

Sensation Seeking among Persian Married and Divorced Women

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Abstract: A social crisis that contemporary societies face is the increasing rate of divorce that results in detrimental effects on societies as well as families. The present study has aimed to examine the factors of sensation seeking among married and divorced women in different regions of Tehran, Iran. A qualitative phenomenology method was utilized for the purpose of this research. Using a purposive sampling technique, a number of married and divorced women who referred to a counseling center was interviewed. The findings indicated that sensation seeking factors such as seeking diversity, self-indulgence, seeking beauty and risk-taking were more worded by divorced women. Nevertheless, sentences indicating factors such as pessimism to the opposite sex and sociability were more found among married women.

Keywords: Divorced women, married women, sensation, adventure seeking, experience seeking.

1. INTRODUCTION

The family is considered to be the first, most basic group in a society that ensures the safety and survival of the society. It is the family that creates the character of children and the ability to raise them in compliance with social values. However, the family does not always maintain solidarity or guide its members toward a goal. Sometimes the family faces numerous problems, challenges and changes. Among these changes and challenges, some issues and problems are of interest due to the harm they cause to the family. Divorce can be among the most important of these problems. Divorce, as a social issue involving legal dissolution leading to separation of wives and husbands deeply influences the population growth and transformation of the family structure. The divorce-inflicted harms on the family as the basis of society are of great importance.

Divorce is in fact a family disruption, characterized by the breakup of a family unit or disruption of social roles due to the failure by one or more family members in playing their roles. Although divorce is as old as marriage, the rate of divorce has been outstanding in the twentieth century, resulting in trauma to the society.

Studies show that legal divorce does not necessarily put an end to the problems and stresses caused by marriage, even for women who have filed for a divorce. In addition, at the final stages of divorce and later, new incidents and processes emerge that affect the emotions, behavior and health of the divorced woman. Such intermediations include responsibility for

custody of the children (among divorcees who have taken custody of the children); disconnection with children (among divorcees who have been denied custody of their children); continuation of conflict with the ex-husband regarding support, visitation or custody of the children; lack of emotional support due to lessened connection with in-laws, married friends, and neighbors; decreased economic activity; and other facts that disrupt routine life such as moving from an appropriate and expensive neighborhood to a less expensive area with lower facilities. These mediating factors provide the mechanism through which divorce affects the performance or prosperity of divorcees and lowers their quality of life [1].

Research shows that factors such as low income of the husband [2], reduced adherence to religious values [3], economic problems [4], rapid changes in cultural realms [5] (Kalmijn, De Graaf, and Poortman, 2004), decrease in the number of children [6, 7] (Bernardi and Martínez-Pastor, 2011; Wagner and Weiß, 2006), pre-marital sex [8, 9] (Brown, Sanchez, Nock, and Wright, 2006; Reinhold, 2010) partnership [10] (Axinn and Thornton, 1992), and positive thinking of divorce [11] (Cohen and Orbuch, 1990) are among the factors that have increased divorce rates in recent decades.

Zuckerman (2007) [12] believes that people in same situation has different risk-taking traits in terms of accepting or not accepting risky valuable activities. Personality traits explain and predict inter-personal differences in terms of how much people tend to take risks. One such predictor is sensation-seeking.

Zuckerman(1978) [13] defines sensation-seeking as the tendency to try new, complicated, intensely exciting

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experiences and the tendency to physical, social, legal and financial risk-taking to gain such experiences. Sensation-seeking is a biological, crucial need in humans that can affect all stages of human life [14] (Reeve, 2009).

Errecart and colleagues (1991) [15] show in their research that from a certain point in time sensations do not occur by themselves. Their happening has a reason and from a functional viewpoint sensations have evolved to assist individuals with confronting basic tasks in their lives. In fact, our behaviors are products of excitements that facilitate the compatibility of individuals with physical and social environments.

Since sensation seeking comes from demanding new and diverse experiences, it is a mutually reinforcing activity [16] (Gatzke-Kopp, Raine, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, and Steinhauer, 2002). According to [13] Zuckerman (1978), the structure of sensation-seeking is related to arousal of the central nervous system. In his view, the main features of sensation-seeking are the need to experience a variety of new and complex experiences, and the tendency toward physical risks because of these experiences. A person who has high sensation-seeking prefers permanent external stimulation of the brain and tires of ordinary things. They constantly search for ways to increase arousal through sensation experiences. One with low sensation-seeking prefers a lesser influx of steady brain stimulation and tolerates ordinary tasks relatively well [14] (Reeve, 2009). For example, adolescents who are known as aggressive adventurers and sensation seekers drive more rapidly in the presence of their parents. Studies indicate that those who seek sensation at any age compared to those who have lower sensation-seeking drive more closely to the cars in front of them [17] (McMillen, Pang, Wells-Parker, and Anderson, 1992). Sensation-seekers are people who have the characteristics of extroversion, self-determination, defiance and uncooperativeness. They tend to be more liberal in their political and religious views, show greater tolerance for ambiguous success, have lower hegemony in sexual attitudes, and have more intense physiological responses to new stimuli than other groups [18] (Schultz and Schultz, 2012). Steinberg and colleagues (2008) [19] have determined that sensation-seeking changes as a result of age, so that younger people prone to seek risks and new experiences more than older people.

2. FACTORS OR COMPONENTS WHICH DETERMINE THE GENERAL TRAIT OF SENSATION-SEEKING

Errantry: Willingness to engage in physical activities that include elements of speed, danger, freshness, and escape from the incident (such as skydiving or scuba diving).

1. Experience seeking: Search for new experiences through travel, music, art, spontaneous lifestyle, and heterochromatic despite the similarities that people tend to.
2. Disinhibition: Need to seek salvation in uninhibited social activities or use of alcohol or without it.
3. Susceptibility to boredom: Avoidance of repetitive experiences, routine or monotonous tasks, or predictable persons. With forced exposure to such experiences, they show unrest dissatisfaction reactions [20, 18] (Fathi, Fekr Azad, Ghaffari, and Bolhari, 2013; Schultz and Schultz, 2012).
4. Self-indulgence (Sadralashrafi, Khonakdari, Shamkhani, Yousefi, and Afrashteh, 2012)(Sadralashrafi *et al.*, 2012)[21].
5. Extraversion [22, 13] (Ireland and Higgins, 2013; Zuckerman *et al.*, 1978).

Numerous studies on sensation-seeking have concluded that this trait is directly related to alcohol use (Weiland *et al.*, 2013) [23], drug abuse and inclination to physical and sexual violence, insensitivity to monotony, and risk seeking [24] (Reid, Manske, and Leatherdale, 2008)), driving drunk [25] (Ravert *et al.*, 2009), suicidal ideation [26] (Ortin, Lake, Kleinman, and Gould, 2012) high-risk behaviors [27] (Voisin, Tan, and DiClemente, 2013), early sex [28] (Khurana *et al.*, 2012), aggression [29] (Wilson and Scarpa, 2011) and lack of marital adjustment [30] (Gibson, Franken, and Rowland, 1989).

Studies show a negative relationship between sensation-seeking scores and marital satisfaction [31] (Heshmati, Hoseinifar, Rezaeinejad, and Miri, 2010). Since the degree of sensation-seeking differs among people, it seems that the cognitive and emotional system of individuals is organized based on this feature. Therefore some appropriateness should be considered in relation to other people so that both

personalities can be perceived to be equal. Harmony of couples along this line should be regarded as the reason for marriages that last. Conversely, the inequality of sensation-seeking in couples is regarded as a source of conflicts such as differences in the use of leisure time in the company of friends, travel programs, cultural interests and feedback in the education of children, which leads to dissatisfaction and the end of the marriage (Heshmati *et al.*, 2010) [31]. Accordingly, the higher the amount of sensation-seeking scores the lower the marital satisfaction.

For example if one spouse has a high score in terms of sensation-seeking and the other side has a low score, they are more likely to separate or divorce [32](Kajbaf, Taher Neshat Doost, and Khaloee, 2005). Although there is a direct relation between sensation-seeking and divorce according to studies (Kajbaf *et al.*, 2005; Muhyiddin Bonab, 1996) [32, 33] no research has been found that compared sensation-seeking between Iranian married and divorced women. Hence, the present study sought to answer the question as to the differences between married and divorced women concerning sensation-seeking.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research study used the qualitative phenomenology research method because the given phenomenon was studied under conventional circumstances, the data analysis was inductive, and attention was paid to detail. The issued was pursued through induction with focus on people's viewpoints in the process of research and the meaning they give to the studied phenomenon. The use of discourse was of importance for the researcher. Data analyses included data coding as open and crucial coding with the intent to arrive at the formation of concepts, issues, and features.

4. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The study population comprised both divorced and married women residents of Tehran, Iran. By taking into consideration the purpose of the study, we chose participants based on purposive sampling from individuals who referred to the Rooze Sevom Charity Consultation Center for consultations to improve their mental health and remove tensions with their children. After interviews with 12 divorced and 11 married women we reached repetitive answers.

5. RESEARCH TOOLS

The survey used 12 researcher-generated questions that were evaluated by several professors at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Allameh Tabatab'i on sensation-seeking. Interviews were individual and semi-structured. While the main questions were clear, the questionnaire was partially free according to issues raised by the participants. Permission was given to participants to speak about their sensation-seeking experience in whatever form or depth. The questions were studied concerning the legibility after the first interview was completed and the information transcribed. A second meeting was held to clarify any ambiguities of words from the previous meeting. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide feedback necessary for data sufficiency. The interviews continued until data saturation (data replication).

6. RESULTS

Qualitative research findings included a description of the study sample and data gathered by the research elements are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Information

N		
23	23-43	Age (years)
13	Housewife	Job
3	Laborer	
7	Work at home	
20	Diploma	Education
3	Associate	

Table 1 shows that most of participants were housewives with educations that ranged from high school diploma to associate degree. Of participants, 20 had high school diplomas whereas 3 had higher educations. We used a structured interview in this study and the results were coded as follows (Table 2).

As Table 2 shows, participants who divorced showed a high desire for variety seeking (24%) and sociability. Variety seeking trait had the highest rate which is 40%, instability was 27%, social was 47%, and 20% in friendship seeking.

These women had a rate of 16% in the popular elements of risk taking and aesthetics. In the aesthetic sets, the highest score belonged to being updated (40%) and the lowest score of being updated with 60%. The maximum and minimum scores were the components of risk taking that had a score of 70% and

Table 2: Components of Sensation Seeking in Divorced Women

Percent	Axial coding	Percent	Open Coding	Participants' Statements
24%	Variety seeking	40%	Secessionism	I become happy with my good or bad experiences. Meeting new people is fun for me. I want to learn new things. I want to see new places. I always want to try everything. I would like to visit some places; it is not enough to hear about them from others.
		27%	Instability and volatility	In my career I have always jumped from one branch to another. I want to change my life, it's repetitive for me. Every month I change my house decor. I don't like to go to places I have not seen before.
		33%	Complaints of stagnancy	Having no contact with my husband for a long time made me tired. Not learning anything and being stagnant made me tired. I get very tired every time I stay at home for a long time. Having nothing to do makes me tired. I cannot sit still somewhere.
9%	Cynicism to the opposite sex	50%	Fear of betrayal	Early on, men always abandon their partners. I have always been afraid of betrayal. The red line of my life is betrayal that I cannot forgive.
		50%	Lack of interest in the opposite sex	I hate men. I just communicate with my own gender. All men are nasty, even my father has done numerous bad things in his youth, but my mother tolerated and endured them.
11%	Pleasurable	57%	Indulgent	I'm inclined to do exciting things for enjoyment. Before performing a new job I'm excited, but when I do it I enjoy it. When I go into nature I become slap happy. I like to be outdoors most of my time.
		43%	Humorous	I usually joke in gatherings. My action causes my friends to laugh a lot. In general I try to take everything easy in my life.
16%	Approbation nice	40%	Fashionable	I love to have new beliefs and be fashionable. I like to be updated and like people who are updated I like shopping and commuting. I am so fashionable, but my criteria is that my clothes suit me and are new.
		60%	Interest in the arts	Artistic people show their sensation with their art. I express my feelings when I see works of art and handicrafts. Those who have excitement and enthusiasm seek to learn an art. Artists like laughing and commuting. I enjoy myself when I do a work of art. Artists are full of enthusiasm in what they do.
16%	Risky	30%	Adventurous	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In general I am interested in things that involve questions. I'm just curious in general I go to the courts to understand why people come here. All people are comfortable with me and talk to me about their problems without hesitation
		70%	Daring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I enjoy stimuli that frighten me. Sometimes I take risks. It is difficult for me to comply with all rules in the society. I love driving at high speeds. If I see a fight somewhere I go to see what they are doing. I am so interested in heights and jumping from heights. I like exciting sports like skiing and riding.

Table 2 Continue...

Percent	Axial coding	Percent	Open Coding	Participants' Statements
24%	Extraversion	20%	Camaderie	I can easily begin talking to someone. If I go outdoors from morning to noon, I usually find friends in a taxi, bus or shrine. One day I was talking to a woman in a bus and she believed I was right.
		33%	Comrade	I spend much of my time with my friends. If I did not have my friends at the time I was getting separated, I would have become crazy. My friends talk to me a lot and I act as a consultant for them. Going out with my friends is much safer. I would like to socialize with neighbors.
		47%	Social	I would be so glad if a person gave me a gift. I express my innate mood whenever I am happy or sad. I talk to everybody about my mood and give them consultations. However, then I become sad. I was stuck so much to my husband that I made him tired. I am very energetic and as a housewife, I know everything. I'm so controversial and express my feelings comfortably.

Table 3: Components of Sensation Seeking among Married Women

Participants' sentences	Open coding	Percent	Axial coding	Percent
I would like to try new foods in a restaurant. My husband becomes stuck on one thing forever; I want to try other things. I'd like to try X pills once and see how it feels.	Secessionism	50%	Variety seeking	23%
I want to do something. I'm tired of having nothing to do except repeat the same works.	Instability and volatility	17%		
I would like my life to not be monotonous. Sometimes I think I am wasteful.	Complaining of stagnation	33%		
You should keep your husband tightly at this time. Sometimes I'm worried about my husband and I'm afraid he is with another woman, but I tell myself he'll finally come home. I tell every single girl not to marry – it's miserable.	Fear of betrayal	72%	Cynicism toward the opposite sex	27%
My husband is not good. I really enjoy being in my father's houses. Men are all the same.	Lack of interest in the opposite sex	28%		
I am very witty amongst friends. 2. Marital life must be joking or else the whole thing is hard.	Humorous	100%	Pleasure seeker	8%
	Pleasurable			
I want to wear good clothes. Now, you have to be fashionable. You have to cope with people.	Fashionable	50%	Approbation nice	15%
I love making desserts and setting a table layout. I learned all arts, but a few from each.	Art friendship	50%		
	Adventurous	0%	Risky	
	Daring	0%		
1. I can easily find friends.	Camaderie	14%	Extraversion	27%
1. I have lots of friends.	Comrade	43%		
1. I have mysteries with my friend. 2. I usually complain about my husband. 3. In our house we don't have silence, we speak so much that sometimes it results in struggles.	Social	43%		

adventure with a score of 30%. Other items include indulgence (11%); the maximum score was 57% for hedonism and the lowest was 43% for humor.

Cynicism to the opposite sex (9%) was the lowest percentage in coding. Features such as fear of betrayal and lack of interest in the opposite were 50%.

According to Table 3, a study of the interviews obtained from married women suggested that cynicism toward the opposite sex and extraversion had the highest axial coding (both: 27%). Cynicism toward the opposite sex had the highest score in cases of fear of betrayal, which was 72% and in cases of lack of interest in the opposite sex, the results was 28%. For attributes of extraversion and comradeship the score was 43%. Comradeship had the least score of 14%. Reports have shown that in diversity seeking these women had a score of 23%. In its subsets the highest score was for experience seeking (50%) whereas instability scored 17%. The maximum and minimum scores for beauty-seeking features was 15% for art seeking and 50% for being updated.

In open coding, the self-indulgence attribute had the least score (8%). The subset feature of humor was 100% and pleasure seeking had a rate of 0%. Of note, risk-taking with the subsets of adventure and being courageous were 0%.

According to Table 4, a comparison of open coding between divorced and married women indicates that in

the element of instability, married women scored 50% in the component of experience seeking which was higher than divorced women who scored 40%. Divorced women scored 27% in variety seeking which was more than married women who scored 17%. However, both groups scored 33% in the components of hatred of stagnancy.

A comparison of the different components of skepticism of the opposite sex in both groups of women suggested that married women in the component of fear from betrayal scored 72%, whereas this score was 50% in divorced women. However the comparison differed in the element of lack of interest in the opposite sex where divorced women scored 50% and married women had a score of 28%.

On the other hand, a comparison of the element of self-indulgence with pleasure seeking and humor between the two groups suggested that married women had a score of 0% in pleasure seeking, whereas divorced women scored 57%. However, married women scored higher in the element of humor (100%) compared to divorced women who scored 43%.

Since married women scored 50% in both components of self-indulgence, they had a higher rank than divorced women who scored 40%. In the component of art seeking, married women had a lower score compared to divorced women who scored 60%.

Table 4: Comparison of the Components of Sensation-Seeking among Married and Divorced Women

Married (%)	Title	Divorced (%)	Title	
50	Secessionism	40	Secessionism	Variety seeking
17	Instability and volatility	27	Instability and volatility	
33	Complaints of stagnancy	33	Complaints of stagnancy	
72	Fear of betrayal	50	Fear of betrayal	Cynicism toward the opposite sex
8	Lack of interest in the opposite sex	50	Lack of interest in the opposite sex	
0	Pleasurable	57	Pleasurable	Pleasure seeking
100	Humorous	43	Humorous	
50	Fashionable	40	Fashionable	Beauty seeking
50	Art friendship	60	Art friendship	
0	Adventurous	30	Adventurous	Risky
0	Daring	70	Daring	
14	Comraderie	20	Comraderie	Extraversion
43	Comrade	33	Comrade	
43	Social	47	Social	

Married women scored 0% in components of adventure and bravery, which was less than divorced women who scored 70% in the component of bravery and 30% in the components of adventure subsets of risk taking.

Finally, in terms of the sociability components, the only component that placed married women in a higher rank than divorced women was the element of comrade seeking where married women scored 43% compared to divorced women who scored 33%. However, in two other elements, comrade seeking and extroversion, divorced women scored higher compared to married women. Married women scored 14% and divorced women scored 20% in the element of comrade seeking. In terms of extroversion, married women had a rate of 43% compared to 47% for divorced women.

7. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to compare the components of sensation-seeking among married and divorced women in Tehran, Iran. Qualitative findings showed a significant difference in the components of sensation-seeking between married and divorced women which supported research in this field.

One of the measures that had a significant difference between divorced and married women in sensation-seeking was the element of risk taking, one of the main outlines of Zuckerman's sensation-seeking. Risk taking was shown to be a factor that influenced sensation-seeking in the current study, which supported results of other studies by Zuckerman (2007) [12], Hegel [34] and Gatzky *et al.* (2002) [16].

Studies showed a high correlation between extroversion and sensation-seeking [20, 13]. On the other hand, this study also showed that the sociability factor was a significant component in sensation-seeking.

The findings of this study clearly showed that variety seeking was an important factor which has affected divorces in women because the monotony of work or exposure to repetitive people was boring. When the situation remains unchanged, humans become sensitive to monotony, which results in intolerance and focus on the need for new experiences. Divorce can be one way to meet these needs. The results of the present study [20] on the grounds that there are three major categories of fields; Demographic characteristics, family and marital relations—as factors related to marital disloyalty, so that in the personal scope: weaknesses in

religious beliefs, variety seeking and sensation-seeking, low self-confidence, and the need to attract the attention, has been effective in women's tendency extramarital relationships outside of marriage are be aligned.

The results of the current study showed that the pleasure seeking factor had a tremendous impact on divorce as seen by the higher percentage in divorced women. Results of this study compared to a study performed by Sadr Al Ashrafi *et al* (2012) [21]. That was determined using the Friedman test. In their study, among the factors considered for the personal aspect, illegitimate self-indulgence and couples socializing with the wrong people were considered to be among the most important factors for aligned divorce.

Based on previous findings (Disney *et al.*, 2012) [35], there was a significant relationship between pessimistic attitude and divorce. In the present study, a pessimistic attitude toward the opposite sex was 9% among divorced women and 27% among married women. The findings in the current study were not consistent with previous research. The reasons for this inconsistency include problems faced by divorced women and remorse for divorce.

In previous studies, no research supported the relationship between art seeking and beauty seeking to divorce.

Divorce is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. Although the present study has attempted to explore different angles somehow associated with this phenomenon, certain points should be investigated thoroughly. In Iran there is no positive attitude toward divorce therefore there are certain problems associated with research in this area. Lack of cooperation in participants to answer some of the research questions has caused problems with data collection. Lack of honesty in some of the participants prolonged the interview process. We propose that due to the damaging, undeniable effects of divorce and problems, traumas and mental health of people, it is important to inform the public about divorce. This can be effective in preventing and reducing divorces. On the other hand, due to the prevalence of different types of this phenomenon it is essential to execute more widespread research in this field.

Considering the reasons for divorce in future research and quantitative research methods to identify and assess the role of other variables that affect divorce, attempts to produce efficient and accurate methods for divorce prevention, conducting

interventional investigations, and focusing on influencing and predictive factors in relation to divorce, with the intent to ultimately assess the consequences of divorce are recommended topics for future research.

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