



The Study of Adult Attachment Styles, Communication Patterns, and Marital Satisfaction

Zoleykha Raeisipour^{1*}, Reza Fallahchai² and Eghbal Zarei²

¹*University of Hormozgan, Minab Street, Bandar Abbas, Iran*

²*Department of Consultant & Psychology, Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Hormozgan, Bandar Abbas, Iran*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: sebna.raeisipour@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction in Band-Abbas married people. The research design was a descriptive correlation, and the study sample included 240 couples with at least 6 months from the time they were living together. Data collection tools, including 4 measures of Demographic Questionnaire, The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS), Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ), and The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction scale (EMS). This type Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis of data ($P < 0.001$) saying that a significant positive relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction, and between communication patterns and marital satisfaction. Results of multiple correlation analysis also suggests the existence of multiple relationships between attachment styles, communication patterns and marital satisfaction and attachment styles was the best predictor of marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Communication Patterns, Marital Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

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 [1]. Beside sexual drives as the initial matters, there are some other factors that make people eager to marry such as love, economical security, protection, emotional security, peace sensation, and run away from loneliness [2].

Marital relation is described as the most important and fundamental human relation because provides the initial structures to establish family relation and to train future generation [3]. 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. The use of Attachment theory lasts more than three decades ago having a better understanding about valuable structure of these relations. According to the Attachment theory, romantic relations are fundamental for adults because personal attachment of adults is manifested by mental characteristics which create their expectations and beliefs [4]. Attachment style is one of the personal factors impressing both marital compatibility and incompatibility; therefore, too many studies have been performed regarding this subject.

Attachment style is an effective factor in interpersonal interactions shaped as the result of relations between individual and affective faces [parents, peers and spouse], and has a significant effect on marital function and relation [5]. Attachment, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction are study subjects that concentrated on interpersonal behaviors through both psychological and sociological perspectives [6]. Attachment, communication patterns, and marital satisfaction are major subjects that start in the early times of childhood [7]. Nevertheless, the accurate interaction and relations between attachment styles and communication patterns are not known yet.

Satisfaction of an individual from marital life is accounted as his or her satisfaction from family, and satisfaction from family refers to satisfaction of life; so, facilitated growth, promotion and material and spiritual development of society will be followed consequently [8]. Due to the specific importance of family and physical

and mental health of family members and also due to healthy relations between couples, researchers are planning to discover mysteries that provide marital satisfaction.

During two past decades, the subject of attachment of adults has been paid attention by well-informed authorities and practitioners as well as scholars because initial relationship experiences that seem to influence adult relationships during the period of adolescence [9].

Researchers, practitioners, and scholars have had a special interest to understand attachment in relation to various factors [10, 11 & 12]. 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].

Attachment is known as a lifelong stable behavior [13]. When people are predisposed to attachment styles [e.g., secure, insecure, preoccupied, avoidant-ambivalent, and dismissive], they will begin to experience different thoughts, emotions and behaviors in their relationships with others [14]. It has been recognized as an effective factor from childhood to adulthood changes, and it is influential to the psychological and sociological impact of building and maintaining all relationships [15]. Wille believes that couples establish a series of relation patterns between them and problematic behaviors occur merely while performing those patterns [16]. Relation patterns point at those patterns in connection-making that people generally use them to deal with their relation issues [17]. Christensen et al. classifies communication patterns among couples in three groups including: mutual avoidance, mutual constructive communication, man demand woman withdraws; woman demand man withdraws, and total demand [18].

Communication patterns have similar characteristics and features to Attachment, and impress the function of adult relations and marital satisfaction. Relation presents various methods to argue with others and the way to interact in connections with them [19].

Attachment styles, communication patterns and marital satisfaction can be found in general situations of relationship; so, they can influence many people. The negative aspect of this reality is its ability to define the growth quality of an individual: from confrontation with childhood events to adulthood experiences in daily interactions with others. Such this negative aspect may influence the maturity condition of individual and creation of romantic relations in adulthood. Therefore, initial Attachment of people begins with social interaction with those people who observe and raise them. Thereafter, adults will require experiencing important parent–children social changes in order to obtain positive effects for romantic relations in adulthood. Consequently, it is essential to consider the relation between Attachment styles, patterns of communication and marital satisfaction.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The plan of this study has an applied goal and a descriptive methodology. Sample size of this study includes married men and women in Bandar-Abbas Harbor between January and June, 2012. Whereas there is not the possibility for random sampling, 240 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., [20], mentioned AAS to have internal consistency (reliability alpha) coefficients of .71, .81, and .75, respectively. The AAS “Close and Depend scales correlated .54 with each other; the Close and Anxiety scales correlated - .19; the Depend and Anxiety scales correlated -.37.1” Research has revealed a relation between the Close and Dependent scales [21]. Test-retest correlations between the Dependent, Close, and Anxiety Scales were reported to be 0.71, 0.62, and 0.58 respectively [21]. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.69 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.63.

3) Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ): The Communication Pattern Questionnaire (CPQ) [22, 17] is a 35-item self-report measure that assesses the communication patterns that a couple uses during three stages of conflict. CPQ consisted of the sum of three items assessing constructive communication behaviors minus the sum of four items assessing destructive communication behaviors [23]. Christensen et al. scale use a seven-point scale ranging from very unlikely (1) to very likely (7) to rate each item on the instrument. Heavey et al. [23] indicated that the reliability for the CPQ is described as alphas, which established internal consistency of sub scales. The reliability is respectively mentioned for males as (.84) and for females as (.81). Evidence specifies that the data give a strong support to reliability and validity of a sub scale of the CPQ, which is designed to capture constructiveness of communication patterns in relationships [23]. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.78 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.72.

4) ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale: The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction scale (EMS), according to Fowers et al. [24], yields a valid and reliable measure of marital quality or satisfaction, and it consisted of 10 items rated on a five-point Likert scale that included 10 domains of marital quality (i.e. communication, conflict resolution, roles, financial concerns, leisure time, sexual relationship, parenting, family and friends, and religion) with one question per domain.

The content validity of the EMS is expressed by the fact that it measures 10 dimensions of marital satisfaction that were found to be most important by Fournier et al., [25]. The EMS scale provides a 1-item sampling of the 10 dimensions of marital satisfaction [24]. The item-total correlations for the EMS ranged from .52 to .82 with a mean of .65 for men and .68 for women which reflected that the items on the EMS are cohesive [26].

The internal consistency of the EMS Scale indicated by Cronbach's alpha revealed an internal reliability of .86 [26]. The test-retest reliability of the EMS scale using an interval of 4 weeks was .86. Concurrent validity of the EMS was expressed by the correlation that it has with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale which was .73 when using individual scores and .81 with couple scores [26]. The scale was translated and adopted into Persian by Soleymanian. He found the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for EMS to be 0.92 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.86 [27]. Also, we found the internal consistency to be 0.90 and split-half reliability coefficient as 0.86.

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 35.6 years (S.D. = 8.66). The respondents reported an average length of marriage of 14.2 years (S.D. = 8.9), an average age of time at marriage of 24.1 years of age (S.D. = 4.1) and the average number of children reported was 2.3 (S.D. = 1.2).

Table 1. Mean, standard deviations, minimum and maximum of score in variables including marital satisfaction, forgiveness, perfection and sincerity of married women

| Statistical indicators Variables | Mean | Standard deviation | Minimum score | Maximum score | Number |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Attachment styles | 89.6 | 15.756 | 38 | 114 | 240 |
| Communication Pattern | 140.86 | 39.7 | 57 | 275 | 240 |
| Marital satisfaction | 113.65 | 25.395 | 31 | 178 | 240 |

Means and standard deviations for the measures utilized in the present study are provided in Table 1. Attachment styles were assessed on a scale ranging from 18 to 126, that indicating person attachment style. Communication Patterns was assessed on a scale ranging from 35 to 245, that indicating person communication pattern. Marital satisfaction was measured on a scale with possible scores between 0 and 235, with higher scores indicating higher levels of marital satisfaction.

Table 2. Multiple correlation coefficient of scores of attachment styles with marital satisfaction using method a) concurrent entry b) step-by-step

| Statistical indicator | | Regression coefficients | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Criterion variables | Predictive variable | Multiple coefficients | correlation MR determination RS | Coefficient of Possibility P | Ratio F |
| Marital satisfaction | attachment styles | 0.696 | 0.484 | 0.001 | 77.35 |
| | | | | | B=0.63 T=12.95 P=0.001 |

According to table 2, multiple correlation for linear combination of attachment styles and marital satisfaction is equal to MR= 0.704 and coefficient of determination is RS= 0.496 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 satisfaction variance is determined by predictive variable, attachment styles.

Table 3. Multiple correlation coefficient of scores of Communication Patterns with marital satisfaction using method a) concurrent entry b) step-by-step

| Statistical indicator | | Regression coefficients | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Criterion variables | Predictive variable | Multiple coefficients | correlation MR determination RS | Coefficient of Possibility P | Ratio F |
| Marital satisfaction | Communication Patterns | 0.601 | 0.361 | 0.001 | 67.35 |
| | | | | | B=0.455 T=7.677 P=0.001 |

According to table 3, multiple correlation for linear combination of Communication Patterns and marital satisfaction is equal to $MR= 0.624$ and coefficient of determination is $RS= 0.389$ 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 satisfaction variance is determined by predictive variable, Communication Patterns.

DISCUSSION

Using a correlational research design, this study examined the perceived need for understanding the relationship between attachment styles and patterns of relation with marital satisfaction 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 satisfaction?" and two components of anxiety and avoidance for attachment were considered as predictor variables to define dependent variable of marital satisfaction. The results of above tables showed that coefficient of determination is $R^2=0.389$, namely component of attachment styles has been able to explain marital satisfaction up to 38.9%, and the results of one-way variance analysis showed that the obtained amount of $F=67.35$ is significant in the level of $p<0.001$.

This finding is consistent with previous findings from research examining the relationship between these two variables [6, 8, 19, 28, 29, 30 and 31].

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 patterns of relation and marital satisfaction?" and three components of creation of problem, within problem and after problem were considered as predictor variables to define dependent variable of marital satisfaction. The results of above tables showed that coefficient of determination is $R^2=0.496$, namely component of patterns of relation has been able to explain marital satisfaction up to 49.6%, and the results of one-way variance analysis showed that the obtained amount of $F=77.355$ is significant in the level of $p<0.001$. This finding is consistent with previous findings Christensen [22]; Christensen et al. [32]; Jacobson [33]; Shenk et al. [34]; Ebadatpour [35]; Fatehizadeh et al. [36]; and Danesh et al. [37].

It is said to explain this finding that according to McCrea et al. [38] both interpersonal and intrapersonal factors may affect sexual relations. Danesh et al. [37] concluded in their study that couples, who enjoy more attachment and respect of their spouses, will face more marital satisfaction. There is a positive correlation between the level of bilateral attachment and respect of couples. Those couples who honored each other more, had higher marital satisfaction, and there is a positive relation between the level of attachment and marital satisfaction of couples. The 4.5-year longitudinal studies of Gottman et al. [39] showed that creative relations pattern can be one of the most protective factors against stresses on one hand, and a factor to establish satisfaction and marital stability on the other hand. So, it can be proposed according to the findings of previous and current studies that there is a significant relation between relation patterns and marital satisfaction [40].

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