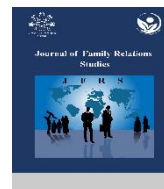




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## Research Paper

# The Role of Insecurity in Attachment and Fear of Intimacy in Predicting the Desire for Remarriage in Divorced Women



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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study was conducted to investigate the role of Insecurity in Attachment and fear of intimacy in predicting the desire for remarriage in divorced women.

**Methods:** This study was descriptive-correlational. The statistical population of this study consisted of divorced women in Tehran in 2020, and among them, 158 people were selected using convenience sampling and snowball methods through social networks. Data were collected using the Marriage Desire and Fear of Intimacy questionnaires and the Adult Attachment Scale. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were also used to analyze data. The data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis at a significance level of ( $P < 0.05$ ), for which SPSS22 was used.

**Results:** The results showed that fear of intimacy has a negative and significant relationship with the desire to remarry ( $r = -0.209$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ). However, anxious and avoidant insecure attachment styles did not show a significant relationship with the desire to remarriage. Multiple regression analysis showed that Fear of intimacy could explain only 3.8% of changes in remarriage desire among divorced women.

**Conclusion:** The desire and tendency to remarry in divorced women is affected by negative experiences resulting from previous failed marriages or relationships. Therefore, paying attention to the healing of emotional wounds or psychological trauma in premarital counseling seems necessary before attempting to remarriage.

## 1. Introduction

Choosing a partner and getting married are among many of the most significant decisions in one's life. Since it provides a Structure for establishing family ties and bringing up the next generation, marriage is looked upon as the underlying human relationship. Thus, it is of grave significance to ponder over the factors affecting its excellence (Nilforoshan et al., 2013). Satisfactory marriage is an important factor in

determining the mental health of the society. However, if it is incapable of satiating the couple's psychological needs, not only is their mental health damaged, but also this brings about irreparable and unfavorable effects, all of which entangle the whole family (Bakhshayesh, 2014; Rahmani et al., 2011). Divorce is one of the reliable indicators of dissatisfaction in marital relations (Porzoor & Ghorbani Polkoei, 2023).

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Divorce is a repercussion of an unsuccessful marriage, which may influence people's mental and physical health in different aspects and affect people's most aspects of life (Jaberi et al., 2021). From a systemic perspective, divorce leads to changes in the family formation, family roles, family ties, and economic status, and then the several unfavorable following aftereffects might have considerable impacts on the family and its functionality (Greeff & Van Der Merwe, 2004). Divorce is a life experience that is accompanied by psychological effects such as feelings of anger, betrayal, sadness, and confusion and might lead to mental health challenges like depression (Ngambi et al., 2023).

Despite divorce's exhausting and multifaceted consequences, it can be considered a proper technique to manage unsuccessful and despondent marriages, which might help the divorcee improve their life (Khan & Hamid, 2021). Divorcee needs 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 is new intimate relationships or remarriage after divorce (Horrie Abarghoyi et al., 2023; 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 desire for remarriage. Desire is defined as a person's readiness to show a positive or negative response to a person, object, or event (Saqquezi & Yazdani Esfidvajani, 2020).

According to the research literature, experiencing failure in previous intimate relationships, whether pre-marriage friendships or marriage, can bring about fear of intimacy, and this causes emotional problems for people (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006). Fear of intimacy is highlighted by features such as distrust of one's partner, concerns about breakup, reluctance to share one's concerns, and feeling uncomfortable with close emotional relationships (Lyvers et al., 2021). Researchers have reported that fear of intimacy seriously unbalances people's interpersonal relationships and general health. Following that, having stable relationships, optimism towards relationships, and showing feelings and emotions become awkwardly problematic (Shafiee et al., 2019). In a research study, Crawford and Unger (2004) indicated that intimate relationships are one the most basic needs of every human being, and in case it is not sated, more conflicts, less intimacy in marital relationships, and mental and emotional issues are highly probable. Fisher (2014) has claimed that if one experiences emotional failure in one's pre-marital emotional and sexual relationships, one's expectation of romantic relationships may gradually or abruptly get agitated.

Reviewing research basics indicates that a successful marriage is mentally more secure and intimate than any other human relationship. On the contrary, an unsuccessful marriage endangers the couple's psychological well-being (McCarthy & Ginsberg, 2007). Thus, divorce, as the perfect example of an unsuccessful marriage, can make the divorced people's attachment style insecure, which is described as guides or internal models of feelings towards oneself or others and people's behavior in close relationships (Kaleta & Mróz, 2023; Collins & Read, 1990). A fundamental assumption in Bowlby's attachment theory is that physical or psychological tensions spontaneously activate the childhood attachment style in adults. When activated, depending on one's attachment style, one looks for availability and security (Ayadi et al., 2017). In studies about the effect of attachment style on the quality of marital life in the second marriage, researchers have concluded that remarried people with more secure attachment styles have shown considerably higher scores of marital commitments than those with insecure attachment styles (Ehrenberg et al., 2012).

Since divorce occurs following the dissolution of a strongemotional bond between couples, the psychological scars or trauma resulting from this separation can appear in the form of fear of intimacy or Insecurity of attachment style. Their desire and attitude to re-establish romantic relationships may become negative in such a situation. Therefore, due to the lack of research literature on the roles of fears and attachment harms due to divorce and its aftereffects on having another intimate relationship in divorced people, it is indispensable to analyze the obstacles to forming after-divorce intimate relationships. Thus, according to the aforementioned, this study aims to investigate the role of insecurity in attachment style and fear of intimacy in predicting divorced people's Desire to remarriage.

## 2. Materials and Methods

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 coronavirus pandemic in Iran; it was done through the Internet to meet health standards. The minimum sample size for correlation-type studies is 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.

After discarding the incomplete ones, 158 were selected for statistical analysis.

**Procedure:** 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, and the questionnaire guide was attached. In addition to explaining the research objectives and stating the needed criteria for the 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 to participate in the study. 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:

**A-Marriage Desire Questionnaire (MDQ):** this questionnaire was created by Heidari et al. in 2004 to measure the desire for marriage which includes 23 questions. Scores are measured via the 5-point Likert Scale, including options *I strongly agree* (5), and *I strongly disagree* (1), and only questions 5, 4, 3, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, and 21 are conversely scored. The face and content validity of the questionnaire have been affirmed by advisors. Its reliability has been reported as 0.89, and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.92 through the test-retest method with a two-week interval (Saqquezi & YazdaniEsfidvajani, 2020). In the present study, the reliability of this scale was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.67.

**B-Fear-of-intimacy Scale (FIS):** this questionnaire was designed by Descanter and Telen in 1991. It is a 35-item self-report scale 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 social intimacy, self-disclosure, and loneliness. Moreover, its reliability was measured at 0.93 and re-measured to 0.89 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 0.88.

**C- 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 0.69 and 0.75 via both Cronbach's Alpha and test re-test models after two months of re-test. In Iran, 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 0.81, 0.78, and 0.85, respectively, which shows the internal consistency of attachment scale (Kamijany, 2009). In the present study, the reliability of this scale was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82.

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 independence of the observations) and multiple linear Regression analysis, all of which were analyzed on a significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) using the 22<sup>nd</sup> version of SPSS.

### 3. Results

The demographic findings of the participants in the present study showed that the age range of the participants in the present study was 19-62 years old, of which 72 people (45.6%) were male and 86 people (54.4%) were female. In addition, among the participants, 28 people (17.7%) had primary education, 18 people (11.4%) had secondary education, 67 people (42.2%) had a diploma, 15 people (9.5%) had an Associate degree, 23 people (14.6 percent) had Bachelor's degree, and 7 people (4.4%) 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               | 0.184                  |
| anxious, insecure attachment | 19.52  | 3.01               | 0.060                  |
| avoidant insecure attachment | 20.55  | 2.73               | 0.069                  |
| desire for remarriage        | 46.58  | 9.16               | 0.254                  |

Findings in Table 1 show the average and (standard deviation) of fear of intimacy, anxious and avoidant insecure attachment, and the desire for remarriage as follows: 101.65(9.96), 19.52(3.01), 20.55(2.73), and

46.58 (9.16). In addition, the result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ( $P < 0.05$ ) shows that the distribution of variables has been normal.

**Table 2. Matrix of correlation coefficients of fear of intimacy, insecure attachment style with desire to marry**

| Variable                       | 1        | 2       | 3      | 4 |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|---|
| 1-fear of intimacy             | 1        | -       | -      | - |
| 2-anxious insecure attachment  | 0.137    | 1       | -      | - |
| 3-avoidant insecure attachment | 0.179*   | 0.424** | 1      | - |
| 4-desire for remarriage        | -0.209** | 0.065   | -0.029 | 1 |

\* $P < 0.05$  \*\* $P < 0.01$

Findings of Table 2 show that fear of intimacy has a negative and significant relationship with the desire for remarriage ( $r = -0.209$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ). Also, these findings show that there is a positive and significant relationship between fear of intimacy and avoidant insecure attachment style ( $r = 0.179$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ). However, no significant relationship was observed between fear of intimacy and anxious, insecure attachment style. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient results showed that none of the components of insecure attachment style (avoidant and anxious) showed a significant relationship with the desire to

remarry.

Before doing the multiple regression analysis, its presumptions were investigated entirely, and the findings are listed in Table 3. In investigating the independence of observations, the Durbin-Watson test (DW) was used, and its findings indicated that observations are independent, i.e., there was no self-attachment among observations. On the other hand, the 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 desire for remarriage according to predicting variables**

| Predictive variables                                                                         | B      | SE    | $\beta$ | T      | Sig.  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|---------|--------|-------|
| Constant                                                                                     | 66.148 | 7.361 |         | 8.987  | 0.000 |
| fear of intimacy                                                                             | -0.192 | 0.072 | -0.209  | -2.671 | 0.008 |
| F = 7.133 $p = 0.008$ ADJ.R <sup>2</sup> = 0.038 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.044 R = 0.209 DW = 2.143 |        |       |         |        |       |

Based on the findings of Table 3, the modified coefficient of determination shows that fear of intimacy and avoidant and anxious insecure attachment could determine only 3.8 percent of changes in the variable desire for remarriage.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aims to investigate the role of insecurity of attachment and fear of intimacy in predicting divorced women's inclination to remarriage. Findings after data analysis indicated that fear of intimacy has a significant and negative relationship with divorced women's inclination to remarriage. In other words, it was understood that women who have experienced an unsuccessful marriage and divorce did not desire well to remarry.

These findings are similar to what Thorberg and Lyvers (2006) found in their study. They showed that Failure in previous intimate relationships can cause fear of intimacy in people, which is a risk factor for the emergence of emotional problems in people. In another study by Asayesh et al. (2021), 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. Also, Ayadi et al. (2021) showed in research that failure in the first marriage can create a pessimistic attitude toward remarriage in divorced women by creating a sense of insecurity in them and increasing their fear about intimate relationships with others.



Regarding the significance of marriage in all countries, particularly ours, which is highlighted both in history books and teachings of Islam as sacred, experiencing failure and divorce in the first marriage may have horrendous effects on the person. Women, due to their sexual differences and their high emotionality, might show more intense signals of romantic failure after they lose the chance of having a romantic marital life. So, it is clear that such women need enough time to get along with their lamentation. Accordingly, studies show that divorce is a kind of dearth by itself and is followed by great amounts of grief and distress (Asanjarani et al., 2017). Therefore, one feasible reason that divorced women feel less eager to remarriage is that they have just experienced divorce and have not got along well with this fiasco, so she is not ready at all to start a new relationship.

The negative relationship between fear of intimacy and the desire to remarriage can be stipulated in terms of behavior therapy. So, marriage includes objectives, expectations, mental capitalizations, and mutual back-scratching, just like any other human relationship. If such needs are met in people's marital life helps them continue the existing relationship enthusiastically or form lives; they experience a sort of positive reinforcement that helps them continue the existing relationship enthusiastically or form the next friendly and intimate one. On the contrary, experiencing failure in marriage and not meeting the aforementioned needs, the divorced person undergoes a dramatic reversal by which they suffer from disappointment and deprivation. Thus, such a person shows much reluctance towards future relationships. Based on behavior therapy, fear of intimacy is a learned behavior, just like other kinds of fears wherein divorced people try to evade similar circumstances since they generalize it to any relationship, such as marriage. According to the behavioral approach, anxiety and neurosis do not arise from incomplete progress of one's personality. They stem from one's imperfect learning or one's negligence in learning proper behavioral patterns, and these conditions continue to exist since they help avoid difficult situations (Shafiabadi & Naseri, 2016).

Another finding of this study indicated that insecure, avoidant, and anxious attachment styles do not hold a significant relationship with the desire to remarriage. This is in line with the findings of a few studies done in this field, such as that of Akbarzadeh et al. (2010), wherein they reported that there is no significant relationship between insecure-avoidant and anxious attachment styles and the attitude toward the first

marriage. On the other hand, this finding of the present study is not similar to that of Brydon (2005) since they reported, in a study, that attachment style is correlated to desire for marriage, reasons for marriage, and the kinds of relationships people develop.

Taking into account Bowlby's attachment theory, it is noteworthy that people's attachment style finds its foundation in preliminary interpersonal experiences, particularly in relationships with parents and relatives. However, future interpersonal relationships can determine the security or insecurity of people's attachment style by activating their attachment style (Aayadi et al., 2017). In explaining the insignificant relationship between insecure attachment style and the desire to remarriage in divorced women, it can be said that since such divorced people, regarding their age, have usually experienced different kinds of interpersonal relationships such as with school or university classmates or with colleagues, it is not necessarily the failure in marriage that makes their attachment style insecure and their desire to marriage as to show inclination to having relationship with others might not be merely influenced by failure in their romantic relationship, so that other interpersonal relationships they have experienced are likely to have effects on their desire to remarriage. Hence, owing to research limitations in investigating all divorced people's previous interpersonal experiences and their effect on their desire to remarriage, it is respectfully suggested that more and more comprehensive studies be done so that findings and results are outlined more reliably.

According to the findings of this study and considering the research literature on the same topic, it can be concluded that divorced women's desire to remarriage is affected by unfavorable experiences and imperfect learning after the previous unsuccessful marriage. Thus, in pre-marital counseling sessions for divorced people's remarriage, psychologists and counselors, depending on their needs and situations, ought to improve and correct their previous learning and decrease their negative Transferring or generalizations using behavior therapy methods and other psychological approaches such as emotion-focused therapy or psychoanalytical approaches.

## 5. Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages.

They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished. If desired, the research results would be available to them.

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### Authors' contributions

All authors have participated in the design, implementation, and writing of all sections of the present study.

### Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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