

ARTICLE

COMPARISON OF MARITAL SATISFACTION IN WORKING AND NON-WORKING PREGNANT WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Pregnancy and breast feeding are factors lead to special situations for female in work place and marital satisfaction is an index of psychological health that is affected by working. In other words, mood changes and pregnant women requirements at home and work place can cause some problems for them. This study aimed to assess marital satisfaction of working and non-working pregnant women. **Materials and methods:** This is a descriptive, cross-sectional study. 239 pregnant women referred to the gynecology clinic of Jahrom, Iran between March and May 2015 were assessed. Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale was used in order to assess Marital Satisfaction in four different domains of conflict resolution, communication, idealistic distortion and satisfaction. Finally, the data analyzed by descriptive statistics and Student's T test to evaluate groups by the SPSS statistical software [v. 21]. **Results:** Mean age of pregnant women was 28.47±4.95 in age range of 18-45 years old. Total marital satisfaction in working pregnant women was 44.60±10.51 and in non-working was 48.25±9.47 and difference between two groups was statistically significant [P=0.03]. **Conclusion:** The results of this study showed that marital satisfaction is different in pregnant working women and the housekeepers. It seems that the decline in marital satisfaction of pregnant working women is due to work stress and mood changes caused by hormonal variation in pregnancy. Thus, counseling programs, would be effective steps to improve the satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Is one of the effective factors in satisfaction with marital life, Women's working out of the house [1]. Marital satisfaction can be affected directly by the professional conditions [2]. Of course, this is varied in different societies and is affected by individual as well as social factors. Overall, various factors, such as income, children, illness, and employment, affect the couple's relationship and lead to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction [3]. Today, with progress in science and technology, women are present in the society more than before. Yet, they still have their responsibilities at home and both the family and the society expect them to perform as a responsible housewife, as well. On the other hand, just being a housewife and doing the household chores can seriously damage the family as well as the woman's personality [4]. Nowadays, expansion of the women's working fields, continuation of academic education, dependence on two incomes for supplying the family's demands and competitiveness of the workplace have caused a large number of women to work even during pregnancy [5].

Pregnancy is one of the most sensitive periods of women's life. The physiological and anatomical changes, changes in the individuals' mental image of their body, and feeling of reduction of attractiveness for the husband during pregnancy affect the couple's sexual relationship, marital satisfaction, and relationship which lead to their anxiety and lack of self-confidence and eventually disturbs the family's mental health [6]. Also, it has been shown that pregnancy can result in a lot of changes in the couple's emotional and sexual relationships [7]. Nowadays, the number of employed women is increasing around the world and women comprise 50% of the workforce in some developed countries [4]. In the U.S., 60.7% of the women between 15 and 44 years old work for more than 6 months during their pregnancy period [46% as full time workers and 14.6% as part time workers] [8]. No accurate statistics are available on the employed women in Iran; however, their cooperation rate was reported as 10.4% in 2002 and they comprised 13.9% of the society's workforce [9].

In general, the women's special biological and anatomical status increases their sensitivity toward the occupational factors in comparison to men. Therefore, making decisions about the pregnant and lactating women's working conditions is of great importance. In fact, their working condition is relatively different from men and, consequently, considering the pregnant women's safety and health in the workplace is highly important [4].

In addition to performing their role as wives, women also have to perform their social roles even during pregnancy. Nevertheless, their mood changes and needs during pregnancy may cause problems in their workplace [10]. Moreover, mood changes may be intensified by women's working and affect the couples' relationship and marital satisfaction [11]. Psychological and developmental changes during pregnancy are

KEY WORDS

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varied depending on the stage of pregnancy. The first trimester of pregnancy is accompanied with uncertainty and doubt, ambivalence feeling and primary focus on own self. In the second trimester, the fetus, is the center of her attention, narcissism and changes in sexual relations occur and in the third trimester with vulnerability, increasing dependence on partner, imitation of male role playing and daydreaming [12]. During pregnancy due to women physiological and psychological changes, couples relationship would be changed that not only affects the mother and child health but also affects sexual satisfaction [13]. 68% of women have some problems in the marital relationship during pregnancy. [14]. Physical problems, depression, fear, emotional instability and impaired sexual relations that occur during pregnancy affect the marital satisfaction [15]. Following pregnancy, changes in perception of self, beliefs and values, priorities, behavioral pattern, communication, problem solving skills and coping would be occurred [16]. Focusing on own self and the baby by the pregnant woman, reduce her attention to her husband and other children and sometimes offends them [17]. Due to changes of sexual desire, fear of abortion and fetal injury, sexual activity during this period decreased [18] and with changes in appearance and feeling of heaviness in pregnant women, social and entertainment activities and relationship with friends and acquaintances became minimized [19]. Besides, increasing the economic needs of the family and pregnant women, also preparing facilities for arrival of a new member of family can impose financial problems for the family [20]. Furthermore, physical and mental changes in pregnant women can lead to avoid performing the housekeeping duties and routine tasks and can result in undesirable behaviors [19]. Thus, all aspects of marital satisfaction is affected by pregnancy. However, studies have shown that professional status of women plays an important role in marital satisfaction: low income, job insecurity and job tension are associated with low marital satisfaction. [1].

Razavieh et al. found that workplace related factors influence marital satisfaction and there are closely relationship between occupational stress and marital conflicts. In other words, increasing marital disputes significantly reduces job satisfaction. So, increased marital satisfaction significantly associated with increased job satisfaction. [21]. Rohani study showed that increased job strain caused marital dissatisfaction. [22]. In fact, job stress threatens marital satisfaction and survival of marital relationship, as in the fourth conference of "work and stress" it is warned that not far that our staffs have no family and there a son is that unsafe working conditions caused family members and family relationships influenced by negative job process [23].

Studies conducted to evaluate couple awareness of changes during pregnancy and its effect on the marital relationship is indicative of limited and incomplete information about this subject, which often reduce marital satisfaction [24, 25, 26]. Khojasteh Mehret et al. [2006] suggest that women employment decreased marital satisfaction and increased psychosis in their husbands [27]. Sedgh Amiz studied marital compatibility related factors in 577 patients in Shiraz. In this study, there was a significant relationship between the age of the couples, marriage age, number of children, age difference between couples, male and female educational status, male occupational status, female employment, remarriage, how couples become familiar with each other, consanguinity or being relatives and the marital compatibility [28]. In general, a large number of factors can be effective in marital satisfaction and various researchers have expressed different factors according to their specific attitude and their research findings [29]. As mentioned before, mood changes during pregnancy can affect marital satisfaction as well as the couples' intimacy. Moreover, when occupation, as a major source of mental pressure, is added to these changes, it affects marital satisfaction of pregnant women [30].

Given that women make almost half of our country population, their activities and efforts, whether at home or at work place, result in multiple roles for them, although, mental health and growth and development of society depends on the family health and specially family mental health, so it was decided to design a study to compare the marital satisfaction of pregnant working and non-working women.

One of the dilemmas during pregnancy is that whether working in this period worth or not? And what effects have on their families, and marital satisfaction. Thus, in this study, according to the importance of marital satisfaction instability of the family, increasing unemployed educated women in Iranian society, marital satisfaction is assessed in married employed pregnant women and married housewife pregnant women in Jahrom. With a view to the above aim, the following question was raised in this research: Is marital satisfaction (in the ENRICH Questionnaire) differ in the scope of 1) distorted ideals, 2) conflict resolution, 3) Communications and 4) marital satisfaction between employed and unemployed pregnant women?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present analytical, Descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted on 239 pregnant women who had referred to the gynecology clinic of Jahrom, Iran for receiving the routine pregnancy cares between March and May 2015. The subjects were selected through simple random sampling.

Convenience sampling method used to select the samples. This means that researcher selected the subjects from the patients referred to the center. In order to select the subjects, coordination was made with the experts and the officials of the organization, so they referred the women to counseling center for fulfilling the Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire. Inclusion criteria was 15-45 years old pregnant women referred to the women clinic. The women with psychological disorders, diagnosed depression, experience of divorce and

husband's death, history of hypertension, diabetes, and underlying clinical diseases, and history of infertility during their reproductive period were excluded from the study. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Jahrom University of Medical Sciences. After explaining about the study, the study questionnaire was given to the women who were interested in taking part in the study.

The study data were collected using a questionnaire including the demographic characteristics such as (occupation, age, level of education, place of living, marital age, duration of marriage, and age difference between the couples, Husband's job) and Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire. The reliability and validity of Enrich questionnaire have been evaluated by both Iranian and foreign researchers. For instance, Olson et al. reported the Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 for the questionnaire. Enrich questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool in this study. The validity of the questionnaire determined by content validity and reliability was assessed by test-retest reliability (TEST-RETEST). The questionnaire was fulfilled by 24 pregnant eligible women, then ten days later questionnaires were refilled by them. After data analysis, spearman or relation coefficient obtained 95%. The results of this pilot study showed this data collection tool is a suitable one to evaluate marital satisfaction. After the pilot study, the main study implemented.

This questionnaire consists of four 35-section subscales (idealistic distortion, marital satisfaction, communication, and conflict resolution) for an overall measurement of marital relationship. The range scores of the questionnaire for three scopes of marital satisfaction, conflict resolution and a communication skill was 10 to 50 and for ideal distortion was 5 to 25. The average scores for scopes of marital satisfaction, communication skills, conflict resolution and ideal distortion were 2, 32, 6, 31, 2, 30, 8, 14 orderly. The powerful relationship of couples is calculated by summing the scales. This scale is executed on the 21501 couples in the United States and have been standardized and then the validity approved. Validity of the test is a structural validity (agreement validity) for marital satisfaction and life satisfaction were correlation of 0.60 and 0.41. The validity of this scale through internal consistency by Cronbach's range of 0.70 to 0.86 and 0.79 for the whole test for each of the 4 scale had.

Also, the test-retest reliability of the test after 4 weeks was 0.86. [31]. In the study of Sadeghi, this scale was translated and back translated by psychologists and linguists and conducted on the Iranian samples. In the study titled as "Marital interaction pattern in the Iranian culture and the effects of culture-based skills training on increasing the opportuneness of incompatible couples", internal consistency validity using Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was 0.84 and for subscales was 0.68. The reliability of the scale obtained 0.94 in this study [32].

The questionnaire is scored based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 being strongly agree to 5 being strongly disagree. Of course, negative items are reversely scored; 1 and 5 points are assigned to "completely disagree" and "completely agree", respectively. Then, the scores obtained in the two groups were investigated [33].

Statistical analysis

After collecting and encoding the data, the SPSS statistical software (v. 16) was used in order to compute the central index, variables' scattering, and frequency distribution of the demographic variables based on the satisfaction level. In order to describe the study subjects' information, mean and standard deviation were used for the quantitative variables, while frequency percentage was used for the qualitative ones. In addition, Pearson and Spearman correlation coefficients were utilized in order to determine the correlation based on the type of variables. Besides, the relationship between the qualitative variables and marital satisfaction was assessed through chi-square test. Also, independent T-test was used to compare the mean scores of satisfaction and the subscales between the two groups. $P < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

The mean age of the participants was 28.47 ± 4.95 years ranging from 18 to 45 years old. In addition, 51.6% of the women were homemakers, while 48.4% were employed. Furthermore, 90.2% of the employed women had academic degrees, while 80% of the unemployed ones had under diploma degrees. Moreover, 25.7%, 27.5%, and 46.8% of the employed women and 20.3%, 34.7%, and 44.9% of the unemployed ones were in the first, second, and third trimesters of pregnancy, respectively. Besides, 82.8% of the employed women and 82.9% of the unemployed ones had planned pregnancies and 55.3% of the unemployed subjects and 44% of the employed ones were primiparous. [Table 1]

The study results revealed a significant difference between the employed and unemployed pregnant women regarding marital satisfaction (44.60 ± 10.51 and 48.25 ± 9.47 , respectively; $P = 0.03$). The study findings revealed a significant difference between the two groups regarding conflict resolution, communication, and idealistic distortion domains ($P < 0.05$). [Table 2]. However, no significant difference was found between the two groups regarding the satisfaction domain.

According to the results, 82.1% of the homemakers and 62.6% of the employed women had average marital satisfaction [Table 3].

In the employed women's group, a significant positive correlation was observed between marital satisfaction and age ($r=0.24$, $P=0.02$) and husband's cooperation in doing the household chores ($r=0.49$, $P<0.001$). In the other group also, a statistically significant relationship was found between marital satisfaction and education ($r=0.3$, $P=0.01$), Spouse's education($r=0.4$, $P=0.001$), and husband's cooperation in doing the household chores ($r=0.33$, $P=0.008$).

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study subjects

Variable	Employed(n=116)	Unemployed (n=123)
Age	30.84±4.08	26.30±4.66
Husband's age	34.43±5.27	31.22±5.84
Age at marriage	24.86±3.28	21.04±4.10
Couple's age difference	4.39±4.30	5.22±3.36
Marriage duration	6.08±4.13	20.00±5.51
	Frequency (percent)	Frequency (percent)
Living place	Rural	12(10.3)
	Urban	104(89.7)
Education level	Under diploma	9(6.8)
	Diploma and above	107(92.2)
Spouse's education level	Under diploma	53(45.2)
	Diploma and above	63(54.8)
Husband's job	Employed	56(48.3)
	Self-employed	60(61.7)
Type of pregnancy	Planned	96(82.8)
	Unwanted	20(17.2)
Husband's cooperation at home	Yes	105(90.5)
	No	11(9.5)

Table 2: Comparison of marital satisfaction in employed and unemployed pregnant women

Domains	Mean and SD of the groups		P-value
	Unemployed(n=116)	Employed (n=123)	
Conflict resolution	46.95±9.82	42.74±9.49	0.003
Communication	40.84±12.60	37.30±11.40	0.03
Idealistic distortion	58.74±12.39	62.33±13.81	0.04
Satisfaction	47.50±10.83	46.08±12.53	0.4
Total marital satisfaction	48.25±9.47	44.60±10.51	0.03

Numbers are presented as mean±SD. * p-value: Student's t-test: between groups. P<0.05 was considered as statistically significant

Table 3: Frequency distribution of marital satisfaction

marital satisfaction	Unemployed (n=123)		Employed(n=116)		Totaln=249	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
low	10	14.9	20	22	31	19.5
moderate	55	82.1	57	62.6	112	70.4
high	2	3	14	15.4	16	10.1

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to compare marital satisfaction between the employed and unemployed pregnant women, the findings of this study showed a significant difference between average satisfaction scores in both groups ($p = 0.03$). Marital satisfaction differs in different periods of life, but pregnancy undoubtedly is considered as the most important events in every woman life [34].Mood changes caused by pregnancy and in the other hand the stress of the working situations can affect other aspect of life including quality of relationships and marital satisfaction. In other words, job stress factors such as high volume work, lack of support and negative interactions with colleagues cause a feeling of irritability, tension and frustration; finally result in increased interactions conflict with the spouse [35].

In the present study, the pregnant homemakers obtained significantly higher scores of conflict resolution. Women with full time jobs have conflicts between their occupation and family demands; therefore, they are

less able to balance their individual, familial, and occupational identities. This consequently causes conflicts in the family which can damage the couple's relationship. Studies have shown that in case the women's employment does not lead to conflicts in their occupational and familial roles, it can have positive impacts on their husbands, children, and social relationships [36,37]. Considering the communication domain, a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups and the housewives performed more actively. Housewives can spend more time in their family life and, as a result, create more profound relationships with their family members; thus, they are more satisfied in this domain.

In idealistic distortion domain, homemakers got significantly higher scores compared to the employed women, which shows their more realistic attitude toward the marital relationship. Women's working out of the house and having responsibilities in doing the household chores result in conflicts and problems whose negative consequences lead to undesirable outcomes for the family structure, husband, and the children. At first, these outcomes lead to the women's physical as well as mental fatigue and finally results in dissatisfaction with life. This has destructive effects on both the marital life and the children which are reflected by the defective messages in the family's communication network. According to the study results, the employed women performed more weakly in this domain. In this study, no significant difference was observed between the two groups regarding the satisfaction domain. Satisfaction cannot only be explained based on the workplace and other external mental pressures because in addition to work pressure, other factors are also effective in satisfaction.

The mean scores of marital satisfaction were statistically significant in both study groups. It seems that as the importance of the employed women's roles increases, their marital dissatisfaction increases, as well. This is consistent with the results of Hall's study [38]. Due to their extra responsibilities and tolerating more pressures in the house and the workplace, employed women tend to show more disinterest toward their marital relationships. However, Saco et al. showed that marital satisfaction was higher among the part-time working women compared to the housewives. Also, the shift workers, particularly night shift workers, had lower marital satisfaction compared to other employed women [39]. In contrast to the findings of the current study, Tahmasbi Sily reported that employed women were more satisfied with their marital lives compared to the housewives [40].

The findings of the current study revealed a significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction among the employed subjects. Studies have shown that compared to the housewives, employed women get married at higher ages [38,41]. Age can both physiologically psychologically affect the marital relationship. Since as age increases, the family life's stability also increases, the couples become more dependent on each other and this dependence keeps them satisfied. Thus, they believe to be highly satisfied with their marital lives.

In this study, a significant positive correlation was observed between marital satisfaction and husband's cooperation in both study groups. This relationship shows the agreement and common spirit between the couple. In fact, the women whose husbands help in doing the household chores are unsparingly supported by their husbands and, consequently, have more tranquility and fewer struggles in their marital lives [42].

Michel (1971), conducted a study on 450 couples, found that women along with their partners involved in planning and decision making related to the funding of equipment, housing and children education are satisfied with their lives. This satisfaction was strongly associated with changeable couples roles that facilitate decision making.

The study findings also showed a statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction and the women's and the husbands' level of education, which is consistent with the results of other studies conducted in Iran. For instance, Afshari, SedghAmiz, and Banaeian reported a statistically significant relationship between the husband's and wife's level of education and marital satisfaction [18-20]. In the same line, Telsiz's study showed that as the level of education increased, marital satisfaction increased, as well [21]. In fact, increase in the level of education results in improvement in social skills and the problems related to marital satisfaction.

In contrast to the previous studies, the present research investigated marital satisfaction in employed and unemployed pregnant women. The study findings showed that the employed subjects had lower marital satisfaction compared to the housewives.

Government programs to ease the women's working situation, prepare special professions with high salary and more convenience facilities will encourage women to work. Familiarize families with division of works within the family members at home and responsibility of the members. Meanwhile, establishing institution sand organizations to provide home care, makes women less busy and more active to do substantial work at home, so through this potential work power growth and development of the country is more accessible.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed that marital satisfaction is different in employed and unemployed pregnant women. It seems that, increase in the importance of the employed women's social roles and the special mood changes during pregnancy which intensify due to their working lead to their marital dissatisfaction. Therefore, paying attention to the pregnant women's safety and health in the workplace is of utmost importance. Also, it is necessary to provide the pregnant women with marital consultation classes accompanied by prenatal care in health and treatment centers.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE STUDY

- This is the first study to compare the marital satisfaction of pregnant and non-pregnant women in the Iranian society, also the use of internationalist and add questionnaire of Enrich is the strength of this study that is used in few studies.
- Variables and other factors such as family and social context of pregnant women such as addiction, unemployed husband, family income, being immigrant, having no access to basic supportive resources, health problems especially for fetus, kind of occupation and working hours per week may affect the mood and behavior of the women. In this study, although we have insight to this factors, but we couldn't change them and their impact on the results was not ignorable. Due to these limitations generalization of results should be taken with caution
- Pregnant housewife women fulfill questionnaires reluctantly because of inadequate familiarity with research and its importance. We try to solve this problem by making several briefing.
- We suggest that spouse satisfaction of pregnant women be examined. Moreover more demographic variables such as being immigrants, family income, number of children, and spouse addiction as moderating variables should be assessed in future researches.
- Other studies with large sample size, as well as different variables, such as higher education level, different area of the country, depression, happiness and pregnant women's kind of job can be implemented.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper

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