

# Effect of Psychological Disorders, Extramarital Relationship, Job Satisfaction and Personality Traits on Emotional Divorce among Male and Female Physicians in Zanjan

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## Abstract

**Background:** A woman and even a man refuse legal separation due to its consequences, but they adopt a psychological mechanism called emotional divorce in living together.

**Objective:** The present study aimed to investigate the effect of psychological disorders, explanatory components of extramarital affairs, job satisfaction, and personality traits on emotional divorce in male and female physicians.

**Method:** The research method was descriptive-correlational. The research sample included 200 married physicians (male and female) aged 30 to 45 years living in Zanjan. Data were collected by SCL25 questionnaire (short form of SCL90 questionnaire), Glass's inter-relationship justification questionnaire, job satisfaction questionnaire, emotional divorce questionnaire, and NEO-FFI questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Pearson correlation, and multivariate regression.

**Results:** Based on the findings, it can be stated that psychological disorders, explanatory components of extramarital affairs, job satisfaction, and personality traits directly or indirectly affect the rate of emotional divorce.

**Conclusion:** It is suggested that future researchers use implicit measurement models to assess extramarital affairs and emotional divorce due to the sensitivity of measuring these variables to counteract the limitations of the validity of the findings.

**Keywords:** Emotional Divorce, Extramarital relationship, Job satisfaction, Physicians

## Introduction

Divorce is a social phenomenon that, although provided for in law, does not have a pleasant face in society. Therefore, a woman and even a man may refuse legal separation due to its consequences, but they adopt a psychological mechanism called emotional divorce in living together (1). Couples encounter the critical issue of extramarital affairs when they have interpersonal and marital problems. Extramarital affairs refer to all the behaviors and actions of a married person outside the framework of the family which leads to a friendly, sincere, emotional, and romantic relationship, and brings special emotions to the acting spouse (2). Accordingly, numerous studies indicate that gender differences are directly related to the occurrence of extramarital affairs which is more common among men (3,4). However, statistics recently show that the incidence of extramarital affairs in women is the same as in men, especially among the younger age group (5). In general, several theoretical models of extramarital relationships focus on marriage, social and cultural norms, such as attachment theory, which emphasizes intrinsic factors (6). Additionally, social structure theory focuses on society and cultural components (7). Accordingly, investment models focus on current relationships such as satisfaction,

investment, and commitment (8). A combination of these theories can be summarized in the diathesis-stress model, which considers intrapersonal and environmental factors in increasing the commission of extramarital relationships (9). Among these, personality is a general and complex concept that plays a major role in highlighting these differences. Personality is a dynamic organization of psychological and physiological systems that determines outstanding behaviors and thoughts in an individual (10). Personality can create an intimate or even unloving relationship between couples (11). Also, some personality traits and mental disorders increase conflicts between couples and threaten the continuation of married life (12). Extramarital affairs often cause severe emotional trauma to both parties. The symptoms of this type of relationship are similar to a post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as depression, anger, frustration, lack of self-confidence, loss of identity, and feelings of worthlessness in the injured spouse. Furthermore, it causes feelings of doubt, depression, and remorse in the unfaithful spouse (13).

Additionally, an emotional coldness occurs between couples in the medical community due to work problems and distance from the family, which can sometimes lead to emotional divorce. This

suggests that emotional divorce and extramarital affairs may also be associated with job satisfaction in addition to personality traits (14). Job satisfaction is the general positive attitude of a person towards his job based on workplace conditions, job organization system, relations governing the work environment, and the impact of cultural factors. Therefore, it can be concluded that job satisfaction is a psychological feeling that is also affected by social factors (15).

The study of variables affecting the strengthening of the family foundation is highly considerable due to the importance of the family system. Few studies, to the best of our knowledge, have been conducted on the extramarital relations of couples, especially in the medical community. Therefore, the present study aimed to predict emotional divorce among male and female physicians based on personality traits, psychological disorders, extramarital affairs, and job satisfaction.

## Method

The present study was analytical survey research. This research was also placed in the category of descriptive correlational research in terms of data collection and data analysis methods. The statistical population included all married male and female physicians aged 30 to 45 years living in Zanjan. At least 5-10 people were required for each predictor variable as a rule of thumb in descriptive correlational research. According to this rule and considering the 18 predictor variables, 180 people were required for the sample (minimum and maximum required sample size according to this rule and for the number of variables in this study were 90 and 180 people for each group). A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to prevent a drop in the sample among which 200 complete questionnaires remained in the analysis for screening the data. Also, gender distribution was observed in the sample due to the comparative nature of the study (100 people for each gender group). Furthermore, a convenience sampling method was used. Inclusion criteria included 1) being a specialist, 2) being married, 3) age range of 30-45, and 4) resident of Zanjan, and exclusion criteria were age gap of more than 8 years and compliance in terms of age and specialty.

Necessary permits were taken to enter the research environment. The questionnaires were distributed among specialists of 11 identified hospitals in Zanjan and they were asked to respond honestly besides entering personal details. The hospitals were selected using convenience sampling among which 6 were located in Zanjan and 5 in Abhar, Khorramdareh, and Gheidar. This sampling method was used according to the conditions of hospitalization and the distribution of questionnaires among specialists. A total of 200 questionnaires were selected from the collected questionnaires and then

the results were analyzed. In this study, descriptive statistics were used to express the demographic and descriptive characteristics of the cases as well as reports on central indicators and dispersion. Additionally, Pearson's correlation test and multivariate regression were used to inferentially examine the research hypotheses. The necessary information about the study was provided to the participants and written informed consent was obtained from the parents before participating in the study. Also, the participants left the executive process whenever they wished in case of reluctance. Participants were also given full assurance about the confidentiality of the results and related principles, while they were allowed not to mention personal details such as name in the questionnaire. Finally, the following research tools were used for data collection:

**Symptoms Checklist-Revised (SCL-25):** The original version of this inventory has 90 questions which is originally designed to show the psychological aspects of physically and mentally ill patients. The initial form of the test was introduced in 1973 and then revised based on clinical experience and psychometric analysis, and the final form was prepared, accordingly. The short form of this questionnaire has 25 questions, which can partially diagnose the symptoms of SCL-90. Also, the questionnaire has 9 subscales including somatization (SOM), Obsessive-Compulsive (OC), interpersonal relationships (INT), depression (DEP), anxiety (ANX), phobias (PHOB), paranoid thoughts (PAR), psychosis (PSY), and additional items (ADI) on a 4-point Likert scale. The content validity of this tool was approved by Iranian society and the internal consistency of test materials was calculated 0.97 using Cronbach's alpha which indicated the excellent reliability of this questionnaire (16).

**Justifications for Extramarital Involvement Questionnaire (JEIQ):** This test was designed by Glass in 1988 and has 18 questions on a 4-point Likert scale and 4 subscales including sexual justification, external motivations, emotional intimacy and love, and romantic motivations (17). This questionnaire assesses the justification of individuals for engaging in extramarital affairs. Both spouses are asked to complete this questionnaire, their answers can give therapists ideas about their nonverbal communication and unconscious collusion on marital relationships. In Iranian studies, the content validity was reported to be suitable and its internal consistency was found to be 0.94 (18).

**Job Satisfaction Questionnaire:** This questionnaire has 30 questions with options A, B, C and scores of 1,3,5. The scores range from 30 to 195 and the higher the scores, the greater the job satisfaction. The reliability and validity of this tool are confirmed in a national sample by (19). The internal reliability of this questionnaire is reported to be 0.83 using

Cronbach's alpha (20). In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire was obtained to be 0.73 using Cronbach's alpha.

**Emotional Divorce Scale (EDS):** The Emotional Divorce Scale is taken from the book *Success or Failure in Marriage* by John Guttman. This scale has 24 questions with yes/no options which obtain one and zero, respectively. The higher the number of positive responses, the greater the likelihood of an emotional divorce. In the study of Mirzadeh Koohshahi et al. (21), the reliability of the questionnaire was reported 0.83 using Cronbach's questions, except that it starts with the third person pronoun and is based on observer ratings (22). In the study of Haghshenas (23), the internal stability of the comparisons and correlation coefficients between 502 cases indicated a high correlation of each index with the relevant scale and the absence of a significant positive correlation with the indicators related to other scales. The retest with

alpha. Also, the content validity of the questionnaire was reported to be desirable by professors.

**The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R):** This questionnaire measures 5 main personality factors with 6 characteristics (30 characteristics). Accordingly, it provides a comprehensive assessment of personality. This questionnaire has two forms: (S) for self-reports which includes 240 five-item questions from strongly agree to strongly disagree, graded by the participants and appropriate for men and women of all ages; (R) or revised form which has also the same 240 an average of 7.6 months on 26 cases also showed correlation coefficients between 53.0 to 76.0 for the test scale.

## Results

Table 1 presents the frequency of samples and age-related descriptive data separated by gender.

**Table 1. The frequency of samples and age-related descriptive data separated by the gender**

Gender	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Mean age	Age Standard Deviation
Male	100	50	39.42	3.8
Female	100	50	37.43	3.1

The research question was examined through statistical tests including multivariate regression. The step-by-step model was used to enter the variables into the model due to the high number of predictor

variables. Before this stage, the correlation between the predictor and criterion variables was investigated. Table 2 presents the correlation matrix of emotional divorce and predictor variables.

**Table 2. Correlation matrix of emotional divorce and predictor variable**

<b>Intimacy justification</b>	Pearson's correlation	*-0.38	*-0.46	*-0.41	
	Significance	0.001	0.001	0.001	
<b>External motivation justification</b>	Pearson's correlation	*-0.28	*-0.33	*-0.29	
	Significance	0.001	0.001	0.001	
<b>Love justification</b>	Pearson's correlation	*-0.28	*-0.30	*-0.29	
	Significance	0.005	0.002	0.001	
<b>Physical complaints</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.12	0.08	0.104	
	Significance	0.20	0.41	0.14	
<b>Obsessive-compulsive</b>	Pearson's correlation	-0.001	0.	0.011	
	Significance	0.95	0.26	0.52	
<b>Interpersonal relations</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.03	0.04	0.03	
	Significance	0.74	0.69	0.62	
<b>Depression</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.02	0.11	0.06	
	Significance	0.84	0.23	0.33	
<b>Anxiety</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.07	-0.02	0.02	
	Significance	0.45	0.79	0.71	
<b>Phobias</b>	Pearson's correlation	-0.01	0.10	0.04	
	Significance	0.92	0.29	0.53	
<b>Paranoid thoughts</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.09	0.09	0.09	
	Significance	0.35	0.34	0.18	
<b>Psychosis</b>	Pearson's correlation	-0.13	-0.04	0.06	
	Significance	0.19	0.65	0.34	
<b>ADi</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.08	0.04	0.06	
	Significance	0.38	0.64	0.34	
<b>scl total score</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.04	0.06	0.04	
	Significance	0.69	0.54	0.47	
<b>Job satisfaction total score</b>	Pearson's correlation	-0.15	-0.08	-0.12	
	Significance	0.116	0.41	0.07	
<b>Neuroticism</b>	Pearson's correlation	*0.34	*0.46	*0.41	
	Significance	0.001	0.001	0.001	
<b>Extraversion</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.01	0.02	0.01	
	Significance	0.92	0.81	0.87	

<b>Openness</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.07	0.09	0.08	
	Significance	0.49	0.35	0.23	
<b>Compatibility</b>	Pearson's correlation	0.06	-0.19	-0.08	
	Significance	0.55	0.51	0.23	
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	Pearson's correlation	*-0.20	*-0.32	*-0.23	

According to Table 2, regarding the predictor variables, only 3 components of marital relations (i.e., justification of intimacy, external motivation, and love) and 2 components of personality traits (i.e., neuroticism and conscientiousness) were significantly associated with emotional divorce among men. Among women, only the components of sexual justification, intimacy, external motivation, and love, as well as neuroticism and conscientiousness had a significant correlation with emotional divorce. The components of personality traits were also significantly associated with emotional divorce on the whole. Also, paranoid thoughts and ADI of psychological characteristics

were removed from the analysis because there was only one question to measure them in this tool which failed to be evidence of the validity of the tool.

The question of this statistical test was first examined to use multivariate regression. Based on the assumptions made for linear regression analysis, the criterion and predictor variables were all of the distance types and there was no restriction on the variability of the criterion variable. Also, the normality of the explanation of the criterion variable was possible since the skewness and kurtosis of the criterion variable were between 1.5 and -1.5. Table 3 presents the results of stepwise regression among female physicians.

**Table 3. Results of stepwise regression among female physicians**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error	Varied R <sup>2</sup>	Significance	Durbin-Watson
<b>Neuroticism</b>	0.46	0.21	0.207	3.96	0.21	0.001	
<b>Intimacy justification</b>	0.57	0.32	0.31	3.69	0.11	0.001	
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	0.62	0.39	0.37	3.52	0.06	0.001	1.6

The results of stepwise regression indicated that neuroticism plays the most considerable role (about 20%) in predicting emotional divorce in women. The justification of intimacy for the extramarital affair was the second variable that enters the model and increases the adjusted coefficient of explanation up to

32%. Conscientiousness was also the third variable in this model, which brought the coefficient of explanation to 37%. Table 4 examines the significance of the above-mentioned variables for female physicians.

**Table 4. Significance of neuroticism, intimacy justification, and conscientiousness for female physicians**

Model	Source	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Significance
<b>Neuroticism</b>	Regression	421.20	1	421.20	26.80	0.001
	Remaining	1539.78	98	15.72		
	Total	1960.99	99			
<b>Intimacy justification</b>	Regression	639.9	2	319.9	23.40	0.001
	Remaining	1321.02	97	13.619		
	Total	1960.20	99			
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	Regression	764.94	3	254.98	20.46	0.001
	Remaining	1196.05	96	12.45		
	Total	1960.99	99			

According to Table 4, the proposed regression models are statistically significant for predicting emotional divorce among female physicians. Table 5

presents the results of stepwise regression among male physicians.

**Table 5. Results of stepwise regression among male physicians**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard error	Varied R <sup>2</sup>	Significance	Durbin-Watson
<b>Neuroticism</b>	0.53	0.28	0.26	3.46	0.06	0.004	
<b>Intimacy justification</b>	0.466	0.21	0.32	3.60	0.21	0.001	
<b>Externalmotivation justification</b>	0.56	0.31	0.29	3.39	0.03	0.025	1.84

The results of stepwise regression indicated that the justification of intimacy for the extramarital affair played the most considerable role in predicting emotional divorce and explained about 22% of the changes in the criterion variable among men. In the next stage, neuroticism entered the model and the

third variable was the justification of external motivation. In total, these three variables predicted 30% of the changes in the criterion variable. Table 6 examines the significance of the above-mentioned variables for male physicians.

**Table 6. Significance of neuroticism, intimacy justification and external motivation justification for male physicians**

Model	Source	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Significance
Intimacyjustification	Regression	352.84	1	352.84	27.220	0.001
	Remaining	1271.2	98	12.97		
	Total	1624.11	99			
Neuroticism	Regression	459.17	2	229.58	19.11	0.001
	Remaining	1164.92	97	12.01		
	Total	1624.11	99			
Conscientiousness	Regression	518.6	3	172.88	15.01	0.001
	Remaining	1105.44	96	11.51		
	Total	1624.11	99			

According to Table 6, variance analysis shows that all three variables are statistically significant.

## Discussion

In the medical community, having work problems and being away from family sometimes creates a kind of emotional coldness that can lead to emotional divorce. Emotional divorce and extramarital affairs along with personality traits can be also associated with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a psychological phenomenon and emotional adaptation to the job and employment conditions (24). Numerous reasons can be imagined for the emotional failure of marriage and reaching a dead end. In the present study, several factors including neuroticism, justification of intimacy, conscientiousness, and justification of external motivation were found to be more important for the participants.

The three variables including neuroticism, justification of intimacy, and conscientiousness predicted emotional divorce among female physicians at 21, 11, and 6%, respectively. In explaining our findings on neuroticism, this relationship can be explained from two perspectives of interpersonal and intrapersonal models. From the perspective of intrapersonal models, people with a high score of neuroticism are less satisfied with relationships because their view of life events is generally negative (24-25). Some researchers believe that an interstitial perspective should be followed to explain the relationship. Therefore, interpersonal and intrapersonal factors are effective in exerting a neurotic effect on emotional divorce (26). It seems that neuroticism has a greater effect on the relationship and interactions of individuals which increases the tendency to divorce (27).

These findings were consistent with those of Kasalova et al., (28) which investigated the relationship between anxiety disorders and marital satisfaction. Anxiety disorders are caused by

psychological effects such as guilt and arguing which lead to marital dissatisfaction among couples. This finding was also in line with the results of Gulzar and Khalid (29) who reported a strong positive relationship between personality type and family inference among female physicians.

They predicted emotional divorce in male physicians by three factors of intimacy justification, neuroticism, and justification of external motivation at rates of 21, 6, and 3%, respectively. These results were in line with those of Yaqoob (30) revealed a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and personality factors (consistency and conscientiousness). This satisfaction was negatively related to neuroticism. Similarly, Kim et al., (31) showed that the more satisfied doctors are, the better visits they make. This finding was also in line with that of Bamdad (32), Fisher et al., (27), and Dehghani and Esmaeilian (33). According to Bamdad (32), extramarital affairs were one of the possible consequences of the formation of an emotional divorce.

Furthermore, paranoid thoughts, obsession, and justification of external motivation were significantly associated with the job satisfaction of the whole group of specialists. As can be imagined, having pessimistic views about the job and work environment has greatly reduced job satisfaction. Additionally, an obsessive-compulsive disorder in employees of an organizational unit leads to procrastination, dissatisfaction with the prevailing atmosphere, and a wide range of informal problems.

Scheeren et al., (34) investigated that marital infidelity was an important factor in determining the occurrence of emotional divorce in couples. However, the justifications for extramarital affairs can be effective in predicting the occurrence of emotional divorce. It should be noted that in this case, only the

justifications of individuals to have an extramarital affair are considered, and this does not mean that it has occurred. In this case, the justifications of individuals when they put themselves in the position of extramarital relationship can be effective in the formation or non-formation of the extramarital relationship. When women use the justification of intimacy to create an extramarital affair, they are less likely to experience an emotional divorce compared to when they use other justifications of sexual justification, external motivation, and love. This can be explained by the fact that women do not reject their romantic and committed relationship just to be in a sincere relationship. The justification of intimacy and external motivation is inversely related to other justifications of the extramarital affair in terms of affecting emotional boredom among men, meaning that the person is less likely to have an emotional divorce if the justification of intimacy and external motivation is greater than other justification. As a result, a situation in which a person engages in an extramarital affair with the motivation of finding intimate relationships and receiving attention outside of their marital relationship or achieving a specific benefit such as wealth or position will be a stronger predictor of an emotional divorce compared to when motivated by other reasons. This finding can be explained by the fact that men are more likely to engage in an extramarital affair and thus emotional divorce if they are motivated to experience better sexual intercourses or to compensate for their possibly insufficient love affair than when they intend to have an intimate relationship or the external interests. The medical profession is one of the 40 most stressful jobs in the world, and those who are active in this field usually have less mental health and marital satisfaction than the general public due to high work pressures and long hours of being away from family (35). In general, job satisfaction and psychiatric disorders are two variables of justification for the extramarital relationship which are mainly associated with the occurrence of emotional divorce. The interesting thing is that this study found no evidence of such a relationship unlike some previous studies on the relationship between mental disorders and emotional divorce.

### Conclusion

The limitation of this study was that the participants sometimes did not cooperate with the researcher in collecting data due to their busy schedules. A causal/ex-post-facto study was proposed to examine the status of emotional divorce in couples who have been victims of marital infidelity. This is important because it can explore the impact of extramarital affairs on emotional divorce in the present study. Also, it is suggested that future researchers use implicit measurement models to assess these variables to deal with the limitation of the validity in the findings due to the sensitivity of

measuring variables such as extramarital affairs and emotional divorce.

### Ethics approval

Ethical considerations have been observed in the present study and written informed consent was obtained from the cases before participating in the study.

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