



## The Study of Adult Attachment Styles, Value Orientation and Marital Adjustment

Sara Ghotbaldinianyazd\*, Reza Fallahchai and Eghbal Zarei

University of Hormozgan, Minab Street, Bandar Abbas, Iran

\*Corresponding author's e-mail: Mojgan.81ir@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles, value orientation, and marital adjustment in married people in Bandar Abbas city. The research design was a descriptive correlation, and the study sample included 401 married women. Data collection tools, including 4 measure of Demographic Questionnaire, The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), was translated and adopted into Persian; Value Orientation Questionnaire (VOQ), was translated and adopted into Persian by researchers, and The Marital Adjustment scale (EMS), was translated and adopted into Persian. Results of Pearson correlation analysis of data representing that there was a significant positive relationship between attachment styles and marital adjustment, and between value orientation and marital adjustment. Results of multiple correlation analysis also suggest the existence of multiple relationships between attachment styles, value orientation and marital adjustment and attachment styles was the best predictor of marital adjustment.

**Key Words:** Adult Attachment Styles, Value Orientation, Marital Adjustment, Married people.

### INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an ideal for many people, and they are looking for a healthy and better marriage/relationship in their lives [1]. Marriage is a holy promise through family is being formed and having been existed among all tribes, nations and societies, is confirmed by most of the religions. Marriage is known as the desirable human relation that makes sense the life of people [2].

According to Johnson [3]. "One of the most primary human needs is to have a secure emotional connection— an attachment — with those who are closest to us: our parents, children, lovers, and partners. It is this need, and the fears of loss and isolation that accompany this need, that provide the script for the oldest and most universal of human dramas that couple and family therapists see played out in their offices every day [3]. Attachment theory was defined by Bowlby [4] as a behavioral system for fulfilling biological necessities for survival through emotional connections with the primary caregiver (4). Attachment styles are the result of early experiences with the mother or primary caregiver regarding degree of warmth, responsiveness, reliability, and engagement, and the corresponding influence on one's sense of security within subsequent relationships [5, 6]. The primary attachment style categories are secure and insecure, based on levels of anxiety and avoidance, relative to fear of abandonment and desire for closeness within relationships [7]. Hazan et al. [8] were the first to suggest that the major concepts and assumptions developed by Bowlby [6] and Ainsworth et al. [5]. They noted that the three attachment styles introduced by Ainsworth et al. [5], (secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant), describe not only strategies for relating to others, but are the product of underlying mental and affective representations known as working models [9]. Bartholomew et al. [10] utilized the two dimensions of a working model, views of the self and others, to create four patterns of intimate relating [10]. Categorizing self-image and perceived responsiveness of others as either positive or negative, Bartholomew or Horowitz conceptualized the following types: secure (self-positive, other-positive), preoccupied (self-negative, other-positive), dismissing (self-positive, other-negative), and fearful (self-negative, other-negative) [10]. According to Bartholomew ET I.

[10], attachment styles were found to be correlated with social strategies for relating with others. Specifically, the insecure attachment styles were associated with relational problems. For example, the dismissing type was characterized in part by coldness, the fearful category by shyness, and the preoccupied style by dependency [11].

The concept of values can be defined as one's general beliefs about desirable and undesirable behavior and goals or end states [12]. Values are assumed to be at the core of self-concept and to influence thought and action in many ways [13]. Kluckhohn et al. [14] operationally defined value orientations as the complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluative process—the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements—which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to solution of “common human problems” [14].

Researchers, practitioners, and scholars have had a special interest to understand attachment in relation to various factors [15, 16, 17]. The reflex of such an interest to study about attachment and adult attachment is represented in the research history of professionals involving two various fields of psychology and sociology, and three subfields in psychology (social, marriage, family and recognition). Value orientation is a relatively new structure that seems to have overlapping properties with attachment and also affects the couple's relationship [18]. Value orientation is a moral viewpoint that represents different ways of experiencing and understanding oneself in relation to others [19]. Values affect the perception of strengths and weaknesses in the relationships [20]. Thus, value orientation can affect the individual's perceptions of marriage. Value orientation reflects the way people decide to increase their personal interests or go beyond the concerns of selfishness in order to improve the welfare of others [19]. Value orientation in family psychology research literature is divided into two groups: relationship orientation (the values that focus on the needs of others), and the value based on individualism (the values that focus on the personal interests) [21].

Marital adjustment can be considered as the source of family system or even a part of life ensuring forces, and the family reviver [22]. This adjustment can totally affect the quality of life [23]. Marriage and marital life requires a stable level of compatibility from couples and marital satisfaction plays an important role in the family's normal functions [24]. Marriage along with adjustment and satisfaction is highly important in maintaining the mental and physical health of spouses [25].

Integration of the adult attachment with value orientation is considered a new field in psychology studies and research literature of marriage. Attachment style has been connected to the growth of value orientation in the form of self-improvement and concern for others [18]. Researchers have found a relationship between secure attachment and value orientation based on individualism [26]. Secure attachment can be an important pioneer in the development of relationship orientation [18].

Although marital satisfaction has been subjected in many studies, but still there is a high level of statistics in divorce and marital conflicts. So, it is necessary to learn how marital satisfaction is being created, obtained and protected [27]. Attachment styles, value orientation and marital adjustment can be found in general situations of relationship; so, they can influence many people [27]. Since few studies have been done on the impact attachment style and value orientation in predicting Iranian marital adjustment. So, the general objective of this study is to determine the relationships between attachment styles, value orientation with marital adjustment among married people. The main question of the study was whether attachment style and value orientation predict marital adjustment? The results of this study can increase the awareness of family psychologists and counselors about family dynamics.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The plan of this study has an applied goal and a descriptive methodology. Sample size of this study includes married women in Bandar-Abbas Harbor between January and June, 2012. Whereas there is not the possibility for random sampling, 401 people were selected by means of available sampling method and by referring to public places such as parks and promenades .

### Measures:

1) Demographic Questionnaire: This form was drafted by a researcher aiming at gathering information such as age, educational level, marriage duration, etc.

2) Adult Attachment Scale (AAS): The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) measured the adult attachment styles. AAS is the self-report that consisted of 18 items that were rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The 18 items of the AAS generate the following three scales: a) the Dependent Scale measures the extent of individual trust and dependency on others; b) the Close Scale measures feelings of comfort, closeness, and intimacy: Furthermore, c) the Anxiety Scale measures the levels of anxiety in the relationship. Shaver et al. [28], mentioned AAS to have internal consistency (reliability alpha) coefficients of 0.71, 0.81, and 0.75, respectively [28]. The AAS “Close and Depend scales correlated .54 with each other; the Close and Anxiety scales correlated -0.19; the Depend and Anxiety scales correlated -0.37.1” Research has revealed a relation between the Close and Dependent scales [29]. Test-retest correlations between the Dependent, Close, and Anxiety Scales were reported to be 0.71, 0.62, and

0.58 respectively [29]. This scale was translated and adopted into Persian by shokrkon et al. [30]. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.73 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.66.

3) Value Orientation Instrument. The instrument chosen to measure value orientation was the Relationship Self-Inventory (RSI) by Pearson et al. [31] because it was best suited to assess the connected-self versus the separate-self for a married sample. This instrument compares the development of the self dichotomously, as either separate (individualistic) or connected (relational) [18]. The thirty questions put a self-descriptive value on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not like me at all) to 5 (very much like me). Regarding validity measures, relational orientation has been determined as normative [31]. Individuals who score high on one orientation tend to score low on the other orientation. The CS and SS scales were both found to be internally consistent, where items have homogeneity of content and meet the Spearman rank one matrix [31]. The RSI scales were also found to be valid across the lifespan [31]. This scale was translated and adopted into Persian by researchers. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.67 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.61.

4) The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a self-report measure used to measure the quality of a marital relationship. Questions on the DAS seek to assess four empirically verified components of marital satisfaction: dyadic satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression. It is pointed out that, although this scale can be utilized in a study with cross-sectional design, since relationship satisfaction is viewed as a "process," any measure of relationship satisfaction or dyadic adjustment is best used in longitudinal studies. Because of the cross-sectional design of the current study, the DAS is seen as being valid, but may be considered less valid than if the study were to be done longitudinally [32]. Each item was measured for content validity through an examination of whether they were relevant measures of dyadic adjustment for contemporary relationships, consistent with definitions for adjustment and its components (satisfaction, cohesion, and consensus), and worded carefully with fixed choice responses. To test criterion validity, the DAS was administered to 218 married participants and 94 divorced participants. Answers on the test were compared with external marital status and were found to be consistent and valid. To assess construct validity, the DAS was compared with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959) and a 0.86 correlation was found. Through a measure of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha, the total scale reliability for the DAS was 0.96 [mentioned in 32]. Was translated and adopted into Persian by Amozgar et al. [24]. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.86 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.81.

## RESULTS

Demographic information including that age, level of education, length of marriage and number of children. The majority of participants had diploma and higher with a mean age of the respondents being 37.3 years (S.D. = 12.44). The respondents reported an average length of marriage of 14.2 years (S.D. = 8.6), an average age of time at marriage of 18.8 years of age (S.D. = 7.66) and the average number of children reported was 2.4 (S.D. = 1.86).

Means and standard deviations for the measures utilized in the present study are provided in Table1. Attachment styles were assessed on a scale ranging from 18 to 126, that indicating person attachment style. Value orientation was assessed on a scale ranging from 30 to 150, that indicating person communication pattern. Marital adjustment was measured on a scale with possible scores between 32 and 160, with higher scores indicating higher levels of marital adjustment.

**Table1.** Mean, standard deviations, minimum and maximum of score in variables including marital adjustment, value orientation and sincerity of married women

Statistical indicators Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum score	Maximum score	Number
Attachment styles	91.1	18.33	41	108	401
Value Orientation	69.86	10.16	35	97	401
Marital adjustment	93.15	6.72	69	158	401

According to table 2, 3, multiple correlation for linear combination of attachment styles and marital adjustment is equal to MR= 0.0416 and coefficient of determination is RS= 0.173 that is significant in  $P < 0.001$ . So our first hypothesize of research is confirmed. Given to coefficient of determination, it is determined that about 49 percent of marital adjustment variance is determined by predictive variable, attachment styles.

According to tables 4, 5, multiple correlation for linear combination of value orientation and marital adjustment is equal to MR= 0.612 and coefficient of determination is RS= 0.374 that is significant in  $P < 0.001$ . So our second hypothesize of research is confirmed. Given to coefficient of determination, it is determined that about 39 percent of marital adjustment variance is determined by predictive variable, value orientation.

**Table 2.** AAS (Adult Attachment Styles) scores by marital adjustment, Regression Analysis, Predictors Attachment Styles, Dependent Variable: marital adjustment

Source	SS	Df	M S	F	Sig.
<b>Regression</b>	2549.44	1	2549.44	44.806	0.000
<b>Residual</b>	22759.94	400	56.899		
<b>Total</b>	25309.38	401			

**Table 3.** Multiple correlation coefficient of scores of attachment styles with marital adjustment using method a) concurrent entry b) step-by-step

Statistical indicator		R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.	B	T-value	Sig.
<b>Criterion V.</b>	Predictive V.							
<b>Marital adjustment</b>	attachment styles	0.417	0.173	44.80	0.001	0.416	6.45	0.001

**Table 4.** RSI scores (Value Orientation) by Marital adjustment, Regression Analysis, Predictors: Value Orientation, Dependent Variable: marital adjustment

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
<b>Regression</b>	833.278	1	833.278	17.857	0.000
<b>Residual</b>	18665.137	400	46.662		
<b>Total</b>	19498.413	401			

**Table 5.** Multiple correlation coefficients of scores of value orientation with marital adjustment using method a) concurrent entry b) step-by-step

Statistical indicator		R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.	B	T-value	Sig.
<b>Criterion V.</b>	Predictive V.							
<b>Marital adjustment</b>	Value orientation	0.612	0.374	17.85	0.001	0.30	5.03	0.001

## DISCUSSION

Using a correlational research design, this study examined the perceived need for understanding the relationship between attachment styles and value orientation with marital adjustment in married people. Simple regression method with simultaneous entry method of variables was used to reply the first question of study asking “Is there any relationship between attachment styles and marital adjustment?” and two components of anxiety and avoidance for attachment were considered as predictor variables to define dependent variable of marital adjustment. The results of tables 2 and 3 showed that there is significant relationship between attachment styles and marital adjustment. Also, the coefficient of determination is  $R^2=0.416$ , namely component of attachment styles has been able to explain marital satisfaction up to 41.6%, and the results of one-way variance analysis showed that the obtained amount of  $F=44.806$  is significant in the level of  $p<0.001$ .

The results of this study provide empirical support for previous research that demonstrates discoveries on how attachment style impact marital satisfaction [18, 33, 34]. This finding is consistent with previous findings from research examining the relationship between these two variables [18, 27, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37].

It is said to explain this finding that according to Duncan [18], “adult attachment literature provides ample explanation for why adult attachment is positively correlated with marital quality. For example, secure attachment to the spouse is a key variable for marital adjustment. Attachment is positively correlated with marriage relationship functioning, and better marital adjustment than insecure couples” [18].

Also, simple regression method with simultaneous entry method of variables was used to reply the second question of study asking “Is there any relation between value orientation and marital adjustment?” and two components of were considered as predictor variables to define dependent variable of marital adjustment. The results of tables 4 and 5 showed that the results of tables 4 and 5 showed that there is significant relationship between value orientation and marital adjustment. Also, the coefficient of determination is  $R^2=0.30$ , namely component of has been able to explain marital adjustment up to 30%, and the results of one-way variance analysis showed that the obtained amount of  $F=17.857$  is significant in the level of  $p<0.001$ . The results of this study provide empirical support for previous research that demonstrates discoveries on how value orientation impact marital quality satisfaction (18, 33, 34). This finding is consistent with previous findings examining the relationship between these two variables [18, 27, 33, 34, 38, 39].

It is said to explain this finding that according to Troxel, Value orientation serves as a standard to guide the selection and evaluation of behaviors [40]. “Another plausible explanation for why relational orientation increases marital quality is that relational spouses are more generous. Being generous makes people happy. Choosing to make sacrifices for the spouse gives people a sense of purpose in the marriage” [18].

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