimed in his studies that if ones' pre-marriage sexual and emotional relationships face emotional failure, one's expectations of romantic relationships will abruptly or gradually get agitated.

Reviewing the research, initials show that prosperous marriage is more mentally secure and intimate than other human relationships. On the contrary, unprosperous marriage endangers both partners' psychological well-being (McCarthy & Ginsberg, 2007). Therefore, divorce, as the crystal clear aspect of marriage unsuccessfulness, can be regarded as a reason for the divorcees' insecure attachment, which has been depicted as guides or inner models of emotions towards oneself or others and individuals' behavior in close relationships (Collins, Welsh & Furman, 2009). Bowlby's attachment theory includes the main hypothesis that physical or psychological tensions in adults automatically activate childlike attachment. After it is activated, according to the attachment style, one seeks an available way to make one secure (Ayadi, Rasouli & Nazari, 2017). Regarding the effects of attachment on the quality of married life in the second marriage, researchers have indicated that those with more secure attachment have greater marital commitment than those with insecure attachment (Ehrenberg, Robertson & Pringle, 2012). Considering the increase in the divorce rate in the country and the consequent increase in the demand for

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remarriage after divorce, it seems necessary to identify the facilitating factors and obstacles to remarriage. In this regard, the review of the existing research literature showed that the experience of divorce affecting people's attachment style could affect their view toward the next intimate relationships. Therefore, by considering the empirical background in this field, the objective of this study was to answer the question of whether an insecure attachment style and fear of intimacy can explain the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage in divorced women?

Method

The present study was descriptive-correlational. All divorced women in Tehran city in 2020 made up the population of this research, 158 of them were chosen through a convenient sampling method from among the educational groups formed on social networking sites) Telegram and WhatsApp). This research was conducted during the Corona Virus pandemic in Iran, it was done through the Internet to meet health standards. Considering that the minimum sample size for correlation-type studies is considered 30 people for each variable (Basharpoor & Ahmadi, 2019). In this research, due to the virtual execution of questionnaires, which reduces access to questionnaires, 180 people were selected as samples, and after discarding the incompletely filled questionnaires, 158 questionnaires were selected for statistical analysis.

To conduct the present research, after online questionnaires were prepared, their access links were sent out on social networking sites and Tehran citizens' Internet groups with the questionnaires guide attached and in addition to explaining the research objectives and stating the needed criteria for the

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research, the members of the groups, to participate in the survey, were proudly invited. Moreover, in Snowball sampling, each member was asked to introduce any other divorced women living in Tehran to the researchers. The criteria for admitting to the research were being a divorcee, being a woman, not having children from the previous marriage, living in Tehran, and agreeing with participation in the research. Criteria for quitting the research were reluctance to continue, moving in during the process, having no experience of divorce or getting married during the investigation. In carrying out the research, ethical principles were highly respected, the most significant of which include vividly informing the participants of the research objectives, gaining their consent to participation, assuring them of confidentiality of their personal information, and gaining approval of the group's administrators for sharing the access links via their groups on social networking sites. Plus, in the very process of investigation, questionnaires were used for collecting data which is comprehensively depicted below:

Instruments

Martial Attitude Scale (MAS)

This questionnaire was designed by Brateen and Rosen in 1998, including 23 questions that inspects individuals' attitude (pessimistic, optimistic, realistic, or idealistic) from different aspects, and concerning the research objective, only pessimistic attitude items were taken into account. The responding spectrum was the five-choice Likert Scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). Nevertheless, this scoring method is the opposite for questions 1, 3, 5, 8, 12, 16, 19, 20, and 23. The internal reliability of the original version of this questionnaire was reported to be .82 for the whole scale. Also, in assessing the

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validity, scores on the MAS moderately correlated with other measures of marital attitudes, such as the Attitude toward Marriage Scale (r=.77) **(**Braaten & Rosén, 1998; Najarpourian, Samavi & Shaafizadeh, 2019**).** In Iran, content validity and convergence of this scale were confirmed in the research held by Nilforoushan et al. (2013), and its reliability was measured at .76 via Cronbach's Alpha model, which indicates its appropriate reliability. In the present study, the reliability of the pessimistic subscale of the MAS scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained to be .80. Also, Qualitative face validity was used to check the validity of this subscale. For this purpose, the questionnaire was given to 5 experts of psychology and counseling, as well as 4 researchers of the present study, to examine the level of Relevancy, Ambiguous and Difficulty of items. Finally, minor changes were made to the questionnaire by applying their comments.

Fear-of-intimacy Scale (FIS)

This questionnaire was designed by Descanter and Telen in 1991 which is a 35-item self-report scale that has been prepared to measure the anxieties of close relationships. Items of this scale focus on the fears of having relationships with others or getting involved in close, romantic, and emotional relationships, especially self-disclosure fears. Participants answer the items on a Likert scale, including a five-item spectrum ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In this questionnaire, scores are measured within a range of 35 to 175, in which the higher the score is, the more fearful the person is of intimacy (Descutner & Thelen, 1991). The validity of this questionnaire has been approved through its correlation with questionnaires on

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social intimacy, self-disclosure, and loneliness. Moreover, its reliability of it was measured 0.93 and re-measured to .89 via Cronbach's Alpha model (Shafiee et al., 2019). Also, in the present study, the reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained to be .88.

Collins and Read's Revised Adult Attachment Scale (RAAS)

This scale, revised by Collins and Read in 1990, examines the self-reported skills of having relationships and forming attachment relationships with respect to attachment styles. This scale consists of 18 items, in which three styles of secure, anxious, and avoidant attachments are observed through marking on a five-choice Likert Scale ranging from zero (it is not my feature at all) to four (it is completely my feature). Collins and Read (1990) detailed the validity of sub-scales of this scale between .69 and .75 via both Cronbach's Alpha and test re-test models after two months of re-test. In Iran, Pakdaman (2001) claimed that the validity and reliability of the Persian version of this scale have been almost properly measured, i.e., Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questions in each of secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachments was .81, .78, and .85 respectively which shows the internal consistency of attachment scale (Kamijany, 2009). In the present study, the reliability of this scale using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained to be .82.

The data of the present study were analyzed using descriptive statistics (the average, standard deviation), Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (to make sure that data are normally distributed), Pearson's coefficient of correlation, tolerance statistics, and VIF, i.e., Variance Inflation Factor (to measure the presupposition of collinearity), Durbin-Watson test (to test the

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independence of the observations) and multiple linear Regression analysis, all of which were analyzed on a significance level ($\alpha = .05$) using the 22nd version of SPSS.

Results

Demographic findings related to participants indicated that participants were between 19 to 62 years old. In addition, among the participants, 28 people (17.7 percent) had primary education, 18 people (11.4 percent) had secondary education, 67 people (42.2 percent) had a diploma, 15 people (9.5 percent) had an Associate degree, 23 people (14.6 percent) had Bachelor's degree, and 7 people (4.4 percent) had Master's degree or Ph.D.

Table 1

The Average and Standard Deviation of the Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (p)
fear of intimacy	101.65	9.96	.184
anxious insecure attachment	19.52	3.01	.060
avoidant insecure attachment	20.55	2.73	.069
pessimistic attitude towards remarriage	26.55	2.80	.078

Findings of table 1 show the average and standard deviation of fear of intimacy, anxious and avoidant insecure attachment, and the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage of divorced women. Plus, because of the probability of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

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in making sure that data are normally distributed (P0.05), it is worth saying that the distribution of variables has been normal.

Table 2

Attachment Coefficients of Fear of Intimacy and Insecure Attachment along with Pessimistic Attitude Toward Remarriage

Variable	1	2	3	4
1-fear of intimacy	1	-	-	-
2-anxious insecure attachment	.137	1	-	-
3-avoidant insecure attachment	.179*	.424**	1	-
4-pessimistic attitude toward remarriage	.204*	.102	.272**	1

*P<.05 **P<.01

Findings of table 2 show that fear of intimacy has a positive and significant relationship with the pessimistic attitude toward remarriage (r = .204; p = .010). Moreover, among insecure attachment styles, avoidant attachment has a positive and significant relationship with the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage (r = .272; p = .001), while anxious attachment does not have a significant relationship with the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage. Before doing Multiple Regression analysis, its presumptions were entirely investigated, and the findings are listed in table 3. İn investigating the independence of observations, Durbin-Watson test (DW) was used, and its

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findings indicated that observations are independent, i.e., there was not any self-attachment among observations. On the other hand, VIF (variance inflation factor) test was used to measure the severity of multicollinearity in regression analysis. The findings showed that there is no collinearity between the independent variables.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Predicting the Pessimistic Attitude towards Remarriage according to Predicting Variables

Predictive variables	B	SE	β	T	Sig.
Constant	17.061	2.604		6.553	.000
fear of intimacy	.046	.074	.218	2.089	.038
avoidant insecure attachment	.261	.087	.255	2.993	.003
anxious insecure attachment	.027	.079	.029	.339	.735
F= 5.682 p= .001	ADJ.R^2=.082		R^2=.010	R=.316	DW=1.90

Findings of Multiple Regression analysis for predicting the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage according to fear of intimacy and avoidant and anxious insecure attachments are listed in Table 3. The modified coefficient of determination shows that fear of intimacy and avoidant and anxious insecure attachment could determine only 10 percent of changes of the variable pessimistic attitude towards remarriage.

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Discussion

This research aimed to determine the pessimistic attitude toward divorced women's remarriage according to insecure attachment and fear of intimacy.

Analyzing findings showed that fear of intimacy has a positive and significant relationship with the pessimistic attitude towards remarriage. These findings are in line with findings of the research held by Asayesh, Ghazi Nezhad, and Bahonar (2021), in which they claimed that incompatible emotional reactions of girls due to love failure include feeling failure, insignificance, emotional confusion, fear, insufficiency and grief, vulnerability, depression, rage, jealousy, guilt, reluctance, disappointment, and hatred. In another research with the same findings, Fischer (2014) found that if ones' pre-marriage sexual and emotional relationships face emotional failure, one's expectations of romantic relationships will abruptly or gradually get agitated.

As inter-personal experiences of the past play a significant role in forming the next romantic relationships (Lloyd, 2011), the psychosocial theory of Ericson (1982] can be utilized to determine the relationship between fear of intimacy and the pessimistic attitude toward remarriage of the divorced women. Ericson, explaining the first level of the life cycle, has said that trust may be built up in people if their needs for security, love, and affection in important relationships like mother-child, teacher-student, or friendship relationships are fulfilled, and this leads to the formation of an optimistic attitude towards themselves and others. Following that, people will learn to expect consistency, continuation, and uniformity in their relationships with others. He added that suspicion, panic, and anxiety may arise if such trust does not exist in relationships

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between people (Schultz & Schultz, 2016). According to the participant of this research, separation or divorce accompanied by mistrust in individuals brings about anxiety and fear in their inter-personal and close relationships, and thus, a negative attitude will be adopted for the next relationships; therewith, the person's expectations of the next relationships will be loaded with suspicion, pessimism, and fear.

Another finding showed that avoidant insecure attachment has a positive and significant relationship with the remarriage of divorced women. In contrast, anxious, insecure attachment did not show a significant relationship with the remarriage of divorced women. This section of the research is almost in line with a similar study carried out by Akbar Zadeh, Hossein Pour, Langroudi, and Mesbah (2010), which stated that there is no significant relationship between avoidant and anxious insecure attachment and the attitude toward marriage. In another similar research, Brydon (2005) specified that attachment style correlates with the tendency to marriage, reasons for marriage, and different types of relationships people have. In another research, Hossein Pour Langroudi, Nouri Ghasem Abadi, and Vakili (2013) stipulated that despite the significant relationship between secure attachment style and the attitude towards marriage, there is no significant relationship between insecure attachments (avoidant and anxious) and the attitude towards marriage. Also, this finding is in line with the results of studies that have shown that a positive attitude and trust in oneself and others are the main characteristics of a secure attachment style. On the other hand, negative attitudes and mistrust toward others are the main characteristics of insecure attachment styles (Besharat, 2012).

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Considering the positive relationship between avoidant insecure attachment and the pessimistic attitude toward remarriage, it is worth mentioning that people with avoidant attachment do not feel pleased to be intimate with others and cannot fully trust others. They find it hard to depend on others, and when someone gets close to them, they get outraged and suppose that others are being more intimate than their comfort zone (Akbarzadeh et al., 2010). Thus, such people feel more insecure and mistrustful in close relationships when they experience divorce, and thereby, they become pessimistic about any other intimate relationships, especially remarriage. To validate this, Aayadi, Rasouli, and Nazari (2016), in a research on attachment theory, mentioned that the firm basis of people's attachment styles is formed in the first inter-personal experiences, particularly in the relationships with parents and relatives. However, next events or interpersonal relationships can help individuals' attachment style remain secure or insecure by activating it.

According to the findings of this research, this can be concluded that failing in the first marriage, by making the divorced women feel insecure and fearful about having intimate relationships with others, can lead to a pessimistic attitude towards remarriage. Thus, it is recommended that in premarital counseling sessions, more suitable consultation tips should be given to divorcees on the verge of remarriage. The present study had some limitations. One of the limitations of this study was that it was conducted online during the Prevalence of Covid-19, which made it difficult to conduct the research in terms of participants' physical and psychological screening and attracting their opinions to participate in the study. In addition, these study statistical populations were divorced women in Tehran city,

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making it difficult to generalize the research results to other people, especially divorced men. Another limitation of this research was the available sampling method using social networks, which affects the possibility of accessing real samples. Therefore, it is suggested to use other sampling methods and In-person implementation of questionnaires in future studies in this field.

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