



## Comparison of Family Functioning and Content in Families Faced With Disloyalty and Normal Families

Ladan Hashemi\* and Tahereh Didgah

Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Arsanjan Branch, Arsanjan, Iran

\*Corresponding author's e-mail: ldnhashemi@iaua.ac.ir

### ABSTRACT

Aim of present study was comparison of process and content in families faced with disloyalty and normal families. Thus, 91 women and men who face with spouse disloyalty and 100 ordinary women and men who did not have had such an experience were selected by Convenience Sampling method and completed research tools include process scales and family content. Results showed that families faced with disloyalty obtained lower grades than the normal families in all processes (problem solving and decision making skills, coping skills, consistency and mutual respect, communication skills and religious beliefs); also in content aspect, normal families maintain their dominance in satisfaction of togetherness, satisfaction with physical appearance, social prestige, physical and mental health and the satisfaction from educational facilities. Overall, findings indicated efficiency of family process and content model in distinguish between families faced with disloyalty and normal families. Implications and applications of the findings are discussed in the text.

**Keywords:** Spouses, Disloyalty, Family Process, Family Content

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, family organization due to cultural, social, industrial, scientific and belief changes have been faced with many problems. Precariousness of many traditions, ethics, customs, ceremonial and beliefs that was agent for the strength and stability and balance of families have threatened family functioning and content seriously. During these years, several theories and models have been introduced in the field of family functioning and dynamism and challenges and ways to deal with multiple problems and issue same as spouse disloyalty. Aim of present study is investigate one of the most comprehensive models that have been proposed recently in this field (spouse's disloyalty). The model is family process and content [1].

Although marriage and relations with spouse is one of the most healthy and satisfying relations, but there are many damages that can cause harm to these relations. One of these damages is disloyalty from each of the spouses. These type of damages or relationships outside the family leads to deep conflicts, separation, divorce and other trauma and social damages [2].

According to Kaveh [3], disloyalty includes behaviors and functions that married person have with opposite gender outside the family, in the way that leads to friendly, devotional, romantic and lovely relationship, so that this relationship have had certain thrills for function's spouse. Shachield Ford et al. [4] have been distinguished between two types of disloyalty: sexual disloyalty that refers to sexual relations with someone other than spouse and devotional or emotional disloyalty that in this type one of spouses have lovely and attention feelings to other one. Experimental estimates show that 30 to 60 percent of men and 20 to 50 percent of women involve with disloyalty during the marriage [5].

These statistics indicate high prevalence of this phenomenon. Disloyalty breaks limitation of in between behaviors in committed relationships [6] and has detrimental effects on relationships. Visman et al. [quoted from 7] believe that disloyalty is one of the most difficult problems facing with in family therapy and have many damages for spouse's relationships. They have been estimated that disloyalty is cause of 50 to 65 percent of couples Referral to counseling centers and psychological treatments [7]. Researchers have reported many causes for disloyalty, including level of education, race, economic status, believes, thrill, opportunity, revenge, human

nature, Dissatisfaction in marriage, marriage at young age, lack of religious beliefs, divorce families (who have remarried), income [7], Business activities outside the home and education [8].

Thres et al. [8] found that low mental satisfaction from marital relation, personality, quality of marital relation to sex, external harmonization, and poor relations with spouse are some of the reasons for unhealthy relations and violate from marital.

Also dissatisfaction from emotional relations and lack of intimacy between couples are some of reasons that can lead to disloyalty. Rubinstion et al. [9] believe that between some couples, emotional separation and lack of intimacy and unhealthy patterns of communication occur over time that these make impossible opportunity for create new sexual and other emotional relations between couples. So, couples to have proper emotional relations and satisfying emotions and passions may turn to disloyalty.

Also quality of relation is one of the most important factors that can lead to disloyalty. Thompson [10] in review 10 studies found that quality of relation has a central role in accelerating the disloyalty. These studies have shown that is a relation between marital satisfaction and disloyalty. Thompson [10] estimates that low satisfaction and sexual relation is a good predictor for disloyalty. Also Shachield Ford [4] believes that marital conflict and low marital satisfaction may lead to disloyalty in one of the couples [7].

Although a lot of researches have been done on the causes and extent of the disloyalty phenomenon in different cultures and countries, however, little research devotes to this important subject in Iranian community. The thing that makes this problem so important in Iran, at first is increasing rate and a few scientific researches in this field. Despite being this operation covert and being crime from point of law view and having heavy death penalty (Stoning) it seems that its rate is very high and increasing. Second, statistics shows very meditative rate state of crimes due to disloyalty. So that high percentage of murders that took place in Iran is because of honor conflicts and disloyalty. This factor has introduced disloyalty as the greatest fear from marriage between people and one of the most important factors for devastating the family. Third factor is related to direct relation of divorce with disloyalty. Statistics shows that 75 percent of sexual disloyalties lead to divorce in Iranian society [11].

In order to further understand the causes of this phenomenon in Iranian society, as previously mentioned, aim of this study is investigate reasons of spouse's disloyalty using one of most comprehensive new native models in the field of family functioning and dynamism and challenges so called "family content and process" model. "Family content and process" model [1] has been designed based on conflict theories or family conflict. Overall, family theoretical models that are based on family conflict theories based their work on identifying factors causing marital and family conflicts. According to family conflict theory, family continuously faces with factors and realities that lead to family imbalance. This imbalance may lead to improve quality of family functioning or may lead to increase unease and problem in family [12, 13].

According to this functioning model, family is the interaction of three factors; includes:

- 1- family processes,
- 2- family content and
- 3- family social context.

"Family processes" means actions that provide ability to organize and adapt more effectively for family members and includes communication skills and styles, educational styles, coping skills, decision making and problem solving skills, family consistency, family flexibility, skills in self-expression, etc. As the research shows, these functions are key processes that enable individuals and families deal with new crisis more effectively [14]. "Family content and potentials" includes different deposits of family members in terms of education, occupation, income, family history, ethnicity and race, age differences between family members, family gender composition, and physical and mental health level and "family social context" means belief system and standards that have covered family in the society. In content and process model of family, effectiveness and importance of the processes and content of family is determined and judged by social context [14].

One of the advantages of family process and content model in investigating family system problems is considering many factors simultaneously while provide guidelines for exit from family deadlocks that lead to dissatisfaction, instability and finally disintegration of the family (possibly in the form of spouses disloyalty). Based on proposed model, it is expected that be differences in various domains between content and processes of normal families and families that have experienced disloyalty, so that families that have experienced disloyalty possibly have lower quality level than normal families in terms of processes of life and family content.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research participants

49 women and 42 men who faced with disloyalty between referrers to family counseling centers in Neiriz city health centers were selected by Convenience Sampling. After reviewing the status of this group in terms of gender, age, education level and duration of marriage, comparison group have been selected (55 women and 45 women from normal families of Neiriz city that refers to counseling center).

To insure two groups similarity in above variables, any possible difference in terms of gender composition, age, education level and marriage duration were analyzed with Chi-square test and t-test. Results showed no significant difference between two groups in the variables.

### Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools are processes questionnaire and family content that have been developed by Samani [1].

Family content scale: in order to measure family content, Samani family content list [15] have been used. This list has 38 statements and measures issues like satisfaction from financial situation, his/her appearance and her/his spouse, educational and job status, spouse and children, social prestige, place of life and physical and mental health of family. In front of each statement, there are five options in range of one for "strongly disagree" to five for "strongly agree" that have been considered.

Samani et al. [13] have identified seven factors in validity and reliability investigation of this scale with a sample of 450 people from Shiraz University students with using factor analysis. Scale internal consistency with Alpha coefficients have been reported for job and education 0.86, Time to be together 0.88, financial resources 0.76, physical appearance and social prestige 0.83, physical and mental health 0.79, life space 0.79, and educational facilities 0.85 respectively by Samani [15]. In the present study, Alpha coefficients for subscales include satisfaction from job and education, time to be together, financial resources, physical appearance and social prestige, physical and mental health, life space and educational facilities was obtained 0.84, 0.83, 0.76, 0.84, 0.80, 0.77, 0.83 respectively.

### Family processes scale

This scale consists of 43 statements and has been designed to measure family processes [15]. For each statement, grade range with five options (strongly disagree to strongly agree) have been considered. This scale consists of 5 subscales include: decision making and problem solving skill, consistency and mutual respect skill, coping skill, communication skills and religious beliefs. Samani [15] have reported scale validity with factor analysis method and its reliability using Cronbach's Alpha for decision making and problem solving 0.89, coping skill 0.87, consistency and mutual respect skill 0.83, communication skill 0.84 and religious beliefs 0.81 respectively.

In the present study, Alpha coefficients for decision making and problem solving, coping skill, consistency and mutual respect skill, communication skill and religious beliefs was obtained 0.81, 0.86, 0.82, 0.82 and 0.83 respectively.

## RESULTS

In order to study differences between two groups include families faced with disloyalty and normal families in family processes subscales, multivariate analysis of variance have been executed. This analysis finding has been shown in Table 1. As the table findings shows, difference between two groups in all family processes subscales is significant.

**Table 1.** Multivariate analysis of variance for two groups in family processes subscales

Variable	Source of variance	SS	MS	df	F	Sig
Decision making and problem solving	Between Groups	1.24	1.24	1	13.19	0.001
	Inter Groups	17.86	0.095	189		
Coping Skill	Between Groups	36.44	36.44	1	59.93	0.001
	Inter Groups	114.90	0.60	189		
Consistency and mutual respect	Between Groups	38.75	38.75	1	57.62	0.001
	Inter Groups	127.10	0.67	189		
Communication skill	Between Groups	6.17	6.17	1	16.14	0.001
	Inter Groups	72.30	0.38	189		
Religious beliefs	Between Groups	10.64	10.64	1	19.97	0.001
	Inter Groups	100.71	0.53	189		

In order to clarify these differences, t-tests were performed. Results of these tests have been shown in Table 2. The findings shows that families faced with disloyalty have lower grades in all processes than normal families.

**Table 2.** Mean and standard deviation for scores of participants in the two groups in subscales of family processes, t value and significance level

Variables	Group	Number	Average	Standard Deviation	t	df	p
Decision Making And Solving Problem	Faced with disloyalty	91	2.96	0.31	-3.63	189	0.001
	Normal	100	3.12	0.31			
Coping Skill	Faced with disloyalty	91	2.99	0.89	-7.63	189	0.001
	Normal	100	3.86	0.66			
Consistency And Mutual Respect	Faced with disloyalty	91	3.11	0.93	-7.50	189	0.001
	Normal	100	4.02	0.71			
Communication Skill And Styles	Faced with disloyalty	91	2.22	0.61	-4.02	189	0.001
	Normal	100	2.58	0.62			
Religious Beliefs	Faced with disloyalty	91	3.23	0.80	-4.47	189	0.001
	Normal	100	3.70	0.66			

**Table 3.** Multivariate analysis of variance for two groups in family content subscales

Variable	Source of Variance	SS	MS	Df	F	Sig
Satisfaction from job and education	Between Groups	1.61	1.61	1	2.32	NS
	Intergroup	131.09	0.69	189		
Satisfaction from time be together	Between Groups	6.91	6.91	1	11.30	0.001
	Intergroup	115.68	0.61	189		
Satisfaction from financial resources	Between Groups	1.79	1.79	1	1.70	NS
	Intergroup	199.54	1.05	189		
Satisfaction from physical appearance and social prestige	Between Groups	5.66	5.66	1	11.80	0.001
	Intergroup	90.73	0.48	189		
Physical and mental health	Between Groups	23.95	23.95	1	28.38	0.001
	Intergroup	159.54	0.84	189		
Satisfaction from life space	Between Groups	2.06	2.06	1	1.31	NS
	Intergroup	296	1.56	189		
Satisfaction from educational facilities	Between Groups	5.34	5.34	1	9.92	0.002
	Intergroup	101.75	0.53	189		

As the above table findings shows, difference between two groups in satisfaction from time to be together, satisfaction from physical appearance and social prestige, physical and mental health and educational facilities subscales in significant; in order to clarify these differences, T tests executed for significance variables. A result of these tests is given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Mean and standard deviation for participant's grades of two groups in family content subscales, T value and significance level

Variables	Group	Number	Average	Standard Deviation	T	Df	P
Satisfaction from time be together	Faced with disloyalty	91	2.06	0.78	-3.62	189	0.001
	Normal	100	3.24	0.78			
Satisfaction from physical appearance and social prestige	Faced with disloyalty	91	3.43	0.76	-3.43	189	0.001
	Normal	100	3.77	0.63			
Physical and mental health	Faced with disloyalty	91	3.52	1.03	-5.33	189	0.001
	Normal	100	4.23	0.81			
Educational facilities	Faced with disloyalty	91	3.13	0.62	-3.19	189	0.002
	Normal	100	3.47	0.82			

Table 4 shows that in all subscales, families faced with disloyalty have obtained fewer grades than normal families.

## DISCUSSION

Aim of this study was investigate causes of spouse's disloyalty in the form of functioning comparison and family content in families faced with disloyalty and normal families. About family processes, findings showed that families faced with disloyalty have weaker skills and processes than families who did not experience this phenomenon.

Findings showed that in decision making and problem solving skills, families faced with disloyalty had lower grades than normal families. Gottman et al. [16] believes that conflict and problem is not always a negative phenomenon, but the method that families use to manage and solve problem may effect on family functionality. Also from Minoochin standpoint [17] in a normal family couples have many problems in their relations, upbringing of children, relations with spouse family and deal with the outside world, but same all normal families struggle with these problems and dialogue and exchange their views about agreements that makes possible living together (page 39 and 40). Consistent with these views, present research findings indicated that probably not having clear and creative strategy in decision making and solving problems that family face with can lead to disloyalty in families.

Findings showed that about coping skill, one of the factors that can separate well families faced by disloyalty and normal families, is skill to face with problems and stress. So that families faced with disloyalty use less from effective skills to cope with stress and problems. The coping strategies are set of cognitive and behavioral efforts that are used in order to interpret and modify a stressful situation and lead to reduce suffer caused by that .Consistent with these findings, Johnson [18] found that couples that can manage the existing relation conflicts with proper methods, have more agreement about family problems and experience less destructive conflicts.

Also Farahbakhsh et al. [19] showed using Glosser couple therapy theory emotional relations, encourage to judge and assess their behavior and coping skill (the solution circle) are some couples problems faced with disloyalty.

Also in consistency and mutual respect, families faced with disloyalty obtained fewer grades than normal families. These findings shows that in families faced with disloyalty the consistency and mutual respect between family members is less. Consistency or family correlation and mutual respect are the most important relational aspect in family and show sense of belonging, honor of the family members to that, open dialogue in home or promote aggressive interactions in the family and indicate type of emotional relations between family members [20]. The consistency concept is important because of responsibility for balance between two separating and togetherness processes of family members [21]. So, low score on this aspect indicates the separation and emotional distance between family members. This finding is consistent with researches that indicate dissatisfaction from emotional relations and lack of intimacy between couples are from the most important factors that can lead to spouse's disloyalty [8, 22]. In this regard, Rubinstion et al. [9] believe that emotional separation and lack of intimacy and unhealthy patterns of communication between couples make impossible opportunity for create new sexual relations and other emotional relations between them and meanwhile couples may turn to disloyalty to have proper emotional relations and satisfy emotions and feelings.

One other skill that families faced with disloyalty have weaker functioning comparison to normal families was communicational relations. The communicational relations are skills that persons can involve in interactions between individual and communication process by them. I.e. the process during that persons share their information, thoughts and emotions by exchange verbal and non-verbal messages. This skill is one of effective and important variables on compatibility, satisfaction, and quality of the marital relationship. Olson [21] introduces family communication component as an instrumental component for improve family functioning in family circumflex model. The researcher introduces amplifying family communication skills as a tool for change family status from unbalanced to balanced status. I.e. basis of desirable function of families depend on members' skills and communication styles. Findings of present study are consistent with these views and also with Samani [1] "family content and processes" model assumptions and showed that communication styles and skills could be a factor for separate normal families and families faced with disloyalty. Previous studies are consistent with this study finding include [4] and studies that have investigated marital dissatisfaction include Glass et al. [5].

Also in the field of religious beliefs, findings showed that average grades of religious beliefs in families faced with disloyalty is significantly less than normal families. This finding is consistent with studies that know religious beliefs as a factor for predict disloyalty, for example Greeley [23] showed that religious is in relation with disloyalty. Burdette et al. [24] found that disloyalty happens less in families who go to church and believe the Bible.

About the content and potentials of family aspect, findings showed that families faced with disloyalty have lower content or quality level in comparison with families that have not experience this phenomenon in aspects of "satisfaction from time to be together", "satisfaction from physical appearance and social prestige", "physical and mental health", "satisfaction from educational facilities".

In "satisfaction from time to be together» aspect, average grades of families faced with disloyalty was less than normal families significantly. These finding shows that devote time for themselves and family members play important role in family conflicts. In this regard, theorists and family therapists believes that one of the matters

that is seen between healthy spouses and dramatically reduces marital conflicts, is the togetherness issue. I.e. Investment on time causes that wives spend their delicate attention to another, so more disloyalty reduction will provide. Also findings shows that families faced with disloyalty have less satisfaction in the aspects of "physical appearance and social prestige" and "educational facilities" in comparison with normal families. According to Samani Model [1, 13] dissatisfaction of family members in this aspect same as other family content aspects can increase conflicts and struggle in family.

Also about "physical and mental health", families faced with disloyalty have reported more improper situation in comparison with normal families. In consistent with this finding, in common statements of some therapists have been specified that persons with poor mental health, low frustration tolerance, male insecurity and Neuroticism (especially in women) are more likely to be disloyal [25].

In aspect of satisfaction from job and education, satisfaction from family financial resources and satisfaction from life space there is no significant difference between two types of family. For explaining these findings, we can match two groups in education level, age, marriage time and gender variables. This matching is done to eliminate confounding factors and give ability to more proper comparisons; however it seems that two group's similarity in these variables particularly in age and education level variables is an explanation for lack of significance in aspects of satisfaction from job, education, life space and financial resources. Although in previous studies there is supports for this finding, for example Buunk et al. [25] found that demographic characteristics and background factors are not good predictors for disloyalty, so that there is no social and economic class that causes disloyalty in marital relations. Also high or low level of income is not a reason for disloyalty.

It should be noted that nature of this research is casual-comparative and then eventual does not make possible causal explanation; for example weaker family functioning in family content and processes can be interpreted as the antecedent and factor of disloyalty and due to after the event nature of study seen as a consequence of the disloyalty in family. To confirm the role of causal factors, there is need to longitudinal research in this area.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm the effectiveness of the family content and processes Model [1, 13] in distinguish between normal families and families faced with disloyalty. These findings show that families faced with disloyalty in actions provide possibility for more effective organization and adaption for family members and in family potentials have problems. Research findings is in consistent with Hashemi et al. [26] that showed the model has required performance for distinguish between normal families and divorced families. In fact, this model that is designed based on conflict theories or family conflict, based its work on identifying factors causing family conflicts and can act well in identifying families faced with conflict include marital disloyalty. According to the teachings of this model one of the family processes features is their "Ability to train". This feature provides context for transformation of conflict affected and problematic families (that have weak performance in content or process aspect) or non-productive (that are weak in two aspects) to productive and constructive families. Also experimental studies have shown that abilities in family process can be taught and learned [15]. Also research results have indicated that education in fact increases the quality level of family processes. Ultimately, the high quality of these events leads families to better adaption and compatibility. In fact this feature makes it possible that this aspect rises not only through improvement families but also to improve families by preparing them to face with crisis [15].

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