



# Prediction of Mental Health based on Emotional Alexithymia and Marital Burnout of Women Affected by Infidelity

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Email: farangis\_demehri@yahoo.com | Received: 27.06.2023 | Acceptance: 04.11.2023

*Journal of Applied Family Therapy*

eISSN: 2717-2430  
http://aftj.ir

Vol. 4, No. 4, Pp: 428-455  
Fall 2023

Original research article

### How to Cite This Article:

Ghasemi, H., Demehri, F., & Abooei, A. (2023). Prediction of Mental Health based on Emotional Alexithymia and Marital Burnout of Women Affected by Infidelity. *aftj*, 4(4): 428-455.



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### Abstract

**Aim:** The purpose of this study was to predict mental health based on emotional alexithymia and marital burnout of women affected by infidelity. **Method:** The current research was descriptive of predictive correlation type. The statistical population of the present study included women who referred to the counseling centers of District 5 of Tehran with a history of marital infidelity in 2022. According to the conducted research, 150 women visited the counseling centers of District 5 of Tehran in a period of 3 months, and 108 women were considered as a statistical sample through random sampling and Morgan's table. The research tools were Goldberg mental health questionnaires (1972), Toronto Alexithymia Scale (1994) and Pines marital burnout (2002). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression were used to analyze the data. **Results:** The results showed that the correlation coefficient between mental health and alexithymia is (0.380) and between mental health and marital burnout (0.568), which shows that there is a correlation between mental health and alexithymia and marital burnout of women affected by infidelity at the error level of 0.1. 0 and with 99 percent confidence, there is a significant positive and direct relationship. Also, regression analysis showed that emotional alexithymia and marital burnout have an effect on the mental health of women affected by infidelity ( $p < 0.05$ ), thus with 95% confidence, the contribution of emotional alexithymia is 28% and marital burnout is 44% on the mental health of women affected by betrayal. **Conclusion:** Marital infidelity has a great contribution to the level of emotional alexithymia and marital boredom, and in turn, this variable has a great impact on the mental health of couples, and by teaching couples how to achieve intimacy skills, steps can be taken to reduce marital infidelity.

**Keywords:** mental health, emotional alexithymia, marital heartbreak, women affected by betrayal

## Introduction

The family is considered as the main foundation of society in many countries, which is always exposed to serious harms. One of the harms that may affect families is marital infidelity. Revealing or discovering infidelity can have detrimental effects on personality, physical and mental health, family health, and the shared relationship of spouses (Moradi and Jafari, 2022). Infidelity and betrayal can happen in anyone's life, subsequently disrupting the person's physical and mental peace (Aghaei, Khanjani, Shaki, & Pasha, 2021). Marital infidelity is a disturbing issue for couples and families, and a common phenomenon for counselors and therapists. Marital infidelity creates numerous disturbances for couples. Research results show that most people expect monogamy and avoidance of extramarital relationships from their spouses (Crowe & Dixon, 2016). When a spouse cheats on someone, the person is at a crossroads: on the one hand, separation leads to the destruction of the family, losing a spouse whom they may still love, and resolving conflicts means they still have to live with the wounds of infidelity and accept the risk of another betrayal. Recent studies with a wide range of selected samples report that roughly 22 to 25% of men and 11 to 15% of women in the United States have had sexual relationships outside of their marriage at least once. Between 1.5 to 4% of married individuals engage in extramarital sexual relationships annually, and within the past year, men engage in extramarital sexual relationships twice as often as women (Cornish, Hunk & Gobash, 2020).

Considering the importance of emotional suppression and marital disillusionment in women who have experienced spousal infidelity and their relationship with mental health in many psychological and behavioral disorders, there is a research gap in this area. That is because with the role that marital relationships can have on the concept of mental health, identifying the effective factors in the stability and satisfaction of marital life is an important step in the field of marital relationships. The psychosocial consequences of incompatibilities and conflicts between partners, whether in divorce or dissolution, bring about exhausting struggles, leading to depression, feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, and alienation experienced by both partners and their children, causing devastating blows to the body of the society. With increasing divorce rates and considering the irreparable damage it causes and the balanced function of the family and preventing its destruction, recognizing the effective factors in marital relationships, controlling and managing it as a basis for strengthening marital life, is one of the significant methods of addressing marital problems. Familiarity with these factors helps couples to create, strengthen, or improve the variables and achieve marital satisfaction. Therefore, it seems that this type of research can be utilized to reduce emotional suppression and marital disillusionment through enhancing mental health in women who have experienced spousal infidelity. The issue of marital infidelity is always considered a growing concern, and mentioning this point is also necessary that considering the emotional nature of women and the complex nature of marital infidelity and its tragic effects on life, the necessity of such research in improving the mental health status of women is essential. Therefore, the main question of this research is whether mental health based on emotional suppression and marital disillusionment in damaged women from infidelity is predictable.

## Method

The current research was descriptive of predictive correlation type. The statistical population of the present study included women who referred to the counseling centers of District 5 of Tehran with a history of marital infidelity in 2022. According to the conducted research, 150 women visited the counseling centers of District 5 of Tehran in a period of 3 months, and 108 women were considered as a statistical sample through random sampling and Morgan's table. The research tools were Goldberg mental health questionnaires (1972), Toronto Alexithymia Scale (1994) and Pines marital burnout (2002). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression were used to analyze the data.

## Results

The results showed that the correlation coefficient between mental health and alexithymia is (0.380) and between mental health and marital burnout (0.568), which shows that there is a correlation between mental health and alexithymia and marital burnout of women affected by infidelity at the error level of 0.1. 0 and with 99 percent confidence, there is a significant positive and direct relationship. Also, regression analysis showed that emotional alexithymia and marital burnout have an effect on the mental health of women affected by infidelity ( $p < 0.05$ ), thus with 95% confidence, the contribution of emotional alexithymia is 28% and marital burnout is 44% on the mental health of women affected by betrayal.

## Conclusion

Marital infidelity has a great contribution to the level of emotional alexithymia and marital boredom, and in turn, this variable has a great impact on the mental health of couples, and by teaching couples how to achieve intimacy skills, steps can be taken to reduce marital infidelity.

The present study was faced with certain limitations. This research was conducted among women who have experienced infidelity in district 5 of Tehran, and caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other groups in other cities. The study did not utilize influential cultural variables in regards to marital infidelity. The questionnaire consisted of three parts, which could be challenging for individuals to complete due to their length and complexity. It is recommended that in future research on marital infidelity, influential cultural variables should also be considered. It is suggested that qualitative research be conducted on marital infidelity to fully understand all aspects of the issue. It is also recommended that other research methods, such as quasi-experimental designs and structural equation modeling, be used to determine the causal relationships that are impactful in marital infidelity. It is suggested that questionnaires with fewer questions be used or that incentives be provided for respondents in future investigations. In line with the study's results, it is recommended that counseling centers and psychological clinics pay special attention to emotional disclosure and seek to improve emotional disclosure through therapy sessions. Additionally, it is suggested that workshops on marital adaptability skills and prevention of dissatisfaction in relationships be held among couples, to create avenues for improving satisfaction and commitment in marriages. Moreover, premarital education for young people and couples on how to establish emotional, friendly, and intimate relationships with one's spouse could be used to impart the experience of positive emotions.

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