

Sexual dysfunction and divorce in Iran: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: One of the causes of dissatisfaction between couples is sexual dysfunction that sometimes leads to divorce. The present systematic study was conducted to evaluate the factors affecting sexual dysfunction and divorce in Iran. **Method:** A comprehensive search, including keywords of sexual dysfunction, emotional divorce, breakaway, separation, conflict, and Iran, was conducted on the databases of Scopus, MEDLINE/PubMed, CINAHL, Web of Science, Magiran, IranMedex, and SID. Out of the total number of reviewed articles, 16 articles met the inclusion criteria. No time limit was considered for our research and all published articles up to November 2021 were reviewed. **Results:** Based on the results of the present study, in all of the reviewed articles, sexual problems and dissatisfaction were among the effective factors in the occurrence or request of a formal divorce or an emotional divorce. The data also demonstrated that weakness in arousal and sexual desire, weakness in sexual function, sexual disorders, orgasm problems, and pain were among the problems of people on the verge of divorce. **Conclusion:** Due to the importance of this issue, recognizing the effective and influential factors of divorce is one of the priorities of mental health. Dissatisfaction with sexual relations in both or one of the spouses is found to be one of the most important factors involved in divorce. If there are problems such as sexual dysfunction between the couples, they may still live together due to cultural and social conditions; however, they may experience emotional divorce. Therefore, there is an urgent need for effective counseling and treatment programs in this regard.

Keywords: Divorce, Iran, sexual dysfunction

Introduction

Sexual desire is one of the most important aspects of human life and plays a vital role in the overall health and well-being of individuals.^[1-3] Sexual satisfaction is largely related to overall marital satisfaction, and many marital problems and divorces occur due to sexual dissatisfaction. One of the causes of sexual dissatisfaction between couples is sexual dysfunction.^[4-6]

Sexual dysfunctions are a group of disorders that are usually characterized by clinically significant impairments in a person's ability to respond sexually or experience sexual pleasure. These disorders include delayed ejaculation, erectile dysfunction, female orgasmic disorder, female sexual arousal disorder, genito-pelvic pain/penetration disorder, male hypoactive sexual desire disorder, premature ejaculation, substance/drug disorders.^[7] Sexual dysfunction is a multifactorial phenomenon and is influenced by various individual and environmental factors.^[8] These disorders can be a symptom of other medical or psychiatric disorders or exist as a separate condition.^[9] Although the prevalence of this disorder varies in different societies due to the influence of cultural factors, in general, its prevalence is estimated at 10 to 25% in men and 25 to 64% in women.^[7,10] Sexual dysfunction poses challenges for emotional relationships and can lead to reduced

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marital satisfaction, emotional stress, less communication, and inability to solve problems, and may eventually lead to divorce.^[11] Divorce is one of the major risk factors for mental disorders and injuries in families, which can also endanger the mental health of society. Hence, many social organizations try to take preventive measures for divorce.^[12] Divorce is not only a personal phenomenon but also a social phenomenon.^[13] Since the family is the first social unit and the most important factor determining the behavior of children, a crisis such as a divorce shakes the foundation of the family and creates negative feelings in the family members, especially adolescents.^[14] Considering the role of sexual dysfunction in divorce and marital conflicts and considering the role of midwives and reproductive health professionals in sexual and marital counseling and providing solutions to couples in this field, solving these problems requires determining the share of sexual dysfunction in divorces registered in Iran. In Iran, several studies have been conducted to identify and investigate the factors affecting divorce (formal or emotional).^[15-18] According to the studies conducted by these researchers, the most important factors included social factors (such as addiction, forced marriage, wrong traditions, domestic violence), economic factors (poverty, male unemployment, financial independence on the part of women, etc.), cultural factors (religious and cultural differences, infidelity of couples), and sexual factors. In many of these studies, the role of sexual dysfunction or problems in sexual relations between couples has been mentioned, but regarding the extent of the impact of this factor and its role in the occurrence of divorce, various statistics have been provided. Therefore, considering the limited studies in this field in Iran and the lack of a systematic and comprehensive review on the relationship between sexual function and divorce, our study was conducted to evaluate the factors affecting sexual dysfunction and divorce in Iran.

Materials and Methods

Search strategies

In the present study, in order to collect the required documents and access all valid English or Persian studies and articles on the prevalence of sexual dysfunction as a cause of divorce in Iran, a comprehensive search was performed in the databases of Scopus, MEDLINE/PubMed, CINAHL, Web of Science, Magiran, IranMedex, and SID. No time limit was considered for the search and all published articles up to November 2021 were reviewed. Initially, one researcher undertook the selection of the terms needed for the search, and then, these terms were reviewed by all the authors. The selected keywords included sexual dysfunction, emotional divorce, breakaway, separation, conflict, and Iran. To maximize the comprehensiveness of the search, the list of sources used in all related articles found in the above search was manually reviewed for finding other possible sources.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

All studies published in English that examined any sexual dysfunction or any form of sexual conflict as one of the factors

influencing formal divorce, filing for divorce in family courts, or the existence of emotional divorce in Iran, were included in the study. Studies that did not provide a clear definition of the type of sexual dysfunction or marital conflict and only referred to these issues in incomprehensible terms and did not report the numerical prevalence of the disorder were excluded from the study. Also, data related to review studies and non-original articles were excluded.

Screening and data extraction

Two trained authors performed search strategies, and then, they separately screened the titles and abstracts of the articles and selected the relevant studies based on the objectives of the review article, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the quality of studies. The abstracts of all the articles were reviewed and in cases where the article could not be deleted based on the title or abstract, the full text article was reviewed and evaluated. In the event of a discrepancy, the two researchers thoroughly reviewed the article and reached a consensus. If the two could not agree, the third author made the final decision.

Quality evaluation

The quality of the final articles was evaluated separately by three evaluators with experience in systematic review and meta-analysis. Then, the results were discussed and in cases where there was disagreement, the discussion continued until a final agreement was reached among the three evaluators. The Cochrane Risk of Bias Scale was used to evaluate the quality of articles and according to this protocol, the articles were classified based on low, high, and unknown risk of bias.

Papers were evaluated in terms of various aspects of methodology including sampling methods, reliability of tools, and study objectives. Finally, a set of articles that were appropriate in terms of topic coverage and content structure was used in this review. In the initial search, 1237 studies were obtained and after removing duplicate articles, 621 articles were selected. At this stage, all articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria, studies that were indirectly related to the subject, or articles that had inappropriate methodological quality were removed. Then, the full text of 166 articles was reviewed, of which 75 articles remained after deleting studies based on their type. After reviewing the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles, 59 articles were deleted because they were unrelated or did not provide the prevalence of sexual dysfunction. Finally, 16 studies that met all inclusion criteria were selected for further review. The process of the review according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is shown in [Figure 1].

Results

The abstracts of all the articles searched were first reviewed separately by two researchers. Based on the inclusion criteria, 16 studies were selected and further reviewed, the results of

which are shown in [Table 1]. Among the reviewed articles, five were cross-sectional articles^[16,19,20-22] eight were descriptive articles^[12-14,17,23,27-29], 2 were qualitative studies^[26,30], and one was a quantitative and survey study^[24]. The instruments used in these studies included researcher-made questionnaires, in-depth interviews, standard questionnaires, or records in the files of divorced individuals. Out of 16 studies conducted in Iran between 2004 and 2021, five studies were conducted in Tehran and the rest were performed in different cities such as Falavarjan, Qazvin, Yasuj, Sanandaj, Qom, Arak, Isfahan, Kerman, Neishabour, Sabzevar, Gonabad, Yazd, and Tonekabon. In most studies, the samples were selected from divorce applicants who referred to family courts or the Dispute Resolution Council. In 13 studies, the samples were divorced or applying for divorce. In two studies, they were emotionally divorced^[28,30]. In one study, the samples were selected from individuals with a tendency to divorce^[27]. The total number of individuals who were studied was 4584, and, on average, 287 people were evaluated in each study. Of the total number of participants, 2607 were female and 967 were male. In three articles, the number of men and women participating in the study was not mentioned. Differences were observed in reviewed studies in terms of the average age of participants at the time of divorce and the length of the marital relationship. In 11 articles (67.75%), the participants were men and women, and in

five (31.25%) of the studies, the information was only collected from women. Based on the results of the present review study, in all articles reviewed, sexual problems and dissatisfaction were among the effective factors in the occurrence or application of formal divorce or the occurrence of emotional divorce. The data also show that weakness in arousal and sexual desire, weakness in sexual function, sexual disorders, orgasm problems, and pain were among the problems of people on the verge of divorce.

The quality of selected articles was assessed systematically by the Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool. The quality assessment results of the articles are presented in [Table 2]. According to the Cochran evaluation scale, out of 16 studies, six studies had a low risk of bias in three areas of bias and five studies had a low risk of bias in two areas. Other studies had unknown bias risk levels in at least four areas of selection, performance, reporting, and other types of bias.

Discussion

Sexual satisfaction is an important indicator of sexual health and is highly associated with relationship satisfaction and divorce.^[31] Divorce is one of the family and social crises that in most cases causes imbalances in the family and as a stressful factor

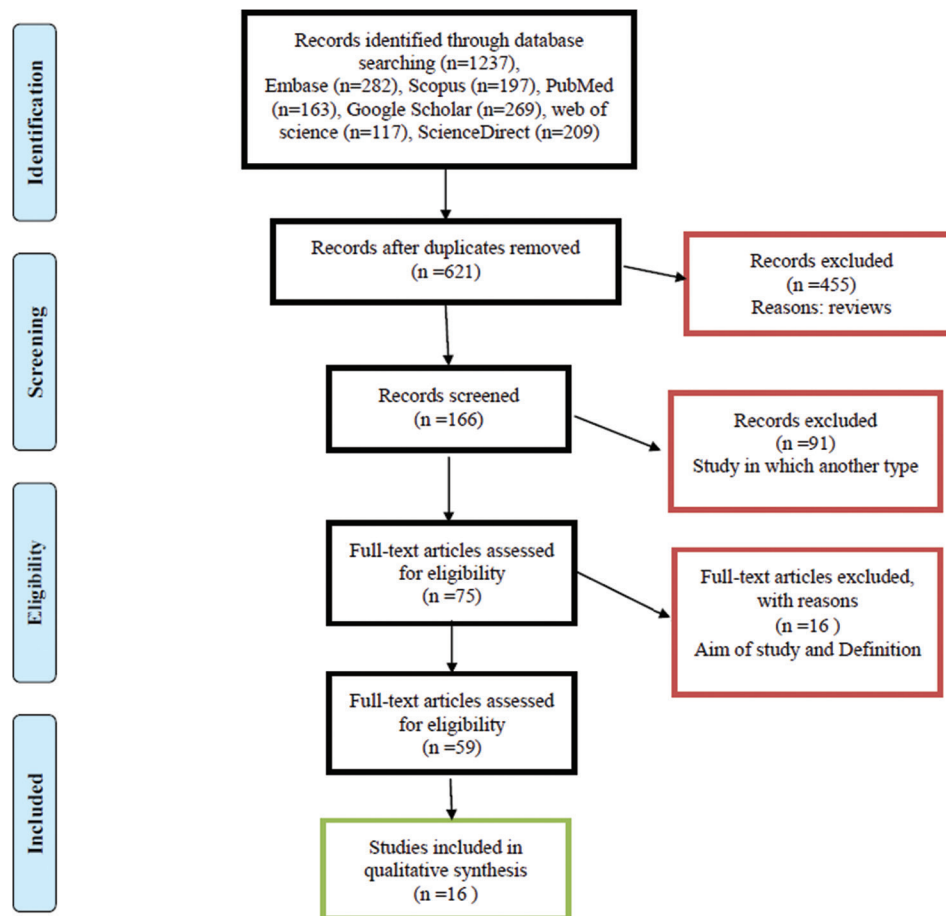


Figure 1: The selection process according to the PRISMA flow diagram

Table 1: Summary of the Characteristics of the Selected Studies

Author(s), year of publication, and objective	Location and type of study (sampling method)	Instruments used	Quantity and age of participants	length of marriage (years)	Type of dysfunction reported (results)
Ghotbi <i>et al.</i> , 2004 ^[16] Investigating the effect of contextual variables on marriage and post-divorce problems	Cross-sectional study with sampling method based on the area covered by each health liaison of Shahid Yaghmaei Health Center and other liaisons who were selected in the region (Dolatabad region of Tehran) Participants: Divorced people in Dolatabad region	Researcher-made questionnaire	45 women and 24 men The most frequent age range was 26–35 years old. The mean age at divorce was 24.6±2.6 years for women and 29.8±3 years for men	6262 months on average	Introducing sexual problems as one of the causes leading to divorce (observed in 11.5% of people)
Zargar and Neshat-Doost, 2008 ^[17] Investigating the factors affecting the incidence of divorce, including age, economic and social variables, cultural variables, addiction, and mental and sexual illnesses	A descriptive study using data extraction from the information contained in the help forms and files of the cases that referred for psychological interviews during the years 2003 to 2005. Participants: Divorced people	The files of all couples seeking divorce who had referred to the Divorce Prevention and Reduction Center of Falavarjan city during 2003–2005	424 people (212 couples) In the men group, 68% of the people were under 35 years old and 32% of them were over 35 years old. In the group of women, 83% of people were under 35 and 17% were over 35 years old (the most frequent age range was 24–27 years with a prevalence of 27.24%)	–	Existence of sexual problems as one of the reasons for filing for divorce (with a frequency of 2.4%)
Foroutan and Jadid Milani, 2008 ^[19] Prevalence of sexual disorders in divorce applicants	A cross-sectional study with sequential sampling, which was conducted in the judicial complexes of families 1 and 2 in Tehran, and the study population included people who referred for the first time. Participants: People filing for divorce, referring to judicial complexes	For women: FSFI (Female Sexual Function Index) For men: IIEF (International Index of Erectile Function)	The total number of people is 400 people 108 men with a mean age of 37.6±9.6 292 women with mean age: 31.7±4/4 Average age: 33.2 years	In women: 10.1±7.3 years In men: 10.8±8.7 years Average length of marriage: 10.37	Dissatisfaction with sexual life was observed in 66.7% of men and 68.4% of women (In terms of sexual performance, 7.2% of men were in good condition, 23.1% were in moderate condition, and 5.8% were in poor condition and 26% of women were in good condition, 56.2% in moderate condition, and 17.8% were in poor condition)
Honarian and Younesi, 2011 ^[20] Investigating the causes and factors affecting divorce among couples referring to family courts	Descriptive-analytical cross-sectional study with purposive and voluntary sampling conducted on couples filing for divorce referring to counseling units of family courts in Tehran Participants: couples filing for divorce	A researcher-made questionnaire that included demographic information as well as common problems between spouses	492 people (men and women) Average age of marriage for men and women: 21.3% under 20 years, 67.7% between 20–30 years, 9.3% between 30 and 40 years, and 1.7% more than 40	Length of marriage in men and women: less than 5 years in 42.8%, between 5 and 10 years in 23.6%, between 10 and 20 years in 21.7%, and more than 20 years in 11.8%	Dissatisfaction with sexual relations as one of the problematic factors (this factor was observed in 8.16% of total cases, 7.86% of men, and 8.28% of female clients)
Barikani <i>et al.</i> , 2012 ^[21] Identifying the causes of divorce among women and men seeking divorce	A cross-sectional study Subjects were selected from the population of men and women seeking a divorce who referred to the Divorce and Marriage Office of Qazvin Province within 3 months. Participants: People filing for divorce	Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire, interviews with the subjects, and the Likert scale.	572 (400 women with a mean age of 26.5 years and 172 men)	Less than 5 years in 100 men and 226 women Between 5 and 10 years in 37 men and 79 women More than 10 years 30 men and 84 women	Sexual desire in the spouse (with an average score of 1.61 in women and 2.41 in men) and other sexual problems (with an average score of 1.56 in women and 1.96 in men) were the causes of divorce for both men and women.

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Table 1: Contd...

Author(s), year of publication, and objective	Location and type of study (sampling method)	Instruments used	Quantity and age of participants	length of marriage (years)	Type of dysfunction reported (results)
Abedinia <i>et al.</i> , 2012 ^[22] Comparison of predisposing and effective factors on divorce between men and women	A cross-sectional study All individuals who had filed for divorce and referred to the family courts of Tehran (Shahid Mahallati–Vanak) between 2006 and 2007. Available and sequential sampling was used in this study. Participants: People filing for divorce	Structured questionnaire and interview	300 people 270 women with an average age of 30.5 years and 30 men with an average age of 35.5 years	The average length of marriage was 9.2 years for women and 7.6 years for men	Sexual problems are one of the most important factors in divorce Existence of weakness in stimulation (61% in women and 72.2% in men), weakness in performance (13.7% in women and 5.6% in men), sexual disorders (18.7% in women and 22.2% in men), orgasm problems (6.6% of women) among participants The share of sexual factors in divorce: slander (52.6% in women and 23.3% in men), sexual problems (67.4% in women and 60% in men), illicit relationships (37.4% in women and 33.3% in men), and betrayal (35.9% in women and 20% in men)
Mahmoudi <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ^[23] Investigating the social factors affecting the tendency to divorce	Survey study with multistage cluster sampling in all households in Yasuj Participants: People filing for divorce	Researcher-made questionnaire	384 people (181 men and 203 women)	–	Existence of correlation coefficient between sexual and emotional satisfaction of the spouse and the rate of divorce (The more sexual and emotional satisfaction from the spouse, the lower the tendency to divorce)
Shakerian <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ^[12] Investigating the relationship between sexual satisfaction and marital problems of women filing for divorce	A descriptive-correlation study Subjects were selected by available sampling method from women applying for divorce referring to family courts in Sanandaj city in 2011. Participants: People filing for divorce	Data collection tools included a scale for measuring sexual satisfaction as well as marital problems. Use of IMS index	400 people with an average age of 28.17 years	The average length of marriage was 6.2 years	A significant negative effect of sexual satisfaction on marital problems Higher scores of marital problems for women seeking divorce with low sexual satisfaction Prediction of marital problems based on sexual satisfaction among couples Low sexual satisfaction in marital relationships was reported in more than 70% of the subjects
Kafashi and Sarabadani, 2015 ^[24] Study of socioeconomic factors affecting emotional divorce between two groups of housewives and employed women	Quantitative and survey study with two descriptive and explanatory methods for data analysis and the random cluster sampling method was used among the available blocks. All married women living in the district one of Qom city Participants: People filing for divorce	Researcher-made questionnaire	400 people (200 employed married women and 200 married housewives)	–	Assigning the third rank among the seven variables to sexual satisfaction with a beta coefficient of 0.327
Goudarzi <i>et al.</i> , 2015 ^[13] Study of sexual dysfunction as a significant cause of	The couples were randomly selected from the couples who referred to the Arak Civil Court for divorce. Participants:	Golombok-Rust Sexual Satisfaction Inventory (GRSSI) was used	72 men in the study group with a mean age of 24.6 years and 108 men in the comparison group with a mean age	–	Less sexual intercourse was observed in men and women in the study group The total score of the GRSSI questionnaire was 51.18±18.75

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Author(s), year of publication, and objective	Location and type of study (sampling method)	Instruments used	Quantity and age of participants	length of marriage (years)	Type of dysfunction reported (results)
divorce among the Iranian population	People filing for divorce		of 25.1 years 80 women in the study group with a mean age of 22.1 years and 100 women in the comparison group with a mean age of 29.5 years		for men in the study group and 30.16±14.41 in the control group The total score was 56.62±16.43 for women in the study group and 29.78±14.35 for the control group
Mahdizadegan <i>et al.</i> , 2016 ^[25] Comparison of sexual performance of normal men and women with men and women on the verge of divorce	A descriptive scientific-comparative study (post-event) with available sampling among normal couples and couples referring to welfare health centers and family courts in Isfahan who were matched in terms of age and duration of marriage. Participants: Couples filing for divorce	FSEI (Female Sexual Function Index)	30 men on the verge of divorce and 30 ordinary men 30 women on the verge of divorce and 30 ordinary women	–	There was a significant difference in desire, psychological stimulation, orgasm, satisfaction, and pain between the men in the two study groups Absence of significant difference in moisture between men of the two groups Significant differences in psychological stimulation, moisture, orgasm, satisfaction, and pain between women in the two study groups Lack of significant difference in desire between women of the two groups
Mohamadsadegh <i>et al.</i> , 2018 ^[26] Evaluation of the sexual problems in women seeking divorce in comparison with women who are satisfied with their marriage	The samples were selected by snowball sampling method and by referring to Vanak and Shahid Mahallati family courts in Tehran. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews up to the saturation stage. Participants: People filing for divorce	Data were analyzed using the Colaizzi method	13 women that filed for divorce had sexual problems (of which 69.2% were between 30 and 35 years old and 30.8% were between 25 and 30 years old); 11 women were satisfied with cohabitation (of which 63.6% were between 30 and 35 years old and 36.4% of them were between 25 and 30 years old)	5 to 10 years	Extracting seven main themes including “sex,” “sexual participation,” “sexual schemas,” “interpersonal relationships,” “sexual orientation,” “sexual attractiveness,” and “living conditions” from interviews with women seeking divorce The highest frequency of the topics of “sexual attractiveness,” “interpersonal relationships,” “sexual intercourse,” “sexual participation,” “sexual schemas,” “living conditions,” and “sexual desire” was observed in the group of women who were satisfied with their marriage
Ghasemi <i>et al.</i> , 2019 ^[27] Evaluation of the relationship between personality traits, religious attitude, and sexual satisfaction with the tendency to divorce in female paramedics	A descriptive correlational study The statistical population of the study included all married female paramedics in Kerman in 2014–2015, from which 200 people were selected by convenience sampling method. Participants: People with a tendency to divorce	Data collection tools included Divorce Tendency Questionnaire, NEO Personality Questionnaire, Religious Attitude Scale (RAS), and Sexual Satisfaction Scale for Women (SSSW).	200 women, 39% of whom were between 32 and 38 years old (7.5% were between 18 and 24 years old, 32% were 25 to 31 years old and 21.5% were between 39 and 45 years old).	–	Existence of a negative and significant relationship between religious attitude and sexual satisfaction with the tendency to divorce
Khatami <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[28] Predicting emotional divorce based on	Individuals were selected based on the purposive sampling method from three cities of Neishabour,	Tools of the study included Guttman Emotional Divorce Questionnaire			Predicting group belonging of individuals with and without emotional divorce in married women was performed with

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Table 1: Contd...

Author(s), year of publication, and objective	Location and type of study (sampling method)	Instruments used	Quantity and age of participants	length of marriage (years)	Type of dysfunction reported (results)
components of dysfunctional sexual beliefs in married women	Gonabad, and Sabzevar in 2016. Participants: People with emotional divorce	and the Sexual Dysfunctional Beliefs Questionnaire.	300 women	–	73.3% accuracy based on the linear composition of variable components of sexual dysfunctional beliefs The most efficient variables in predicting group belonging were sexual work conservatism, body image, and age-related beliefs that found based on step-by-step and simultaneous diagnostic analysis
Bidaki <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[29] Investigating the distribution of divorce causes and designing an effective plan to deal with this problem	A descriptive cross-sectional analytic study Data were collected from those who referred to the courts of Yazd city, requesting divorce within 12 months. Participants: Couples filing for divorce	Participants were randomly selected and asked to complete a researcher-made divorce questionnaire.	118 men and women	–	Sexual dissatisfaction was expressed as one of the causes of divorce by men and women (average score of 1.1 in men and 1.2 in women).
Ramezanifar <i>et al.</i> , 2021 ^[30] Evaluation of the factors affecting emotional divorce in married women	Using the purposive sampling method, 21 women involved in emotional divorce referring to Tonekabon city counseling centers were selected. Participants: People with emotional divorce	This research was conducted with a qualitative approach and basic theory (Use of in-depth interview)	21 women between 20 and 50 years old	–	Sexual problems were reported as one of the factors affecting emotional divorce

destroys the stability of the family and damages the mental health of family members.^[32] According to the records of judicial institutions, divorce in Iran has been increasing rapidly since 2001.^[33] One of the most important causes of divorce is sexual dysfunction or problems in couples' sexual relationships.^[15-18] In this structured review, 16 studies that were conducted in different parts of Iran were reviewed; these articles examined the factors affecting the occurrence of divorce or marital conflicts, and among these factors, any sexual dysfunction was also evaluated. In general, in all 16 studies reviewed, different types of sexual problems were introduced as the effective causes in the occurrence or application of formal divorce or the occurrence of emotional divorce. Sexual satisfaction is an important factor in the success of marriage and sexual dissatisfaction can lead to marital disputes. Thus, sexual dissatisfaction is at least one of the factors that cause divorce.^[20] Sexual and emotional satisfaction is considered as the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs in the family and shows contentment in the exchange of emotions between couples.^[23] The concept of "sexual satisfaction" has been used in most of these studies and can be considered as the most common complaint of people about their sexual dysfunction, but the difference in the reported values is significant. This issue can be related to the differences in the tools for measuring sexual satisfaction in different studies (interviews, researcher-made

questionnaires, standard questionnaires, or records in the files of divorced people) as well as the different definitions of this term in each study. In the study by Foroutan and Jadid Milani, dissatisfaction with sexual life was reported in 66.7% of men and 68.4% of women (in terms of sexual performance, 7.2% of men were in good condition, 23.1% were in moderate condition, and 8.5% were in poor condition and 26% of women were in good condition, 56.2% were in moderate condition, and 17.8% were in poor condition). These researchers stated that the level of sexual satisfaction of women seeking divorce in their research was lower than the level of sexual satisfaction of women in Iranian society, and this shows that sexual satisfaction can affect the rate of divorce. On the other hand, in the study by Honarian and Younesi, the frequency of sexual dissatisfaction was 8.16% among problematic factors, which was 7.86% for men and 8.28% for women. According to the results of this study, although dissatisfaction with sexual relations is one of the problematic factors in relationships between couples, this factor ranked tenth among various factors. The researchers reported that if couples can have a proper and satisfying emotional relationship with each other, sexual satisfaction will follow, and sexual relations alone would not cause the collapse of marriage. In the study by Mahdizadegan *et al.*,^[25] in the field of sexual satisfaction, there was a significant difference between men

Table 2: Investigation of the risk of bias in the reviewed articles

Studies/scale	Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool (types of bias)						
	Performance bias		Selection bias		Reporting bias	Attrition bias	Other types of bias
	Random sequence generation	Allocation concealment	Blinding of participants and personnel	Blinding of outcome assessment			
Ghotbi <i>et al.</i> , 2004 ^[16]	Low	Low	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown	Unknown
Zargar and Neshat-Doost, 2007 ^[17]	Low	Low	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Low	Unknown
Foroutan and Jadid Milani, 2008 ^[19]	Unknown	Low	Low	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Honarain and Younesi, 2011 ^[20]	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Unknown
Barikani <i>et al.</i> , 2012 ^[21]	Low	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown
Abedinia <i>et al.</i> , 2012 ^[22]	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Unknown
Mahmoudi <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ^[23]	Low	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown
Shakerian <i>et al.</i> , 2014 ^[12]	Low	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown
Kafashi and Sarabadani, 2014 ^[24]	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Unknown
Goudarzi <i>et al.</i> , 2015 ^[13]	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Mahdizadegan <i>et al.</i> , 2016 ^[25]	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Low	Unknown
Mohamadsadegh <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[26]	Low	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown
Ghasemi <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[27]	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown
Khatami <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[28]	Low	Unknown	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Unknown
Bidaki <i>et al.</i> , 2020 ^[29]	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Unknown
Ramezanifar <i>et al.</i> , 2021 ^[30]	Low	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Low	Low	Unknown

on the verge of divorce and the normal group. This difference was also seen between women on the verge of divorce and the normal group. Mohamadsadegh *et al.*,^[25] also reported that the quality of sexual relations is more important to women than the number of times they have sex. Also, according to a study by Shakerian *et al.*,^[12] more than 70% of those surveyed reported low sexual satisfaction in their marital relationships. They stated that sexual satisfaction has a significant negative effect on marital problems. This significant negative relationship between these variables demonstrates that people with lower sexual satisfaction have higher marital problems. Also, divorced women who have low sexual satisfaction in this study had higher scores in marital problems. It can be concluded that sexual satisfaction can predict marital problems between couples.

Many women seeking divorce report problems with sexual gratification, and they feel deficient when they do not reach orgasm from their sexual relations. In fact, one of the most common problems in women is the problem of sexual satisfaction, and the experience of orgasm by women is associated with the degree of satisfaction with the marital relationship.^[26] According to the study by Mahdizadegan *et al.*,^[25] there was a significant difference in psychological stimulation, moisture, orgasm, and pain between women on the verge of divorce and the normal group. Also, there was a significant difference in desire, psychological stimulation, orgasm, and pain between men on the verge of divorce and the normal group, but there was no significant difference in moisture between men in the two groups. Also, the study by Abedinia *et al.*,^[22] showed that sexual problems are the cause of divorce in 67.4% of women and 60% of men, and these problems include weakness in arousal (61% in women and 72.2% in men), weakness in sexual function (13.7% in women and 5.6% in men), sexual disorders (18.7% in women

and 22.2% in men), and orgasm (6.6% in women). On the other hand, low sexual desire in women, as one of the important sexual problems, is one of the important factors of divorce. In the study by Barikani *et al.*,^[21] low libido was one of the problems that had a significant difference between men and women. Their results showed that the causes of divorce for women and men were lack of sexual desire in the spouse (with an average score of 1.61 in women and 2.41 in men) and other sexual problems (with an average score of 1.56 in women and 1.96 in men).

In addition, failure in marriage and the reduction of relations between couples do not always lead to formal divorce, because, due to social and cultural conditions, sometimes couples are forced to live together. In this case, although the family structure is apparently preserved, the family is empty from within. Thus, there is a considerable decrease in the emotions of the couple, which leads to emotional divorce.^[30] According to a study by Khatami *et al.*,^[28] on the prediction of emotional divorce based on sexually dysfunctional beliefs, the results showed that there is a significant relationship between dysfunctional beliefs and marital conflicts, damaged marital relationships and maintenance behaviors, and the continuation of marriage.^[12,22,25,26]

Limitations of the study

Due to the fact that the English abstracts were not available for some Persian articles, the authors were not able to access their texts. Also, due to the heterogeneity of these studies in terms of tools used to collect information and also the differences in studies in terms of the type of sexual dysfunction and the diversity of studies in terms of study groups (sample size, subjects in terms of couples or men and women) performance of meta-analysis was not possible. Additionally, the duration of evaluation in cross-sectional studies, age of samples, target

population, sampling methods as well as the types of scales used for evaluation were among the factors influencing the results.

Conclusion

Since the family is the most important institution of society and the source of a healthy society is a healthy family, any harm to this institution and its functions is very important. One of the most important problems of families is divorce; thus, recognizing the effective and influential factors of divorce should be one of the priorities of societies. Dissatisfaction with sexual relations in both or one of the spouses is one of the most important factors involved in the divorce. Based on the results of the present study, in all articles reviewed, sexual problems and dissatisfaction were among the effective factors in the occurrence of formal divorce or emotional divorce. The data also demonstrated that weakness in arousal and sexual desire, weakness in sexual function, sexual disorders, orgasm problems, and pain were among the problems of people on the verge of divorce. If there are problems such as sexual dysfunction between couples, they may still live together due to cultural and social conditions but may experience emotional divorce. Therefore, due to the importance of the issue in maintaining stable relationships between couples, there is an urgent need for effective counseling and treatment programs in this regard.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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