The study of personality characteristics, self-esteem and social support in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship

Zohreh Alizadeh  
Department of law, Rasht branch, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran

Mohammad Mehdi Pasandideh  
Assistant Professor of Payam Noor University, Iran

Mohammad Reza Nazari Nezhad  
Assistant Professor of Gilan University, Iran  
Corresponding author: Mohammad Mehdi Pasandideh  
Email: mmpasandideh@gmail.com

Abstract

Introduction: sexual relationships without marriage is accepted or rejected depending on customs and religious beliefs of each country. Iran is a country that because of having religious government rejects people’s illicit sexual relationships. Objective: the aim of this study is comparing personality characteristics, self-esteem and social support in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship. Method: this research is a kind of EX-post facto research. Statistic population of this research is consisted of men and women committing illicit sexual relationship in Rasht Central Prison and ordinary people. The sample used in this research includes 200 subjects (100 subjects committing illicit sexual relationship and 100 ordinary people) that convenience sampling was used for those committing illicit sexual relationship and judgmental sampling was used for ordinary people. Questionnaires of MMPI to study dimensions of personality, Cooper Smith to study self-esteem and social support were used in this research. Data analyzing was used by using methods of descriptive and inferential statistics (ANOVA & MANOVA and independent t analysis). Findings: data analysis showed that in personality dimensions, there is a significant difference between self-esteem and dimensions of perceived social support among men and women in two groups. Conclusion: results of this research show that having personality problem and low self-esteem and low amount of perceived social support face men and women having this problem to committing crimes like illicit sexual relationship, compared to those who don’t have this problem.

Keywords: personality characteristics, self-esteem, social support, illicit sexual relationship.
Introduction
Marriage like other affairs has its own danger and problem and one of these main dangerous and problematic events in marriage is illicit sexual relationships (Kaveh, 1383). Media and satellite programs give so much opportunities to people and make people familiar to new stimulus and kinds of different behaviors all times (Aliverdinia, 1384, p.157). the term illicit sexual relationship is used as opposite to the legal sexual relationship and is influenced of Islamic belief and ethics and means illicit sexual relationship between a man and woman for satisfying sexual desire in any possible way (Saber, 1393, p.12). Therefore, in defining illicit sexual relationship it can be said that any physical contact against law and religion between parties (at least two people) regardless gender and sex parties. So, the relationship between those in the same gender, human and animals are absolutely illicit and sexual relationship between unmarried man and woman is illicit whether this sexual relationship leads into the marriage or not. According to the term relationship for being illicit, at least there should be two people. So, what the people do individually and without any need for presence of someone else is out of our research field (Nikhoo, 1380, p.75).
Of course, what is considered as illicit sexual relationship in our country is considered as a normal behavior in everyday interaction in other non-Muslim countries (Divband et.al, 1392). Unfaith and infidelity, if happens in a family, the wife or husband who receives them, will be damaged and unfaith and infidelity will destroy his/her mental health and balance in behavior or affection. Here, the kids also will suffer these damages in family structure (Kaveh, 1383). In societies with no religious beliefs, men and women’s faith is very important. This faith is a firm dam against most of perversions. When a man or woman avoids having relationship with other men or women because of promising to the family, most of perversions will be deleted from his/her life. Result of this privilege is more strength in family structure. But when there is no such promise and commitment, most of perversions will be seemed as common and normal and she cannot be a a good wife for her husband and a good mother for her kids, anymore (Abbasi Valadi, 1393, pp.39-40).
Men and women committing illicit sexual relationship will be known as criminal and imprisoned because of breaking the social law. These guilty people will be faced special physical and mental problem. Emotional and psychological effects that prostitutes experience in their life, is very serious and fatal. Some of personality characteristics and mental disorders increase tensions and conflicts between couples and threaten continuation of married life (Watson, Hubbard & Wiese, 2000; Donnellan, Conger & Bryant, 2004; Whisman, Uebelacker & Weinstock, 2007). Researches related to personality characteristics and marital stability have shown that personality characteristics like low neurotic, high compatibility, high extroversion and openness to experience have significant relationship to the level of marital satisfaction and so in marital stability (Malouff et.al, 2010). Huston and Houts (1998) noted that personality helps stable psychological basis and so, it can predict success or failure of the relationship (as cited as Rodrigues et.al, 2007). Personality is a factor that can help us in more perception of coping skills that prisoners face in stressful events while personality disorders are common among prisoners. Self esteem as one of the important psychological aspects of human beings is the attitude that one has toward himself/herself in which there are cognitive and emotional components (Rosenberg, 1965; Cooper Smith, 1967).
Self-esteem has been defined as the capacity and the ability to interpret events in such a way that be able to increase and maintain person's self-worth (Kernis, 2006) and includes the development of self-worth by the charm and competence feelings (Ourerson & Jost, 2007) and has two parts: a sense of self-efficiency and self-worth. Self-efficiency includes a person’s sense of competence and effectiveness in dealing with the physical and social environment and self-worth means a sense and evaluation that person has about himself/herself (Kernis, 2006).

Self-worth component is limited to time and space in the sense that feeling of self-worth is the result of a variety of experiences and opportunities. This sense is acquired differently in different ages (Ourerson & Jost, Chedraui, Perez-Lopez, Mendoza et.al, 2010). Women with low self-esteem don’t feel good about themselves and their social and family roles and also have a low self-concept. Studies have shown that low self-esteem caused psychosomatic disorders, anxiety, depression, drug abuse, unsafe sex, delinquency, failure and eating disorder (O'Farrell, Flanagan, Bedford et.al, 2005; Adewuya & Ologun, 2006).

It seems that beside the dimensions of personality and self-esteem, there is another factor that can affect men and women committing illicit sexual relationships that is social support. Social support is interpersonal communications among members of a social network for bilateral, informal and usually useful and spontaneous relations and has two functional (perceived social support) and structural domains (the size of the social network). Perceived social support reflects the view of the support provided and the size of the social network also refers to all people known as familiar by the person (Chan, Hon, Chine & Lopez, 2004). In addition, social support is not only a multiplicity of relationships, but it is quality that is important, because it is achieved from the variety of sources, including family, relatives, friends or community organizations (Sarapino, 2004). Those who receive social support, feel that the others love them and have a sense of importance, they fell that the others respect them and know themselves as a part of family and friend networks or social organizations that can be the source of monetary and moral help and the two way services when it is needed (Sarapino, 2002) and it is less probable to tend illicit sexual relationship.

The crime of <<illicit sexual relationship>> has high importance in the judicial courts in our country that needs no relators. In this crime, public prosecutor can investigate the crime without complain of relator according to the act 637 of Islamic punishment.

Despite the importance of this issue in our country, limited researches have been conducted to study psychological dimensions of this social harm. So, the necessity of studying psychological components like comparing personality characteristics, self-esteem and social support in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship is felt much and can help the authorities to educate people and prevent them from it.

**Method:**

This research is a kind of descriptive and Ex-post facto research. Statistic population of this research included two groups, a group of men and women committing illicit sexual relationship imprisoned in central prison of Guilan province and the second group of ordinary people without any illicit sexual relationship or any other crime or having any prison experience and they were equal to the first group in demographic variables. The sample under study included 200 subjects (100 men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and 100 ordinary men and women)
that has been selected by non-random convenience sampling and MMPI, Cooper Smith self-esteem and Sherbourne & Stewart social support questionnaires have been used.

Research tools:

MMPI questionnaire: In 1943, this questionnaire was made by Hathaway and Mckinley in Minnesota University and then it was used widely in different researches related to the personality and mental disorders in hospitals and mental health centers. Scoring of this questionnaire has been done in two scales. One scale includes mental scales that is interpreted and scored before clinical interpretation and scoring like lie-detecting and defensiveness. Clinical Scales also include dimensions of Hypochondriasis, depression, Hysteria, psychopathic deviate, paranoia, psychasthenia, hypomania and schizophrenia. The test in all scales had mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10. It means that those who get balanced score equal to 50, get a score equal to the mean score in healthy group.

Cooper smith self-esteem questionnaire: Cooper smith has made this questionnaire based on Rodgers & David’s revised scale. This scale has 58 inventories that measures attitudes toward oneself and has 8 lie-detecting inventories that its reliability has been proved by different researchers. In a research, internal consistency coefficient of self-esteem questionnaire by using coefficient of Cronbach alpha has been 0.8 and its reliability has been reported by bisection of Gautam to be 0.76 (Motamedi, 1385).

Sherbourne & Stewart social support questionnaire: this scale was made by Sherbourne and Stewart in 1991 to be used in medical outcomes and then was used in other research fields. This questionnaire that evaluates amount of perceived social support, has 19 statements and 5 sub-scales. These sub-scales are: tangible support, emotional support, positive affection, informing, kindness and social interaction. The lowest score was 19 and the highest one was 95. Reliability of sub-scales of this research was reported to be in the range of 0.74 to 0.93 by using Cronbach alpha (Shyua, Tang, Liang and Weng, 2005).

Findings

In this research the number of 200 subjects (100 men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and 100 ordinary subjects) were studied according to the psychological dimensions like personality characteristics, self-esteem and social support. Analyzing descriptive data showed that 37% of imprisoned subjects and 69% of ordinary subjects are in the age range of 18 to 30 and 45% of imprisoned subjects and 13% of ordinary subjects were at the age range of 41 to 50 and the rest were at the age range of older than 51. And also, studying marital status of two groups showed that 20% of imprisoned subjects and 53% of ordinary subjects were single and 66% of imprisoned subjects and 47% of ordinary subjects were married and the rest were divorced. Studying educational level also showed that 38% of imprisoned subjects were illiterate or had elementary education and 41% of imprisoned subjects and 3% of ordinary people had intermediate education and 18% of imprisoned subjects and 24% of ordinary subjects had diploma and associated degree and the rest had bachelor or higher degrees. And finally, job status of the subjects showed that 50% of imprisoned subjects and 29% of ordinary subjects were unemployed, 38% of imprisoned subjects and 3% of ordinary subjects were worker, 6% of imprisoned subjects and 34% of ordinary subjects were employee and the rest had free jobs.

MANOVA was used to compare personality dimensions in two groups. Therefore, first, hypothesis of homogeneousness of variance-covariance matrix was studied according to M –box test and the results of this test showed that this hypothesis isn’t true (P=0.01, F55, 1266.5 =2.13, M-
box=123.46). Of course, since sample size in two groups is equal, it can be said that this test is
consistent to error of this hypothesis and there is no limitation in using it. Then, homogeneous
hypothesis of error variance was studied by using Leven test and the results showed that this
hypothesis consists for all personality dimensions under study (P>0.05). After studying
hypothesis of this test, multi variable test was used to study general difference among personality
dimensions in two groups. Results of Wilks’s lambda test showed that there is a significant
difference in personality dimensions of two groups of those committing illicit sexual relationship
and ordinary people (P=0.01, F_{10 , 189 } =19.78, value=0.49). So, it can be concluded that
personality characteristics of men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary
men and women are different in groups. Table1 shows results of MANOVA to compare all
personality dimensions individually in two groups.

Table1: results of MANOVA to compare all personality dimensions individually in two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>component</th>
<th>group</th>
<th>Mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>Total square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(2.37) 4.54</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(1.88) 5.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.15) 7.17</td>
<td>253.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>253.13</td>
<td>30.85</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.54) 9.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HY</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.01) 10.14</td>
<td>95.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95.22</td>
<td>11.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.86) 8.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(2.95) 6.91</td>
<td>423.41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>423.41</td>
<td>65.142</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.07) 9.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(2.34) 4.91</td>
<td>348.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>348.48</td>
<td>73.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.02) 7.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.59) 7.13</td>
<td>496.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>496.13</td>
<td>50.81</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.57) 28.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.97) 8.32</td>
<td>776.180</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>776.180</td>
<td>69.20</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(2.58) 12.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(2.39) 5.58</td>
<td>165.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>165.62</td>
<td>34.95</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(1.94) 7.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results showed that depression, psychopathic deviate deviate, psychasthenia, schizophrenia and
hypohypomania in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship is higher than in
ordinary subjects and hysteria in ordinary men and women is higher than those committing illicit
sexual relationship. Then, amount of self-esteem was compared between two groups of those
committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects. Independent-t was used to compare
this component that results are shown in table2.
Table 2: Results of independent-t test to compare self-esteem in two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(4.7) 21.07</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(3.25) 15.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results showed that there is a significant difference between the mean of self-esteem in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects and comparison of the means shows that ordinary subjects have higher self-esteem. Then, total score of social support was studied by independent-t between two groups. Results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of independent-t test to compare social support between two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(15.08) 76.47</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(19.33) 64.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Table 3 showed that there is a difference between social support for those committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects and ordinary subjects have more social support. After studying total score of social support, MANOVA test was used to study dimensions of social support. Therefore, first, hypothesis of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrix was studied by using M-box test and results showed that this hypothesis is not true (P=0.0001, F_{15, 157847.6} =3.05, M-box=11.56). According to equality of sample size in two groups it can be said that this test is consistent to error of this hypothesis and there is no limitation in using it. Then, hypothesis of homogeneity of error variance was studied by using Leven test and the results showed that this hypothesis is consistent for all dimensions of social support under study (P>0.05). After checking hypotheses of this test, MANOVA test was used to study total difference among dimensions of social support in two groups. Results of Wilks’s lambda test showed that there is a significant difference in dimensions of social support in two groups of those committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects (P=0.0001, F_{5, 194} = 23.99, value=0.61). So, it can be concluded that, dimensions of social support is different in those committing illicit sexual relationship and in ordinary people. Table 4 provides results of MANOVA test to compare dimensions of social support individually in two groups.

Table 4: Results of MANOVA test to compare dimensions of social support individually in two groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>Total square</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.06) 16.65</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>48.46</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>imprisoned</td>
<td>(4.17) 13.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>(3.2915) 462.08</td>
<td>462.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>462.08</td>
<td>31.36</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results showed that there is a significant difference in all dimensions of social support (tangible, emotional, informing, kindness and positive social interaction) among those committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects and comparing the means shows that these dimensions are higher in ordinary subjects.

**Conclusion**

Sexual instinct like other instincts has given to human beings because of sacred purposes and this natural and licit power imparts aware and free human beings in honorific and licit reproduction, so, a sexual relationship between a man and woman for erogenic feelings is obscene by law and rule because of its opposition to human nature and having a sexual relationship between two genders without marriage is legally and reasonably refused and rejected, so, sexual relationship is called illicit sexual relationship because of its opposition to the Islamic government and current rules (Kalhor, 1388). Iran is one of societies that rejects illicit sexual relationship because of having Islamic government and religion. Hence, the legislator considers sexual relationship without marriage as a crime to prevent them. But, despite Had and Tazir punishment, committing this crime by some people in society is deniable. Results of this research showed that there is a significant difference between personality dimensions of men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects and also, this result matches findings in previous researches (Watson et.al, 2000; Donnellan et.al, 2004; Whisman et.al, 2007).

There are various researches that show personality characteristics can be effective in stability and strength of marital life. Some of personality characteristics and mental disorders increase tensions and conflicts and threaten continuance of marital life (Watson et.al, 2000); Donnellan et.al, 2004; Whisman et.al, 2007). Caughlin, Huston and Houts (2000) conducted a 13 year research and concluded that a great part of the relationship between psychasthenia and satisfaction from marital life is related to the negative interactional patterns between wives and husbands. It means that those who have psychasthenia show more negative feelings to their wives/husbands and so help negative interactional pattern to form in marital life. Beside, psychasthenia, other personality characteristics also, have been considered in marital conflicts.
and satisfaction. Jarvis (2006) believes that responsible people try more to maintain their own marital life. And Watson et.al (2000) reported in their research that agreeableness, responsibility and extroversion have positive correlation with marital life. Personality researches like low psychasthenia, high adaption, high conscience, high extroversion and openness toward experience have significant relationship with satisfaction in marital life and then in marital consistency (Malouff et.al, 2010). Results of this research also showed that in dimensions of depression, social deviate, psychasthenia, schizophrenia and hypomania in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship is higher than ordinary men and women and hysteria in ordinary men and women is higher than those committing illicit sexual relationship. And also, there was no significant difference in hypochondriasis between men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary men and women. So, it can be said that men and women committing illicit sexual relationship will have more problems like depression, behaviors against society, psychasthenia, autistic disorders and hypomania and these problems will lead them towards high risk behaviors like illicit sexual relationship.

Among other dimensions that have been under study in this research, is amount of self-esteem. Results of this research showed that there is a significant difference in self-esteem in men and women committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary men and women. So, it can be concluded that ordinary men and women have higher self-esteem compared to men and women committing illicit sexual relationship. These findings were consistent to findings of previous researches (Kernis 2006, Ourerson & Jost, 2007). Self-esteem is a worthy psychological event that relates one’s self-worth according to its total value (Chedraui, Perez-Lopez, Mendoza et.al, 2010). And self-esteem is among other coordinating factors of mental-social pressure that is based on family relationships, social interaction, educational success, body imagination and total self-worth and importance of these factors defers according to individual difference and one’s growth (Baumeister, 1993). So, it seems that those who have healthy psychological dimensions will have higher self-esteem and it is less probable to commit different crimes like illicit sexual relationship. Women with less self-esteem don’t have a good feeling toward themselves and family and social roles and they have low self-worth.

Social support and its dimensions were also other psychological components that were studied in this research and the results showed that ordinary men and women have more social support than those committing illicit sexual relationship. The results showed that the mean of men and women committing illicit sexual relationship in tangible support, emotional support, informing, kindness and positive social interaction is less than it in ordinary subjects. Hence, it can be inferred that suitable social support can decrease amount of harmful damages in society. In other words, social support decreases amount of encountering to stressful condition and one can benefit other’s cooperation and help in difficult situations and avoid immediate and without thinking decisions. Research conducted by Albokordi et.al (1389) with the title of the relationship among self-esteem and social support to depression in imprisoned men showed that 93.9% of imprisoned men under study suffered low to high degrees of depression and there was a significant correlation between self-esteem and depression, but, there was no significant relationship between depression and social support. Results of this research showed that there is a significant relationship between personality dimensions, self-esteem and dimensions of social support in those committing illicit sexual relationship and ordinary subjects and it can help us
prevent and predict this social problem and help society families be protected from this social harm.
References

Okhovvat, Valiollah & Daneshmand, Loqman, 1357. Evaluation of personality, publication of Tehran University.

Albokordi, Sajjad et.al (1389). The relationship among self-esteem and social support with depression in imprisoned men, journal of medical science in Mazandaran, 20th period, no.77.

Divband, Faezeh & Masoudnia, Ebrahim & Jesmani, Somayeh (1392). Effects of satellite programs on young people’s point of view to illicit sexual relationship, periodical of police woman studies, 7th year, no.19, fall and winter 1392, p.43.


Abbasi Valadi, Mohsen. The plates on table of our roofs (family and satellite), Al-zahra society publication, 33rd edition, summer 1393, p. 39-40.


Kaveh, Saeed (1383. Unfaith and disloyalty psychology, Tehran, publication of Honar Sara-ye Andisheh.


