

Correlation between Self Compassion and Emotional Distress among Young Aged Divorced Women

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Abstract: Background: Divorce among young aged women poses significant psychological problems to their health and wellbeing. **Purpose:** To identify the correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women. **Design:** A descriptive correlational design was utilized. **Setting:** This study was conducted at family court of Shebin El-kom, Menoufia Governorat, Egypt and government charitable institution which support divorcees Takaful and Karama charity and National Council for Women at Shebin El-Kom, Menoufia branch. at Menoufia Governorate, Egypt. **Sample:** A convenience sample of 180 young age divorced women who fit the inclusion and exclusion criteria. **Data collection Instruments:** 1) A structural interview questionnaire to assess socio-demographic characteristics, 2) Self-Compassion Scale (SCS): (3) Emotion Distress Scale (EDS). **Results:** There was a statistically significant negative correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women at p value ($P < 0.005$). **Conclusion:** There was a negative correlation between total self-compassion and total emotional distress among young aged divorced women. **Recommendation:** Psychoeducational program based self-compassion to all divorced women's and their family for enhancement of their self-compassion, developing optimism, psychological flexibility, mental alertness and psychological wellbeing

Keywords: Emotional distress, self-compassion.

Introduction

Marriage is an important and natural process in human life that has existed in all cultures and periods in different forms. Successful marriage and the

strengthening family foundation bring about numerous positive outcomes for both the family and society. Accordingly, most humans expect to

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achieve happiness through marrying someone and forming a married life. However, events are always observed during marriage, including the low rate of occurrence or the rising age of marriage, the lack of understanding between couples and the development of the phenomenon of divorce especially in the primary years of married life (Zaheri et al., 2020).

Marital conflict may be described as a struggle, clash, strife, disagreement or quarrel between husband and wife, over opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. Regarding its consequences, marital conflict is not only the issue of the two spouses; its effect goes beyond the individuals who dissolve the marital union. Children and other relatives of the couples are the immediate victims who share the potential consequences and exposed to various psychosocial problems. Moreover, conflicts in marriages produce various personal, familial, physical, and psychological consequences. They can result in depression, anxiety, and eating disorders and others (Tasew & Getahun, 2021).

Additionally, conflict in marriage can lead to poorer health conditions and the risk of certain diseases, such as heart disease, as well as cancer and chronic pains. Furthermore, conflicts in marriages can affect family life in different ways, e.g., it may decrease the performance of the parents and the compatibility of the children and increase conflicts among all family members (parents and children as well as between siblings) (Tasew & Getahun, 2021).

Early marriages are less stable due to the problems of children, economic difficulties and the lack of a complete picture of the desired partner, which finally develops by the age of 25. Men, on the other hand, most often try to escape from reality, immerse themselves in work, hobbies; thereby delaying the state of dissatisfaction for a longer period so, woman must not blame herself for everything as if it is her own fault instead must compassionate herself (Ikramova, 2022).

The construct of compassion is defined as the emotional perception and recognition of the suffering of others and the desire to alleviate it, understanding the universality of suffering, feeling moved by the person suffering and emotionally connecting with their distress, and tolerating uncomfortable feelings such as fear, distress so that we remain open to and accepting of the person suffering (Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021).

Self-compassionate mind state entails being kinder and more supportive toward oneself and less harshly judgmental. It involves greater recognition of the shared human experience and fewer feelings of being isolated by one's imperfection. It includes greater mindfulness of personal suffering and less rumination about negative aspects of oneself or one's life experience and less emotional distress (Tóth & Neff, 2021).

Emotional distress is viewed as an emotional condition that involves negative views of the self, others and the environment. It is characterized by unpleasant subjective states such

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feeling tense, worried, worthless, withdrawn and irritable. Sadness, anxiety, detachment with oneself and many other symptoms of mental imbalance are manifestations of psychological distress. These subjective states can reduce the emotional hardness of individuals and impact their ability to enjoy life and to cope with pain, disappointment and sadness (Singh, 2021).

Divorce leads to poor psychological and physical health especially in young aged women, divorced women have a higher susceptibility to chronic illness; stressful life event has also shown to have affected the psychological health of these women after the divorce. Divorce has become a serious problem; challenging the establishment of the family in a routine manner and causing severe impacts on the emotional and mental health of the individual especially, women. Since women are considered as the binding force in the family, they are believed to be responsible for whatever wrong is done (Sbarra & Whisman, 2022). After divorce women face different types of problems such as: social rejection, blame by relatives and siblings, challenges related to getting a separate house, economic hardships, harassment and exploitation, problems related to emotional attachment, psychological problems such as: depression, emotional distress, health problem, tried to kill herself, trauma, feelings of loneliness and lack of confidence (Khataybeh, 2022). Divorce has a significant impact on individuals, families, and whole communities. It can cause emotional distress, feelings of

guilt or regret, financial strain, and a breakdown in family dynamics. It may also lead to increased crime rates, poverty levels, and lower levels of education (Gul et al., 2021).

Psychiatric nurse have an important role in women who experience mental health problems due to divorce. Nurses can provide psycho-education and psychosocial interventions. Psychosocial Interventions are nursing activities that enhance the woman's psychological and social functions and improve social skills, interpersonal relationships, and communication. Nurses often use psychosocial interventions to help women meet their needs and achieve final results in all practice sites (Pragholapati, 2020). In addition to divorce rate involves, and negatively affects, many children and adolescents. Studies and clinical reports of the effects of divorce on children show that these children and adolescents respond to parental divorce with a group of symptoms (Kang et al., 2020). Nurses are some of the first professionals to see these reactions. Identifying symptomatology as an effect of divorce on them is the first step toward dealing with and enhancing these effects (Kang et al., 2020).

Significance of the study

Divorce is a common phenomenon in today's community. But still represent a major life stressor for the individuals involved, with potentially strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of all members of the family (Damota, 2019).

The Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics

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(CAPMAS) reported a higher rate of divorce. Divorce rates in Egypt were reported to be between 39.3 and 60.7%, depending on rural and urban locations. The divorce rate in Egypt was high especially in the last two years 2020 and 2021. The highest divorce rate was recorded in the women age group from 30 to less than 35 years (18.2%), (The Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2021).

Purpose of the study

To identify the correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women.

Research Questions:

- 1) What are the levels of self-compassion among young aged divorced women?
- 2) What are the levels of emotional distress among young aged divorced women?
- 3) What is the relationship between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women?

Research design:

A descriptive correlational design was used to achieve the purpose of the study.

Research setting:

A multistage random selection of one center for social units out of nine centers for social units in Menoufia Governorate was done through simple random selection from the papers in the bowl. The selected center for social units was Shebin El- Kom center. The researcher randomly selected eight

villages from 12 villages affiliated to Shebin El- Kom center.

Selected centers were Al-May social unit, Bakhati social unit, Al-Mesilha social unit, Al-Raheb social unit, Shanawan social unit, Shibin El Kom social unit and Shubra Bas social unit at Menoufia Governorate, Egypt. In addition to family court at Shebin El-kom, Takaful and Karama charity and National Council for Women at Shebin El-Kom ,Menoufia branch.

Sample Size calculation:

The sample size was relied upon 95% confidence interval (CI) and assuming a (two-sided) α of 0.05. Based on the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistic, 2021 the prevalence of divorce among Egyptian young aged women was between 39.3 and 60.7%. The sample size was calculated by the following formula:

$$Z^2 * (p) * (1-p)$$

$$SS =$$

$$d^2$$

Where SS= sample size, Z = Z value (1.96 for 95% confidence level), p = hypothesized % frequency of outcome factor (divorce) in the population (16%+/-5) d= confidence limits as % of 100(absolute +/- %) (5%).

Sampling: -

A consecutive sample of 180 young aged divorced women. Inclusion criteria: Their ages ranged from 18 to 35 years old and free from any physical or psychiatric disorders. Exclusion criteria: Divorced women whose age was more than 35 years, diagnosed with

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mental illness or neurological disorder, any history of chronic physical illness which may lead to anxiety and depression.

Instruments:

Three instruments were used for data collection:

Instrument one: A structured interviewing questionnaire

It was developed by the researcher to assess the socio-demographic characteristics of participants which includes age, level of education, occupation, residence, housing now, having children, number of children, duration of marriage and causes of divorce.

Instrument two: Self-Compassion Scale (SCS):

This scale was developed by (Neff, (2003) and translated into Arabic by the researcher to assess self-compassion. The SCS consists of 26 items, statements each which assess different aspects of self-compassion. It contains 6 subscales which include (self-kindness versus self-judgment, common humanity versus isolation and mindfulness versus over-identified items). Each statement is rated using three-point scale ranging from 1 to 3.

Scoring system of each item: Never received 1 degree, sometimes received 2 degrees and always received 3 degrees.

Total scoring system: Scores > 22.8 were considered as "Low SCS". On the other hand, a score higher than mean value of grand total SCS Positive subscales, was categorized into "High

self-compassion". Accordingly, women achieved a score > 32.47 were considered as "High SCS".

Instrument three: Emotional Distress Scale (EDS):

This scale was developed by Robertson et al., (2017) and translated into Arabic by the researcher to assess emotional distress in divorced women.

Scoring system of each item: It ranged from 0 to 5. Strongly disagree received 0, disagree received 1 degree, to some extent disagree received 2 degrees, to some extent agree received 3 degrees, agree received 4 degrees and completely agree received 5 degrees.

Total scoring system: The range of scores on this questionnaire was from 0 to 50. The higher scores indicated higher emotional distress. Normal or no emotional distress scoring (0-20) , Mild emotional distress scoring (21-30) , Moderate emotional distress scoring (31-40) and Severe emotional distress scoring (41-50).

Validity:

The study instruments were tested for face validity by a jury of five experts in the field specialty of psychiatric mental health nursing (Professor), psychiatric medicine (Professor) and psychologist (Professor) to ascertain the relevance, coverage of the content and clarity of the questions. The instruments were approved to be valid after the judgment of the experts.

Reliability:

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The reliability of the instruments was done

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using test - retest reliability and proved to be strongly reliable at 0.87 for instrument two, at 0.79 for instrument three.

Pilot study:

Pilot study was conducted on 10% (18 young aged divorced women) to assess the clarity of the utilized instruments and the time needed for collecting data. Minor modifications were done according to the result of the pilot study in instruments two and three. Such as in (e.g. in the self-compassion questionnaire the question of when i think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world which was modified into when i feel isolated and disconnected from the rest of the world when i think about my defects. In addition to the question of when i see aspects of myself that i don't like, i get down on myself was modified to when i see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get angry or frustrated from myself.) These questions were simplified to be more understandable to participants.

Ethical consideration:

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Research Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Menoufia University. Informed consent for participation was taken from the participants after explaining the purpose of the study. Study participants were assured of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects, data, the divorcees Also, they were informed that participation in this study was voluntary; they have the right to participate in the study and they have

the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Procedure of data collection

- Before starting any step in the study an official letter was addressed from the dean of faculty of nursing, Menoufia University to the undersecretary of Ministry of Social Solidarity in Menoufia governorate requesting their cooperation and permission to conduct the study.

The process of data collection took a period of 3 months (from the beginning of November 2023 to the end of January 2024), 1 day / week.

Statistical Analysis:

The study used IBM's SPSS version 22 for data collection, analysis, and statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to present quantitative data in mean, standard deviation, range, and qualitative data in numbers and percentages. Analytical statistics were used to determine possible associations between factors and the targeted disease. Tests of significance included Chi-square, Fisher exact, Spearman's correlation were used, A statistical significant difference was considered if with a significance level of $P < 0.05$. Significance level was set at p value < 0.05 . A highly statistical significant difference was considered if $P < 0.01$. A very highly statistical significant difference was considered if $P < 0$.

Table1: Showed the socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women. The results revealed that the average age of the studied divorced women was (31.9 ± 4.9) and that nearly three quarters of divorced women

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(72.8%) aged from 25-35 years. In terms of educational level, more than one-third (41.7%) had moderate education while one quarter of study group have high education. The majority of the studied group (74.4%) was not work before divorce, and nearly two thirds (61.1%) were from rural areas. Majority (80%) had children, and approximately one half (44.4%) have duration of marriage of (1-5) years.

Figure 1: Showed levels of self-compassion among young aged divorced women and the results revealed that the majority of studied divorced women (86.11%) had low levels of self-compassion. The minority (13.89%) of the studied divorced women had high levels of self-compassion.

Figure 2: Showed levels of emotional distress among young aged divorced women. The results revealed that the majority of studied divorced women (66.89%) had mild levels of emotional distress. While the minority (6.67%) of studied divorced women had severe levels of emotional distress.

Table 2: Showed relationship between socio-demographics characteristics of young aged divorced women and self-compassion. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women and self-compassion. However there was significant relationship between educational level and self-

compassion which revealed that moderately educated divorced women had low levels of self-compassion (42.6%) at p value ($P < 0.005$). While highly educated women had a lower percent of low self-compassion (24.5%) than moderately educated women.

Table 3 Showed relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women and emotional distress. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women and emotional distress. However there was significant relationship between duration of marriage and emotional distress which revealed that divorced women who had a duration of marriage 1-5 years had mild levels of self-compassion with a percent of (44.4%) at p value ($P < 0.005$).

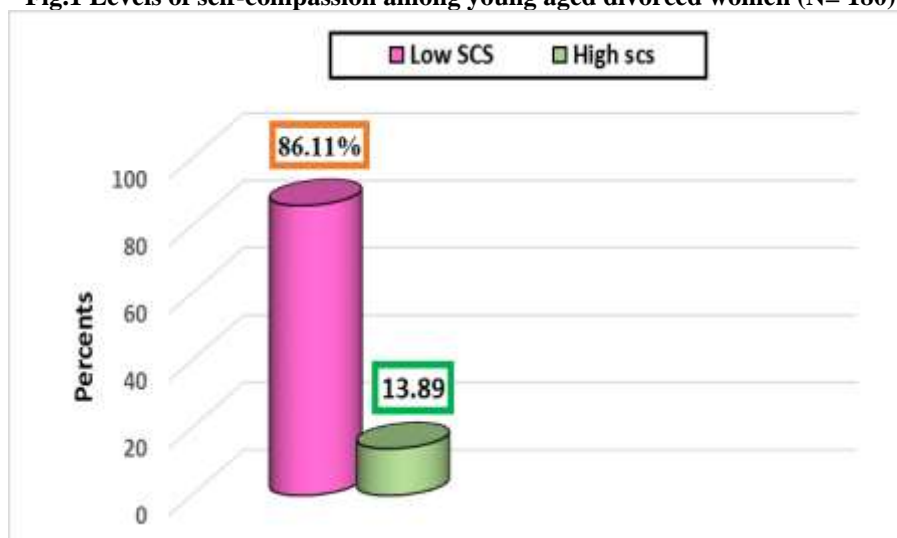
Table 4: Showed correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women at p value ($P < 0.005$). This result answered the third research question of current study which stated “What is the relationship between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women.

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Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women (N=180)

Studied variables	No.	%
Age / years		
18-24	49	27.2
25-35	131	72.8
Mean±SD	31.9±4.9	
Educational level		
Illiterate	28	15.6
Read and write	34	18.8
Moderate education	75	41.7
High education	43	23.9
Occupation before marriage		
Works	46	25.6
Doesn't work	134	74.4
Residence before marriage		
Rural	110	61.1
Urban	70	38.9
Housing now		
Independent	57	31.7
With parents	123	68.3
Do you have children		
Not have children	27	15
Have children	153	85
Number of children if present		
One child	62	40.5
2 children	58	37.9
3 children	22	14.4
4 children	11	7.2
Age of children		
1 month-3 years	40	26.1
4-10 years	83	54.2
11-15 years	30	19.7
Duration of marriage		
1-11 months	24	13.3
1-5 years	80	44.4
6-10 Years	51	28.3
more than 10 years	25	13.9

Fig.1 Levels of self-compassion among young aged divorced women (N= 180)



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Fig.2 Levels of emotional distress among young aged divorced women (N= 180)

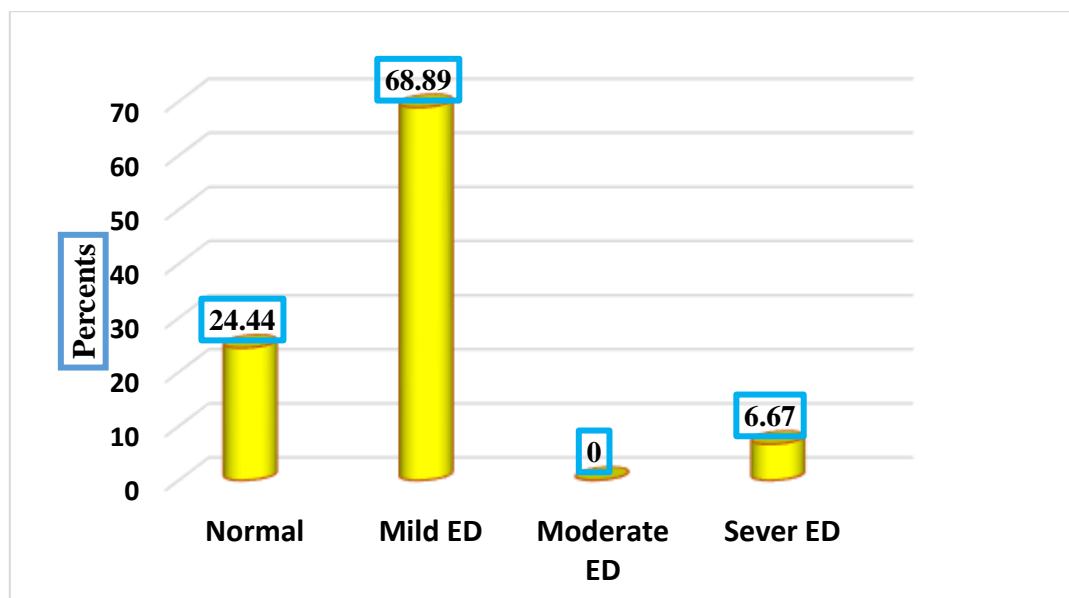


Table 2 Relationship between socio-demographics characteristics of young aged divorced women and self-compassion (N=180)

Sociodemographic data	Self-compassion levels				X ²	P
	Low SCS		High SCS			
	N0	%	N0	%		
Age						
18-24	44	28.4	5	20	0.764	0.382 NS
25-35	111	71.6	20	80		
Educational level	19	12.3	9	36	10.03	0.018 S
Illiterate	32	20.6	2	8		
Read and write	66	42.6	9	36		
Moderate education	38	24.5	5	20		
High education						
Occupation before divorce						
Works	40	25.8	6	24	0.037	0.848 NS
Doesn't work	115	74.2	19	76		
Residence before divorce						
Rural	97	62.6	13	52	1.014	0.314 NS
Urban	58	37.4	12	48		
Housing now						
Independent	48	31	9	36	0.252	0.616 NS
With parents	107	69	16	64		
Do you have children						
Not have children	22	14.2	5	20	0.569	0.451 NS
Have children	133	85.8	20	80		
Duration of marriage						
1-11 months	19	12.3	5	20	2.974	0.396 NS
1-5 years	67	43.2	13	52		
6-10 Years	47	30.3	4	16		
more than 10 years	22	14.2	3	12		

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Table (3) Relationship between socio-demographics characteristics of young aged divorced women and emotional distress (N=180)

Sociodemographic data	Emotional distress levels						X ²	P
	Normal ED		Mild ED		Severe ED			
	N0	%	N0	%	N0	%		
Age								
18- 24	10	22.7	35	28.2	4	33.3	0.738	0.691 NS
25-35	34	77.3	89	71.8	8	66.7		
Educational level								
Illiterate	9	20.5	19	15.3	0	0	7.405	0.285 NS
Read and write	7	15.9	25	20.2	2	16.7		
Moderate education	14	31.8	53	42.7	8	66.7		
High education	14	31.8	27	22.8	2	16.7		
Occupation before divorce								
Works	10	22.7	32	25.8	4	33.3	0.571	0.752 NS
Doesn't work	34	77.3	92	74.2	8	66.7		
Residence before divorce								
Urban	26	59.1	79	63.7	5	41.7	2.337	0.311 NS
Rural	18	40.9	45	36.3	7	58.3		
Housing now								
Independent	15	34.1	40	32.3	2	16.7	1.387	0.500 NS
With parents	29	65.9	84	67.7	10	83.3		
Do you have children								
Not have children	4	9.1	22	17.7	1	8.3	2.354	0.308 NS
Have children	40	90.9	102	82.3	11	91.7		
Duration of marriage								
1-11 months	10	22.7	13	10.5	1	8.3	13.094	0.042 S
1-5 years	16	36.4	55	44.4	9	75		
6-10 Years	15	34.1	34.1	29	0	0		
more than 10 years	3	6.8	20	16.1	2	2		

Table (4) Correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women (N=180)

Studied variables	Total self-compassion score	
	R	P value
Total emotional distress score	0..217	0.003

Discussion

Divorce is a common phenomenon in today's community. Divorce rates are increasing in Egypt which has caused significant social disturbance (Cooke, 2020). Divorce still represents a major life stressor for the individuals

involved, with potentially strong negative consequences for the mental and physical health of all members of the family (Damota, 2019). Divorce has negative consequences on divorced woman which includes the

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psychological impact on women's lives included social stigmatization, psychological pain, economic crisis, remarriage issues (Qamar & Faizan, 2021).

The present study revealed that the majority of studied divorced women had low levels of self-compassion. The minority of studied divorced women had high levels of self-compassion. This could be due to feelings of guilt, feelings of failure after divorce, stigma of being divorced especially in rural areas and having children which in turn is considered a big burden all these feelings lowering self-compassion and increasing self-judgment or self-criticism.

This study was consistent with Rad et al.(2020), who published a study about " Comparing the effectiveness of schema therapy and compassion-focused therapy on forgiveness and ambiguity tolerance in divorce-seeking women" who found that the study group had a low level of self-compassion after divorce. In addition to the study of Hoag (2019), who examined the "Compassionate divorce recovery for Christian women" who found that the study group had a low level of self-compassion after divorce. The current study revealed that the majority of studied divorced women had mild levels of emotional distress. This could be due to that after divorce, women usually suffer a decrease in income and standard of living, their chances of marrying again decrease, and their responsibility as a single mother if there are children may further hinder their path to rebuild a strong economic situation. In addition

to society's low view of the divorced woman all these feelings have a negative impact on emotions and result in emotional distress.

This result was similar to a study conducted by Imran (2023) about "Emotional and social challenges experienced by Divorce and Non-Divorced/Married Women" and Arendell (2023) who published a study about " others and divorce: Legal, economic, and social dilemmas".

The present study revealed that there was no statistical significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women and self-compassion. However there was a statistical significant relationship between educational level and self-compassion. This could be due to higher education meaning higher experience in life, higher awareness of how to adapt post-divorce, and more opportunity for working after divorce and absorption that divorce was not the end of life and she can start a new life, achieve success in another marriage or another thing.

These findings agreed with Shabat, & Yasmine (2022) who published a study title " Self-Compassion and Social Support as Predictors of Psychological Well-Being among the Divorced in the Southern governorates of Palestine However, moderate and low education had a negative impact on self-compassion , high education had a positive impact on self-compassion.

As well, these results were supported by Sayed & Ahmed (2019) who published a study entitled "Self-compassion and its relationship to

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psychological flexibility and violence against divorced women" who stated that moderate and low education had a negative impact on self-compassion and high education had a positive impact on self-compassion. These findings were opposed to Muhammad et al.(2020), who published a study about " The effectiveness of a guidance program to develop tolerance for oneself and others among divorced women in the Kingdom of Bahrain" which revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the averages of age or education for the study on the self-compassion.

The current study showed that there was no significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics of young aged divorced women and emotional distress. However there was significant relationship between duration of marriage (1-5) years and emotional distress. This could be due to increasing the responsibility for woman after marriage being house wife and responsible for husband, house and children, the declining role of the family for solving the problems, interference of husband mother and sister, economic reasons ranked second as a result of increasing financial burdens, lack of income and the gap between reality, ambition, and the determinants of choice. This result was against the study by Jarwan & Al-frehat (2020) who published a study about "Emotional Divorce and Its Relationship with Psychological Hardiness".

This result also was in contrast with Hamdi & Abdel Hamid (2022) who

conducted study about "Emotional divorce as one of the determinants of fear and sadness among a sample of children: A comparative study between rural and urban areas".

This contradiction may be due to the fact that divorce inevitably affects a woman's emotions, regardless of the duration of marriage or residence. As well, the negative consequences of divorce such as stigma of being divorced, increasing the burden all these problems cause emotional distress.

The current study showed that there was a statistically significant negative correlation between self-compassion and emotional distress among young aged divorced women. This could be due to the fact that self-compassion creates a sense of self-worth and increased resilience.

This finding was consistent with Gutiérrez et la.(2022) who published a study about "Analysis Of The Predictive Role Of Self-Compassion On Emotional Distress". Also this result matched with Lathren et la.(2021) who published a study about "Self-compassion and current close interpersonal relationships".

Conclusion

The current study concluded that the majority of the studied divorced women showed low self-compassion. Additionally, more than the half reported mild emotional distress. The study also revealed a significant negative correlation between total self-compassion and total emotional distress among young aged divorced women.

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Recommendations

This study recommended that it is mandatory for young people who will get married to undergo rehabilitation programs, which include promotion of self-compassion, social skill training, problem solving skill training, assertiveness skill training, stress management skill training and self-regulation skill training, the other part.

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