

Associations between Emotional Dysregulation, Repetitive Negative Thoughts, and a Sense of Self-Continuity with Post-Divorce Adjustment in Divorced Women

Mahdieh Hassanpour¹, MSc;  Parisa Pourmohammad^{1*}, PhD 

¹Department of Clinical Psychology, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Tabriz Medical Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran

*Corresponding author: Parisa Pourmohammad, PhD; Tabriz Azad University of Medical Sciences, Basmanj Road, Postal code: 5159115705, Tabriz, Iran. Tel: +98-41-36370943; Fax: +98-41-36372274; Email: pa.pourmohammad@iau.ac.ir

Received: November 14, 2024; Revised: December 01, 2024; Accepted: December 25, 2024

Abstract

Background: Divorce leads to personal, psychological, and social changes, necessitating an exploration of post-divorce adjustment. This study aimed to investigate the associations between emotional dysregulation, repetitive negative thoughts, and self-continuity with post-divorce adjustment in women.

Methods: In this cross-sectional study, with a descriptive-correlational design, the statistical population comprised all divorced women using services at social health centers in Tabriz, Iran in 2024. A sample of 346 participants was recruited using a convenience sampling method. Assessments were performed using Fisher's Post-Divorce Adjustment Questionnaire (FDAS), Gratz's Difficulty in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS), McEvoy et al.'s Repetitive Negative Thoughts Questionnaire (RTQ), and Sokol and Serper's Future Self-Continuity Questionnaire (FSCQ). Data were analyzed via Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis in SPSS version 26.

Results: The findings revealed that the mean scores (SD) were 96.76 (22.33) for emotional dysregulation, 27.45 (9.35) for repetitive negative thoughts, 32.96 (11.75) for a sense of Self-Continuity and 280.09 (88.24) for post-divorce adjustment. Pearson correlation analysis indicated that emotional dysregulation ($r=-0.59$, $P<0.001$) and repetitive negative thoughts ($r=-0.33$, $P<0.001$) negatively linked to divorce adaptation, while the sense of self-continuity revealed a significant positive association ($r=0.29$, $P<0.001$). Regression analysis confirmed that emotional dysregulation ($\beta=-0.50$, $P<0.001$) repetitive negative thoughts ($\beta=-0.15$, $P=0.0007$) and a sense of self-continuity ($\beta=0.13$, $P=0.004$) were significantly associated with post-divorce adjustment.

Conclusions: The findings suggested that lower emotional dysregulation and repetitive negative thoughts, along with higher sense of self-continuity, correlate with improved post-divorce adjustment in women.

Keywords: Divorce, Emotional Regulation, Psychological Adaptation, Metacognition, Self Concept

How to Cite: Hassanpour M, Pourmohammad P. Associations between Emotional Dysregulation, Repetitive Negative Thoughts, and a Sense of Self-Continuity with Post-Divorce Adjustment in Divorced Women. Women. Health. Bull. 2025;12(2):79-89. doi: 10.30476/whb.2025.104792.1325.

1. Introduction

The process of adapting to divorce is defined as the psychological and emotional adjustment individuals experience in response to the challenges associated with divorce. This journey involves reconciling differences across various aspects of life and managing the complex emotions arising during and after the divorce (1). Coping with divorce can be intricate, and differs widely among individuals, depending on their unique situations, coping strategies, and available support systems (2). Wang and Amato (3) highlighted that post-divorce adjustment is contingent upon three interrelated factors: the stressful events following divorce, individual coping resources—both personal and social—and the individual's interpretation of divorce (3). Gender plays a crucial

role in post-divorce adjustment experiences. Research showed that women report lower post-divorce emotional adjustment compared with men (4, 5). This difference is particularly significant due to the heightened stigma associated with divorce in women (5). In many societies, women are often defined by traditional roles, and deviating from these norms through divorce exposes them to societal stigma, which exacerbates feelings of rejection and inadequacy (6). A qualitative study on Iranian women found that social stigma following divorce leads many participants to experience feelings of worthlessness and regret about their divorce decisions, posing a substantial barrier to adapting to their new lives (6). Therefore, understanding the factors influencing post-divorce adjustment is crucial for supporting women's emotional well-being during this transition.

Given that divorce often triggers a wide array of intense emotions—such as sadness, grief, anger, fear, and confusion—emotional adjustment during this process involves the acceptance and processing of these feelings, coping with the breakup, and discovering ways to recover (7). Emotional dysregulation, a key component in psychopathology, refers to difficulty managing emotions, leading to overwhelming emotional experiences, and interfering with purposeful activities (8). Furthermore, emotional dysregulation can heighten the distress encountered during and after divorce (9). Additionally, an inability to manage emotions can interfere with the decision-making process. Decision-making processes, resulting in impulsive or emotionally driven choices that complicate the adjustment process (10). Several studies indicated that effective emotion regulation is linked to making less risky choices (10, 11). Additionally, effective emotion regulation has been found to play a crucial role in selecting appropriate strategies during interpersonal interactions (12, 13).

Individuals with high levels of emotional dysregulation are also more likely to resort to ineffective coping strategies, like engaging in self-destructive actions or using addictive substances, which can hinder adaptation and exacerbate emotional difficulties (14). Furthermore, uncontrolled emotional outbursts and conflicts, along with challenges in expressing feelings constructively can strain relationships. This leads to a lack of social support, making it more challenging to adjust to post-divorce life (15). Prior research established a connection between emotion regulation and post-divorce adjustment (16). For instance, one study on 416 divorced women found that cognitive emotion regulation significantly predicted post-divorce adaptation, both directly and indirectly, via social support (16). Also, another study involving 177 divorced individuals found that difficulties in emotion regulation were linked to elevated psychological symptoms and greater emotional challenges in adapting to divorce (17).

Furthermore, the tendency to employ strategies failing to alleviate negative emotions once they arise, such as repetitive negative thoughts (RNT), can lead to long-term adverse feelings (18, 19). Repetitive negative thoughts are characterized by a frequent and passive tendency to engage in negative thoughts, feelings, and experiences, along with their

potential consequences, without seeking solutions (20). Rumination, as one type of RNT, is defined as persistent thinking focused on negative content such as distress, possible causes, and consequences that cause emotional distress (18). According to response styles theory, rumination can extend and intensify despair in stressful circumstances, transforming initial distress symptoms into episodes of severe emotional disruption (16). Worry and obsessive thoughts represent other forms of recurring negative thinking. Worry involves negative and unsettling thoughts about the future or the possible outcomes of events (16), while obsessive thoughts refer to intense fears or anxieties that compel individuals to engage in specific behaviors (16). Some evidence suggested that worry, due to its chronic nature, along with obsessive thoughts, which are characterized by compulsive and repetitive qualities, can contribute to heightened stress levels, decreased overall adaptation, and diminished quality of life (21). Ongoing self-blame or an emphasis on perceived personal failures can hinder rebuilding and adapting to life after divorce by undermining self-esteem and fostering feelings of worthlessness (21). Zhou and colleagues (22) demonstrated a negative association between rumination and psychosocial adaptation in patients. Additionally, a study by Tran and Joormann (19) highlighted that trait rumination is associated with a proneness to experience challenges in post-divorce adjustment.

Another construct that recently emerged in divorce studies is the sense of self-continuity. Self-continuity refers to an identity process characterized by “a feeling of relation between one’s past and present” (23), encompassing the belief that an individual’s core characteristics, memories, values, and experiences across different life stages remain relatively stable (24). More importantly, a sense of self-continuity is not static and can be influenced by significant life events like divorce. Research indicated that a robust sense of self-continuity can positively impact psychological well-being, facilitate adaptation to change, and enhance the ability to function effectively in critical life transitions (25). Indeed, those with a well-established feeling of continuity are more possible to draw upon their stable self-concept to address the challenges posed by divorce. They often rely on their strengths, maintain an optimistic perspective, and develop effective coping mechanisms (26).

As mentioned, it has been established that there are gender differences in the psychological experiences of divorced individuals. For example, women experience higher levels of emotional distress and face unique social pressures during and after divorce compared to men; however, studies often overlook these gender differences in examining emotional reactions to divorce (1, 9, 26). Furthermore, studies investigating the relationship between a sense of self-continuity and life-changing events, especially divorce, are limited (22, 27, 28). In one of the few studies conducted, Lampraki and colleagues (27) reported that a feeling of self-continuity is negatively correlated with feelings of loneliness among divorced and widowed women. Additionally, a sense of self-continuity influenced how childhood maltreatments impacted emotional loneliness in all marital categories, with a more evident effect observed among divorced individuals. In another study, Lampraki and colleagues (28) reported that a higher sense of self-continuity was associated with reduced social loneliness among women after divorce. Therefore, additional studies in this area are necessary.

Furthermore, existing studies typically examine these variables in isolation (9, 19, 22, 26-28). However, the present study investigates the combined effects of these variables on post-divorce adjustment. This approach is particularly significant because combining emotional, cognitive, and metacognitive variables into an integrated model offers a more comprehensive understanding of post-divorce adjustment. Furthermore, it helps identify key intervention targets to enhance this adjustment process. With this framework in mind, the present study aimed to explore the associations between emotional dysregulation, repetitive negative thoughts, and self-continuity with post-divorce adjustment.

2. Methods

In this descriptive-correlation study, the statistical population comprised all divorced women supported by social health centers in the 8th region of Tabriz, Iran in 2024. The sample was obtained through a convenience sampling approach, and the sample size was calculated using G*power software. The correlations of these variables in previous studies were 0.28 for emotion regulation (29), -0.25 for repetitive negative thoughts (26), and 0.21 for self-continuity (28).

Therefore, the effect size was determined to be 0.20. Using an alpha coefficient of 0.05 and a test power of 0.95, the necessary sample size was determined to be 314. To consider a possible dropout rate of 15%, 361 individuals were selected. Fifteen participants were removed from the study due to incomplete questionnaires, resulting in data from 346 participants being analyzed. The inclusion criteria were: signing informed consent, having at least a 6th-grade education, being aged between 20 and 50 years, having a history of formal marriage with at least one year of cohabitation, experiencing formal divorce, having at least one child, and being two to four years post-divorce. The exclusion criteria were: unwillingness to participate in the study, submission of distorted or incomplete questionnaires, and self-reported addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Necessary arrangements were made with the managers of the health centers to select the sample. In the initial phase, phone calls were made to potential participants to gather detailed information, and confirm they met the inclusion criteria. Eligible individuals who expressed interest were given brief information about the research process, and in-person sessions were scheduled. Initially, 384 individuals were selected; however, 19 did not attend their sessions, two withdrew after receiving questionnaires. This left 363 participants, of whom 15 submitted incomplete questionnaires and two had potential chance responses and were excluded from the final sample. During in-person sessions, the aims and procedures of the study were explained, including the principle of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation—emphasizing that individuals would not be deprived of health center services if they chose not to participate. Participants then signed the informed consent form. Questionnaires were physically distributed and completed at health centers. Sampling was conducted by the first author from May 2024 to July 2024. The participants were provided with a contact number to access their test results interpretation, if they wished to do so.

2.1. Measures

2.1.1. Fisher's Post-Divorce Adjustment Questionnaire (FDAS)

This scale (30) comprises 100 items designed to assess the level of adjustment following the end of a

romantic relationship. It includes six subscales: self-worth, disentanglement from relationships, anger, grief, social trust, and social self-worth. Scoring is conducted using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never). The total score ranges from 100-500 with higher scores indicating better post-divorce adjustment (30). Asanjarani and co-workers (31) reported a Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.87 to 0.95, along with a concurrent validity coefficient of 0.89, and established content validity for this scale. The validity of the Persian version of this questionnaire was determined by experts (CVI=0.85, CVR=0.87). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was 0.79.

2.1.2. *Difficulty in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS)*

This 36-item scale (32) measures the level of difficulty individuals experience in emotional regulation across six areas: 1. Non-acceptance of emotional responses (non-acceptance), 2. Difficulty in engaging in purposeful behavior (goals), 3. Difficulty in impulse control (impulsive), 4. Lack of emotional awareness (awareness), 5. Limited access to emotion regulation strategies (strategies), and 6. Lack of emotional clarity (clarity). Items on this scale are evaluated using a five-point Likert scale. The total score ranges from 36-180 with higher scores meaning more severe difficulties in emotional management (32). For the Persian version, Saaidian asl and colleagues (33) reported the reliability of the subscales using Cronbach's alpha, which ranged from 0.86 to 0.88. The retest reliability coefficient for the subscales assessed after one week ranged from 0.79 to 0.91. The validity of the Persian version of this scale was established by experts in the present study (CVI=0.81, CVR=0.79). Moreover, the total scale achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, while the subcomponents varied from 0.78 to 0.86.

2.1.3. *Repetitive Negative Thoughts Questionnaire (RTQ)*

This 10-item questionnaire (34) measures repetitive negative thoughts. Scoring is based on a five-point Likert scale, varying from never (1) to always (5). The overall score ranges from 10-50 with higher scores, demonstrating more intense repetitive negative thoughts. McEvoy and co-workers (34) calculated the predictive validity of this tool by correlating it with the

Beck Depression Inventory and the Beck Anxiety Inventory, yielding correlation coefficients of 0.42 and 0.38, respectively. Akbari (35) confirmed the single-factor structure of the scale through exploratory factor analysis, reporting a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.91 and favorable evaluations for both divergent and convergent validity. The validity of the Persian version of this questionnaire was established by experts in the present study (CVI=0.87, CVR=0.84). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.93 for the total scale.

2.1.4. *Future Self-Continuity Questionnaire (FSCQ)*

The Self Continuity Questionnaire (36) comprises 10 items, with each one rated on a scale from 1 to 6. A score of 1 implies that the statement is entirely dissimilar to the respondent, whereas a score of 6 means it is entirely similar. The total score for the questionnaire is determined by summing all individual scores and ranges from 10-60. The overall scale demonstrated reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85 (36). In the study conducted by Hajiazizi and colleagues (37), SCQ achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, affirming its reliability within the Iranian sample. Additionally, the construct validity of the questionnaire was assessed and validated through confirmatory factor analysis. The validity of the Persian version of this questionnaire was established by experts in the present study (CVI=0.94, CVR=0.91). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was 0.83 for the full scale.

2.2. *Statistical Analysis*

For data analysis, the frequency, mean, percentage, and standard deviation were calculated to describe the data. Pearson's correlation was also used to investigate associations between the main variables of the study. Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis employing the enter method was conducted to assess the contributions of emotional dysregulation total score, repetitive thoughts, and sense of self-continuity in explaining post-divorce adjustment. It is important to note that a collinearity analysis was performed among the variables. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1 and a tolerance index exceeding 0.8 indicated the absence of significant correlations among emotional dysregulation, repetitive thoughts, and sense of self-continuity, suggesting that serious collinearity is not present.

3. Results

Based on the demographic variables, the mean age of the participants was 36.49, with a standard deviation of 8.72. Also, a majority of the sample (49.4%) had a bachelor's degree. In regards to the length of time since their divorce, a majority of the

participants in the study (5.54%) had experienced divorce between 6 to 11 years ago. (Table 1).

Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between variables. As presented in Table 2, post-divorce adjustment was significantly negatively associated with emotional

Table 1: Demographic and descriptive characteristics of the studied variables

Variable	N (%)	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age		36.49	8.72		
20 - 35	155 (44.7)				
36 - 50	192 (55.3)				
Education level					
Diploma and lower	116(33.5)				
Bachelor	171(49.4)				
Master	59(17.0)				
Years since divorce		6.24	3.92		
2-5 (years)	158(45.5)				
6-11(years)	189 (54.5)				
DERS (total)		96.76	22.33	-1.01	-0.167
Nonacceptance		17.5	6.56	0.29	-0.96
Goals		13.47	4.76	0.16	-1.15
Impulse		15.02	5.17	-0.44	0.84
Awareness		16.52	5.48	0.27	0.86
Strategies		22.30	9.57	0.36	-0.12
Clarity		12.39	4.67	0.07	-1.18
RTQ total		27.45	9.35	0.46	-1.0
SCQ total		32.96	11.75	0.29	-1.08
FDA total		280.09	88.24	0.15	0.93

M=Mean, SD=Standard. Deviation, RTQ=Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire, SCQ=Self-Continuity Questionnaire, FDAS=Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, DERS=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale

Table 2: Pearson correlation among the main study variables (N=346)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1- Acceptance	-									
2- Goals	0.23**	-								
3- Impulse	0.24**	0.20**	-							
4- Awareness	0.23**	0.22**	0.25**	-						
5- Strategies	0.24**	0.22**	0.37**	0.35**	-					
6- Clarity	0.22**	0.18*	0.21**	0.23**	0.18*	-				
7- DERS total	0.60**	0.51**	0.60**	0.61**	0.75**	0.49**	-			
8- RTQ total	0.16*	0.21**	0.20**	0.21**	0.19**	0.15*	0.30**	-		
9- SCQ total	-0.16*	-0.19**	-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.19**	-0.18*	-0.27**	-0.18*	-	
10- FDA total	-0.34**	-0.36**	-0.43**	-0.31**	-0.31**	-0.34**	-0.59**	-0.33**	0.29**	-

*P<0.01, **P<0.001, RTQ=Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire, SCQ=Self-Continuity Questionnaire, FDAS=Fisher Divorce Adjustment Scale, DERS=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale

Table 3: Multiple linear regression analysis of the link between emotion dysregulation, repeated negative thoughts and self-continuity with post-divorce adjustment

Variable	B	β	SE	P
DERS total	-1.99	-0.50	0.18	<0.001
RTQ	-1.43	-0.15	0.42	0.0007
SCQ	0.98	0.13	0.33	0.004

RTQ=Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire, SCQ=Self-Continuity Questionnaire, DERS=Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale

dysregulation ($r=-0.59$, $P<0.001$) and repetitive negative thoughts ($r=-0.33$, $P<0.001$). Furthermore, sense of self-continuity had a significant positive association with post-divorce adjustment ($r=0.29$, $P<0.001$). The results of the multiple regression analysis are detailed in Table 3.

According to Table 3, multiple regression analysis revealed that emotional dysregulation ($\beta=-0.50$, $P<0.001$) and repetitive negative thoughts ($\beta=-0.15$, $P=0.0007$) had a significant negative association with post-divorce adjustment. This indicates that more intense emotion dysregulation and repetitive negative thoughts were associated with lower levels of adjustment to divorce. However, a sense of self-continuity was significantly positively associated with post-divorce adjustment ($\beta=0.13$, $P=0.004$), indicating that increased levels of self-continuity were related to a greater adjustment with divorce.

4. Discussion

The findings of the present study indicated that emotional dysregulation and repetitive negative thoughts are negatively correlated with post-divorce adaptation in women, while a strong sense of self-continuity is positively correlated with better adjustment. Our first finding regarding the role of emotional dysregulation in explaining poor post-divorce adjustment in women aligns with the previous studies (16, 22, 38). It can be posited that emotional dysregulation, which is characterized by difficulties in managing and effectively expressing emotions, is often exacerbated by negative emotional responses such as sadness, anger, or anxiety. This dysregulation diminishes the individual's capacity to adapt to the challenges posed by divorce (19). Moreover, existing literature demonstrates that emotional dysregulation blocks efficient problem-solving abilities and decision-making processes (1). For instance, in one study, Güss and Starker (39) reported that an inability to regulate emotions like anger or fear can distort problem perception, making challenges appear less daunting than they are. Additionally, emotional dysregulation can strain social relationships as crucial sources of support during the post-divorce period (34). The absence of emotional support and understanding can amplify feelings of isolation and distress, complicating women's efforts to adapt to new circumstances and rebuild their lives (40). Furthermore, emotional dysregulation can disrupt

an individual's self-esteem and sense of identity (41). As a mechanism, divorce frequently necessitates a redefinition of roles, alterations in social status, and shifts in personal goals and aspirations. For women experiencing high levels of emotional dysregulation, these transitions can heighten feelings of instability and uncertainty, resulting in prolonged periods of self-doubt, loss of direction, and difficulty imagining a positive future post-divorce (9).

Furthermore, our findings indicated that repetitive negative thoughts were significantly related to post-divorce adjustment in women. This aligns with the studies by Yarnoz-Yaben (26), which demonstrated a relationship between RNT and adjustment to divorce, as well as the research by Tran and Joormann (19), who underscored that trait rumination is linked to a disposition to encounter distorted thoughts while exploring personal characteristics of individuals and their difficulties in post-breakup adjustment (19). It can be concluded that rumination and worry, by perpetuating negative feelings associated with divorce, obstruct the healing process and a person's ability to adapt to new circumstances (16). Divorce inherently brings a range of negative emotions, including sadness, anger, and grief. However, due to rumination and worry, these thoughts persist and intensify. Rather than actively processing these feelings, RNT keeps them at the forefront of one's mind, prolonging their duration and hindering emotional recovery and successful adjustment to life after divorce (16).

Additionally, RNT can reinforce negative self-perceptions and feelings of personal failure (26). Divorced women may find themselves engaging in self-blame, self-criticism, or feelings of inadequacy, constantly replaying negative events or fixating on perceived shortcomings. This self-focused rumination can erode self-esteem and self-confidence, obstructing the formation of a positive identity post-divorce. Moreover, rumination can impede problem-solving abilities and the development of effective coping strategies (42). Instead of actively seeking solutions or considering alternative perspectives, individuals caught in repetitive negative thoughts may dwell on the problems and obstacles associated with divorce. This fixation can foster helplessness and a lack of agency in overcoming challenges, further disrupting the adaptation process (26).

Alternatively, rumination can impair individual's capacity to engage in present-focused activities and relationships. When individuals are consumed by repetitive negative thoughts, their attention and energy are diverted from the present moment, hindering their capacity to fully engage in new experiences, rebuild social connections, and establish a sense of stability after divorce (43). Another explanation is that repetitive negative thoughts can influence levels of adjustment to divorce by affecting physiological and psychological stress responses. Engaging in repetitive negative thoughts, especially those related to divorce and its challenges, can create a chronic state of stress and arousal. Prolonged exposure to stress activates the body's stress response system; high arousal levels and chronic stress can disrupt the adaptation process following divorce (21). Furthermore, repeated negative thoughts can limit attention resources and cognitive flexibility. Rumination consumes cognitive resources, leaving limited mental capacity for problem-solving, adaptive coping, and participation in positive activities. This narrow focus can hinder the discovery of new opportunities and the development of strategies for addressing post-divorce challenges (44).

In addition, the results of the present study demonstrated that the feeling of self-continuity is positively linked to post-divorce adjustment among women. This result aligns with the results of the previous studies (22, 27, 28). It can be argued that individuals who possess a strong sense of continuity during significant life transitions, such as divorce, are better able to maintain their self-understanding, values, and stable identity. This stability in self-perception facilitates a sense of coherence and personal purpose, providing a guiding framework for decision-making, goal-setting, and navigating the post-divorce landscape. A robust sense of self is correlated with a positive self-image and a belief in one's capabilities to overcome challenges, which can mitigate the negative emotional repercussions of divorce and enhance compatibility with life after divorce (45). Furthermore, it can be posited that the feeling of self-continuity, characterized by a stable sense of identity and an enhanced sense of control and agency during transitional periods, augments women's adaptability to divorce (25). Despite substantial changes across various dimensions of life, including roles, relationships, and daily routines, a pronounced sense of continuity enables

women to make choices that resonate with their values, establish goals, and undertake actions that foster their well-being and personal growth. This sense of control and agency can counteract feelings of helplessness and uncertainty commonly associated with divorce, thereby promoting resilience and adaptability (25). On another note, a strong sense of self-continuity fosters hope for the future. A clear understanding of one's intrinsic value and identity enhances flexibility, motivation, and a proactive stance toward navigating the changes and uncertainties linked to divorce. Women with a well-defined sense of continuity are more possible to prioritize self-care, engage in activities that yield joy and satisfaction, and establish boundaries that safeguard their well-being. By honoring their needs and desires, they can construct a post-divorce life that aligns with their authentic selves, thereby enhancing their overall adjustment and life satisfaction (46).

4.1. Limitations

This study had some limitations. Data were gathered through self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to response bias. Also, in cross-sectional studies, data are collected at one specific point in time, potentially missing changes in variables. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights. Additionally, focusing on divorced women in social health centers may exclude those who are not supported by these organizations. Our sample consisted mainly of women from middle socioeconomic status, which may restrict the generalizability of our results to broader populations. Moreover, despite assurances regarding the confidentiality of questionnaire results, privacy concerns may have led to distortion or bias in some participants' responses. Specifically, due to the interplay between mental health issues and matters in divorced women, such as child custody, some participants may have adopted a defensive stance and withheld honest information. Furthermore, this study was conducted on divorced women attending a health center in Tabriz, Iran using a non-random sampling, which constrains the generalizability of the results. While controlling for gender enhances the validity of the results, it limits their generalizability to men. Future studies are suggested to consider interpersonal factors like perceived social support to explain post-divorce adaptation.

5. Conclusions

The present study underscores the significance of understanding the interplay between emotional dysregulation, repetitive negative thoughts (RNT), and sense of self-continuity as critical factors relating to post-divorce adjustment in women. Therapeutic interventions aimed at addressing these constructs, specifically targeting reductions in RNT and enhancements in emotional regulation, have the potential to significantly improve psychological outcomes for women in after-divorce life. By addressing these psychological constructs, resilience may be enhanced, leading to healthier coping strategies, greater life satisfaction, and well-being in divorced women.

Acknowledgement

This article was a part of the thesis of Ms. Mahdiah Hassanpour at Department of Clinical Psychology, Tabriz Medical Sciences, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran. Also, we thank all the participants for their cooperation in this research.

Authors' Contribution

Mahdiah Hassanpour: Substantial contributions to the conception and design of the work, acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data for the work, drafting the work and reviewing it critically for important intellectual content. Parisa Pourmohammad: Substantial contributions to the conception and design of the work, acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data for the work, drafting the work and reviewing it critically for important intellectual content. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work, such that the questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

Funding: None.

Ethical Approval

The Research Ethics Committee at Tabriz Azad University of Medical Sciences approved the current research with the code of IR.IAU.TABRIZ.REC.1403.045. Also, written informed consent was obtained from the participants.

References

1. Körük S, Vapurulu S. The Mediating Role of Self-Forgiveness in the Relationship between Perceived Social Support and Adjustment to Divorce. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 2022;63(4):277-297. doi: 10.1080/10502556.2022.2047369.
2. Cabilar BÖ, Yılmaz AE. Divorce and post-divorce adjustment: Definitions, models and assessment of adjustment. *Psikiyatride Guncel Yaklasimler*. 2022;14(1):1-11. doi: 10.18863/pgy.910766.
3. Wang H, Amato PR. Predictors of divorce adjustment: Stressors, resources, and definitions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 2000;62(3):655-668. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00655.x.
4. Ghadimi Azad R, Emami Sigaroudi A, Bostani Khalesi Z, Kazemnezhad Leili E. Relationship between social exclusion and post-divorce adjustment in Iranian women. *Health Educ Health Promot*. 2021;9(1):73-78.
5. Bastani S, Gholamzadeh Jofreh M, Sodani M. Divorce Adjustment: Reflection on Divorced Womens's Lived Experience of Divorce Adjustment: *Quarterly Journal of Women and Society*. 2023;15(54):141-156.
6. Pirak A, Negarandeh R, Khakbazan Z. Post-divorce regret among Iranian women: A qualitative study. *IJCBNM*. 2019;7(1):75-86. doi: 10.30476/IJCBNM.2019.40848.
7. Moral MA, Chimpén-López CA, Lyon TR, Adsuar JC. The relationship between differentiation of self and psychological adjustment to separation. *Healthcare*. 2021;9(6):738. doi: 10.3390/healthcare9060738. PubMed PMID: 34208457; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC8235787.
8. Thompson RA. Emotion dysregulation: A theme in search of definition. *Dev Psychopathol*. 2019;31(3):805-815. doi: 10.1017/S0954579419000282. PubMed PMID: 31030684.
9. Slanbekova G, Chung MC, Abildina S, Sabirova R, Kapbasova G, Karipbaev B. The impact of coping and emotional intelligence on the relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder from past trauma, adjustment difficulty, and psychological distress following divorce. *Journal of Mental Health*. 2017;26(4):334-341. doi: 10.1080/09638237.2017.1322186. PubMed PMID: 28485695.

10. Heilman RM, Crişan LG, Houser D, Miclea M, Miu AC. Emotion regulation and decision making under risk and uncertainty. *Emotion*. 2010;10(2):257-65. doi: 10.1037/a0018489. PubMed PMID: 20364902.
11. Martin LN, Delgado MR. The influence of emotion regulation on decision-making under risk. *J Cogn Neurosci*. 2011;23(9):2569-2581. doi: 10.1162/jocn.2011.21618. PubMed PMID: 21254801; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC3164848.
12. Van't Wout M, Kahn R, Sanfey A, Aleman A. Affective state and decision-making in the Ultimatum Game. *Exp Brain Res*. 2006;169(4):564-8. doi: 10.1007/s00221-006-0346-5. PubMed PMID: 16489438.
13. Van't Wout M, Chang LJ, Sanfey AG. The influence of emotion regulation on social interactive decision-making. *Emotion*. 2010;10(6):815-821. doi: 10.1037/a0020069. PubMed PMID: 21171756; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC3057682.
14. Schmidt P. Affective instability and emotion dysregulation as a social impairment. *Front Psychol*. 2022;13:666016. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.666016. PubMed PMID: 35496195; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9051371.
15. Guzmán-González M, Navarro K, Tay-Karapas K. Attachment, emotion regulation difficulties, and forgiveness to the ex-partner: The moderating role of sex and joint children. *Current Psychology*. 2023;42(1):31687-700. doi: 10.1007/s12144-022-04191-8.
16. Mohandes L, Javidi H, Barzegar M, Sohrabi N. Development of A Causal Model of Post-Divorce Adjustment Based on Social and Psychological Factors in Divorced Women in Shiraz, Iran. *Armaghane Danesh*. 2023;28(1):87-111. doi: 10.52547/armaghanj.28.1.1. Persian.
17. Alvarez I, Herrero M, Martínez-Pampliega A. The impact of emotion regulation on the establishment of the therapeutic alliance in post-divorce group intervention: A multilevel approach. *Plos One*. 2024;19(10):e0312293. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0312293. PubMed PMID: 39423194; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC11488741.
18. Nolen-Hoeksema S. Responses to depression and their effects on the duration of depressive episodes. *J Abnorm Psychol*. 1991;100(4):569-82. doi: 10.1037//0021-843x.100.4.569. PubMed PMID: 1757671.
19. Tran TB, Joormann J. The role of Facebook use in mediating the relation between rumination and adjustment after a relationship breakup. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 2015;49:56-61. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.02.050.
20. Wong SM, Chen EY, Lee MC, Suen YN, Hui CL. Rumination as a Transdiagnostic Phenomenon in the 21st Century: The Flow Model of Rumination. *Brain Sciences*. 2023;13(7):1041. doi: 10.3390/brainsci13071041.
21. Kingery JN, Bodenlos JS, Schneider TI, Peltz JS, Sindoni MW. Dispositional mindfulness predicting psychological adjustment among college students: The role of rumination and gender. *J Am Coll Health*. 2023;71(5):1584-1595. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2021.1943411. PubMed PMID: 34437827.
22. Zhou XY, Li YM, Su JK, Wang YF, Su J, Yang QH. Effects of posttraumatic growth on psychosocial adjustment in young and middle-aged patients with acute myocardial infarction: The mediating role of rumination. *Heart Lung*. 2023;62:81-86. doi: 10.1016/j.hrtlng.2023.06.003. PubMed PMID: 37348212.
23. Sedikides C, Green JD, Saunders J, Skowronski JJ, Zengel B. Mnemonic neglect: Selective amnesia of one's faults. *European Review of Social Psychology*. 2016;27(1):1-62. doi: 10.1080/10463283.2016.1183913.
24. Sedikides C, Hong EK, Wildschut T. Self-continuity. *Annu Rev Psychol*. 2023;74:333-361. doi: 10.1146/annurev-psych-032420-032236. PubMed PMID: 35961040.
25. Löckenhoff CE, Rutt JL. Age differences in self-continuity: Converging evidence and directions for future research. *The Gerontologist*. 2017;57(3):396-408. doi: 10.1093/geront/gnx010.
26. Yarnoz-Yaben S. What if it was all a mistake? Negative thoughts and adjustment to divorce. *Estudios de Psicología*. 2013;34(2):185-95. doi: 10.1174/021093913806751393.
27. Lampraki C, Jopp DS, Spini D. The mediating role of self-continuity on the link between childhood adversity and loneliness in later life. *Front Psychol*. 2022;13:1039504. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1039504. PubMed PMID: 36478945; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9721115.
28. Lampraki C, Jopp DS, Spini D, Morselli D. Social loneliness after divorce: Time-dependent differential benefits of personality, multiple important group memberships, and self-continuity. *Gerontology*. 2019;65(3):275-

287. doi: 10.1159/000494112. PubMed PMID: 30605909.
29. Amani R, Nooreini SN, Farhadi M. The Structural Model of Emotional Divorce Based on Neuroticism through the Mediating Role of Coping Strategies and Emotional Regulation. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 2021;62(3):227-246.
 30. Fisher BF. Identifying and meeting needs of formally-married people through a divorce adjustment seminar. University of Northern Colorado; 1976.
 31. Asanjarani F, Jazayeri R, Fatehizade M, Etemadi O, de Mol J. Examining the reliability and validity of the fisher divorce adjustment scale: The Persian version. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*. 2018;59(1):141-55. doi: 10.1080/10502556.2017.1402653.
 32. Gratz KL, Roemer L. Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation: Development, factor structure, and initial validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*. 2004;26(1):41-54. doi: 10.1023/B:JOBA.0000007455.08539.94.
 33. Saaidian asl M, Khanzadeh M, Hasani J, Edrissi F. Factor Structure and Psychometric Properties of the Persian version of State Adult Attachment Scale (SAAS). *Journal of Research in Psychological Health*. 2021;6(1):66-78. Persian.
 34. McEvoy PM, Mahoney AE, Moulds ML. Are worry, rumination, and post-event processing one and the same?: Development of the Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire. *J Anxiety Disord*. 2010;24(5):509-19. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.03.008. PubMed PMID: 20409676.
 35. Akbari M. Psychometric Properties of Repetitive Thinking Questionnaire in Nonclinical Sample: Trans diagnostic Tool. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 2017;9(2):59-72. doi: 10.22075/jcp.2017.10345. Persian.
 36. Sokol Y, Serper M. Development and validation of a future self-continuity questionnaire: A preliminary report. *J Pers Assess*. 2020;102(5):677-688. doi: 10.1080/00223891.2019.1611588. PubMed PMID: 31107602.
 37. Hajiazizi A, Hejazi E, Gholamali Lavasani M, Naghsh Z. Investigating the relational model of self-continuity, purposeful life and social networks burnout and students' academic procrastination with mediated role of delay discounting. *Journal of Modern Psychological Researches*. 2022;17(68):91-101. doi: 10.22034/jmpr.2023.15343. Persian.
 38. Javid H, Mohandes L, Barzegar M, Sohrabi N. The causal model of post-divorce adjustment Based on Personality Characteristics Attachment Styles, perceived social support with the mediating role of Cognitive Emotion Regulation. *Psychological Models and Methods*. 2023;13(50):69-92. doi: 10.30495/jpmm.2023.26603.3251.
 39. Güss CD, Starker U. The influence of emotion and emotion regulation on complex problem-solving performance. *Systems*. 2023;11(6):276. doi: 10.3390/systems11060276.
 40. Duca DS, Ursu A, Bogdan I, Rusu PP. Emotions and emotion regulation in family relationships. *Revista Romaneasca Pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*. 2023;15(2):114-131. doi: 10.18662/rrem/15.2/724.
 41. Gomez T, Quiñones-Camacho L, Davis EL. Building a sense of self: The link between emotion regulation and self-esteem in young adults. *UC Riverside Undergraduate Research Journal*. 2018;12(1). doi: 10.5070/RJ5121039160.
 42. Zięba M, Wiecheć K, Wójcik NE, Zięba MJ. Prioritizing positivity, styles of rumination, coping strategies, and posttraumatic growth: Examining their patterns and correlations in a prospective study. *Front Psychol*. 2022;13:842979. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.842979. PubMed PMID: 35282249; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC8913722.
 43. Li P, Mao L, Hu M, Lu Z, Yuan X, Zhang Y, et al. Mindfulness on rumination in patients with depressive disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022;19(23):16101. doi: 10.3390/ijerph192316101. PubMed PMID: 36498174; PubMed Central PMCID: PMC9737922.
 44. Vosoughi Motlagh A, Mohammadi N, Taghavi MR, Goodarzi MA. Investigating Cognitive Control and Repetitive Thinking in Clinical Groups With Major Depressive Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. *PCP*. 2023;11(3):259-266. doi: 10.32598/jpcp.11.3.856.2.
 45. Habermas T, Köber C. Autobiographical reasoning is constitutive for narrative identity:

The role of the life story for personal continuity.
In McLean KC, Syed M. *The Oxford Handbook of Identity Development*. Oxford University Press; 2015. p. 149-165.

46. Hershfield HE, Cohen TR, Thompson L. Short horizons and tempting situations:

Lack of continuity to our future selves leads to unethical decision making and behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 2012;117(2):298-310. doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2011.11.002.