



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Investigating the Personality Factors; attachment and self-Differentiation on Interpersonal Intimacy of couples in Shiraz City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating effect of the attachment and self-differentiation personality factors on interpersonal intimacy of the couples in Shiraz City. The method of this research is correlation. Statistical population includes all couples of Shiraz University studying in the educational year of 2012-2013. One hundred and ninety persons (95 male and 95 female) from four faculties were selected as the samples by random multistage cluster sampling method. The research tools include three questionnaires, namely, Colins Verid adults' attachment, Scorn and Smith self-differentiation and Waker & Thompson interpersonal intimacy scale. The research hypotheses were analyzed by using the descriptive statistical methods such as dispersion indices like mean, standard deviation as well as the inferential statistical methods such as Pearson correlation coefficient, linear regression analysis and regression beta coefficient. Results showed that there is negative significant correlation between attachment anxiety and self-differentiation. Also, the women experience more attachment anxiety than men, but men show more differentiation than women. No significant result was obtained on the intimacy variable.

Keywords: attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, secure attachment, self-differentiation, interpersonal intimacy

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important factors which determine the one's personality in adulthood is his/her relationship with care-taker or mother. Existence or non-existence of this relationship and also quality of this relationship between baby and his/her care-taker has been considered by many psychoanalysts and psychologists such as Freud, Melani Kline, Sullivan, Ericson and Bowlby. In the meantime, Bowlby has studied and examined this relationship regularly and consistently as the attachment. Attachment is a concept which is rooted in the etiologist deeds and has a psychoanalytic concept [1].

Many theoreticians have tried to explain the function of family. Among the most famous theoreticians in this field, Murry Bown has offered the theories of family systems. Foundation and basis of this theory is based on the self-separation concept. From Bown's point of view, a type of emotional system dominates over the family structure which is able to be transferred from one generation to another (intergeneration) and the person's mental health is based on the his separation level from this system. Intimacy is defined as the ability to make communication with others by keeping the individuality. Such self-based definitions indicate that the person reaches a degree of personal development so that he/she can make sincere communication with others [2]. Intimacy can be regarded as the ability to know self in the presence of others that self-awareness and identity development are necessary for capacity of one's capability toward intimacy. Common conceptualization of intimacy includes level of closeness to spouse, sharing the values and ideas, joint activities, sexual relationships, knowing each other and affective behaviors such as fondling. The person who experiences more intimacy is able to offer himself more desirably in relationships and show his/her needs more effectively to the partner or spouse [3].

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the theories and research findings for predicting among the attachment, self-differentiation and intimacy. Lack of intimacy and attachment in marriage makes each of

couples grow up separately and alone. So, paying attention to it is of high importance. Intimacy in marriage is a process which occurs in all life periods, never completes and reaches to end [4].

Depth of intimacy two persons create in their relationships is highly dependent on their ability to express thoughts, feelings (levels of self-differentiation), needs, wants and wishes clearly and effectively. Since birth, human being is surrounded by the social environment which affects the person as the natural and physical environment play role in one's personality change and evolution. Since not only it requires person to recognize the facts, but also provides him with a system made of signs and marks which changes his thoughts, ideas, emotions and internal affections and offers him new methods and imposes a series of duties on him. Basic assumptions of attachment are that attachment is not limited only to childhood and continues in the next stages of life and affects the person's life [5].

Attachment covers adulthood, establishing the relationship with others, confronting the stress and other issues [6]. Children who are highly attached to their mothers are expected to be extrovert, pay attention to their surrounding environment and want to explore around themselves and encounter the discomfort [7]. Secure attached children play the role of social leader, pioneer in activities; conversely insecure attached children are socially dissociable, inactive and in pursuing the objective are weak and these types of differences in not being related to the children intelligence [8]. Bowlby (1980) believes that emotions are strongly related to the attachment and says that most emotional tensions play role during formation, reservation, cut and regeneration of attachment relationships [9].

According to Bakendam (2001), those persons who are securely attached, have had the adjustment styles for adapted emotions as well as empathy in interpersonal communications and trivial personal disorder was seen among them. In contrast, those insecurely attached, were using the adjustment styles for inadapted emotions, suffering mind disorders and emotional excitement and enjoying less empathy. People with secure attachment are successful in a large number of duties and communications including interpersonal communications, solving the social problems, confronting stress, physical and mental health. In a research it became clear that secure attachment style makes people take efficient contrasting strategies while confronting life stressing events [10]. Waterz (1977) has stated that children with secure attachment are rapidly motivated at the time of confronting the problems; i.e. they act excitement-based, easily disappointed and are not able to get help from their care-taker. Bowlby (1973) believes that one's attachment style forms the method for his/her confrontation and compatibility by stress-making experiences [11]. In the consultation profession, sometimes we face people who are highly reactive from emotional points of view. It means their emotions overcome their rationale and mind and they have no defined beliefs for themselves. They change their behaviors and ideas in order to gain others' satisfaction or people-satisfying, completely need others' help and tend to support others, and too; they are not able to create borders and sound personal territories in relationship with others. Therefore, they run away from establishing intimate connection and closing to others due to the fear of disorders resulting from mixing with others and its consequences [12]. Sometimes they feel that have been victimized in life and in some cases they experienced contradictions with their families and due to lack of ability to fix these contradictions properly, they disconnected completely from their families. The main problem with these persons is non-differentiation or mixture. Many researchers have been carried out in relation to the aforementioned variables. Findings showed that anxiety attachment styles are significantly and negatively correlated with marriage satisfaction; while no significant correlation was obtained between secure and avoidance attachment styles. Findings also confirmed the psychological interventions before marriage and during matrimonial life.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participant

Statistical population of present study includes all students of Shiraz colleges studying in Shiraz City during the educational year 2012-13. Sample for this research includes 190 students consisting of 95 males and 95 females. These students are studying at Shiraz University during the educational year 2012-13. Through random multistage cluster method, 4 colleges, namely, engineering, literature, medical and psychology were selected from among governmental colleges of Shiraz and then 3 classes of each college and 10 students from each class were selected randomly and evaluated.

Measures

1- Collins & Read Revised Adult Attachment Scale ; Collins & Read (1990, quoted by Pakdaman, 2001) have developed their questionnaire based on the descriptions mentioned in the Hazal & Shewer attachment questionnaire about three basic attachment styles. Since all Cronbach Alpha values in all cases are equal to or more than .80, test has high validity. On the other hand, in research by Pakdaman (2001), value of test validity had been specified by using retest in the form of correlation between these two implementations. This RAAS questionnaire was implemented for 100 boys and girls in high-school second class who were

selected randomly[13]. The results obtained from the reimplementation of this questionnaire with one-month time interval indicated that this test is significant in 95% level/ it has validity.

2- Scorn & Smith self-differentiation scale; this questionnaire was developed by Scorn & Smith in 1998. Revised list of self-differentiation (DSIR) for measuring the participants in a self-differentiation score in which feelings and thoughts are kept separately which shows what will happen in the future and managing the emotional selections and going away from the important communications. This scale includes 45 items which is ranked in 6 degrees. Differentiation questionnaire was implemented in Iran by Eskian (2005) on a sample consisting of 26 students of first class of high-school. Questions which had relatively lower correlation with total test were deleted from scoring [14]. Cronbach Alpha coefficient reported by Scorn & Frid Lender for this questionnaire is 0.88. In his research, Eskian (2005) obtained 0.81 for the Cronbach Alpha coefficient.

3- Walker & Thompson intimacy scale; measurement tools in this research is intimacy scale which was developed by Alex J. Walker and Linda Thomson. Intimacy scale is a 17-question tools which has been developed for measuring the affection and intimacy. Subject is scored in intimacy scale through summing the scores of questions and dividing it by 17. Score range is between 1 and 7 and the higher score is , the more intimacy is. Validity: (intimacy scale) with Alpha coefficient 91% to 97% has very good internal similarity. No information is reported on test stability. Reliability: although no information is reported on validity of this scale in the reference, in intimacy scale some information is shown through reports by mothers from remote and close contributions to them and reports by girls from close contribution to mothers [15].

RESULTS

Table 1: Matrix for multiple correlations of variables

| | Anxiety | Avoidance | Secure | Intimacy | Dsi | |
|-----------|---------------------|-----------|--------|----------|-------|---------|
| Anxiety | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.147* | -.226** | -.138 | -.291** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .043 | .002 | .058 | .000 |
| | N | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 |
| Avoidance | Pearson Correlation | -.147* | 1 | .185* | .109 | .137 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .043 | | .010 | .135 | .060 |
| | N | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 |
| Secure | Pearson Correlation | -.226** | .185* | 1 | .102 | .077 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .002 | .010 | | .161 | .292 |
| | N | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 |
| Intimacy | Pearson Correlation | -.138 | .109 | .102 | 1 | -.095 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .058 | .135 | .161 | | .192 |
| | N | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 |
| dsi | Pearson Correlation | -.291** | .137 | .077 | -.095 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .060 | .292 | .192 | |
| | N | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 | 190 |

The results of table show that there is significant multiple relationship among personality variables (anxiety, avoidance attachment, self-differentiation).

Table 2: linear relationship between the variables avoidance attachment and intimacy

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 3.047 | 1 | 3.047 | 2.256 | .135 ^a |
| Residual | 253.903 | 188 | 1.351 | | |
| Total | 256.950 | 189 | | | |

As seen in the table, statistical test F with the value 2.256, degrees of freedom 1 and 188, indicates that the linear relationship between attachment avoidance and intimacy has not reached the significance level.

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | 5.185 | .384 | | 13.487 | .000 |
| avoidance | .044 | .029 | .109 | 1.502 | .135 |

As seen in the table, beta coefficient for attachment avoidance on intimacy is 0.109 which has not reached the significance level and therefore the first hypothesis is not confirmed.

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 418.828 | 1 | 418.828 | 17.374 | .000 ^a |
| Residual | 4532.140 | 188 | 24.107 | | |
| Total | 4950.968 | 189 | | | |

As seen in the table, statistical test F with value 17.374, degrees of freedom 1 and 188 indicates that there is a significant linear relationship between attachment avoidance and differentiation. P less than 0.000; therefore the first hypothesis is accepted.

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 Regression | 4.891 | 1 | 4.891 | 3.648 | .058 ^a |
| Residual | 252.059 | 188 | 1.341 | | |
| Total | 256.950 | 189 | | | |

As seen in the table, statistical test F with value 3.648, degrees of freedom 1 and 188 indicates that the linear relationship between anxiety attachment and intimacy has not reached the significance level.

| Men | Mean | Standard deviation | Women | Mean | Standard deviation |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Intimacy | 5.7724 | 1.16555 | Intimacy | 5.7152 | 1.17454 |
| Anxiety | 8.4737 | 5.31526 | Anxiety | 9.8617 | 4.81173 |
| Avoidance | 12.7579 | 3.02372 | Avoidance | 12.9681 | 2.77257 |
| Self-differentiation | 143.7789 | 21.51802 | Self-differentiation | 139.3404 | 21.12052 |

The results from the table indicate that the average attachment anxiety among women is more than men. Also, the average self-differentiation of men is more than that of women. But, no gender separation was observed between avoidance and intimacy and standard deviation for

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Concerning the general hypothesis: there is significant multiple relationships among the personality variables self-differentiation, attachment and intimacy.

Results of table 1 show that there is significant multiple relationships among personality variables (avoidance attachment, anxiety attachment and self-differentiation). But no relationship was found between the variables interaction. No domestic research has been carried out on general hypothesis of research, but researches relative similar to this subject were more focused on the matrimonial satisfaction than interpersonal intimacy and unlike the general hypothesis stating no significant relationships among the variables interaction, significant relationships were found in variables interaction with matrimonial satisfaction. Aleiki & Nazari [16] investigated the relationship between differentiation and matrimonial satisfaction [16]. The research sample included 40 couples among the personnel of Teacher Education University. Results showed that the correlation coefficient between differentiation and matrimonial satisfaction was positive and significant ($r = .75$, $P = 0.0001$). The first secondary hypothesis indicates: there is relationship between attachment avoidance and intimacy. As seen statistical test F with value 2.256 and degree of freedom 1 and 188 shows the linear relationship between attachment avoidance and intimacy has not reached the significance level. Sayyadpour (2005); in styles of attachment and marriage satisfaction, 100 male and female students with their spouses from Azad Islamic University of South Tehran Branch were selected as the accessible sample. Findings showed that there is not significant correlation between the secure and avoidance attachment styles through marriage satisfaction. Findings also confirmed the psychological interventions before the marriage and during the matrimonial life [17]. As shown in correlation result, there is negative significant correlation between attachment anxiety and self-differentiation; i.e., the higher the anxiety, the lower the self-differentiation and vice versa, the less the anxiety, the more the self-differentiation. P is less than 1%. According to the research by Swason and Frid Lender [17] on Philippine teens, higher ability to create a position and setting for self in interpersonal relationships (high differentiation) predicts the less levels of anxiety and high level of adaptation and these results correspond with the opinion of Bowen.

Results show that average attachment anxiety in men is more than women. Meanwhile, self-differentiation among men is more than women. But, no gender difference was seen among avoidance, intimacy and secure attachment and standard deviation for each can be observed separately. Williamson (1981) states that self-differentiation emerges through personal independence in relationship between parents and adolescents. Persons with more independent personality (in interpersonal relationships) are more able to experience the intimacy with others. Williamson (1981) believes that personality independence is achieved when the adolescent finds his/her relationship with parents on the basis of mutual respect, cooperation and selection power rather than based on the compulsion, coalition or using threat or fear [18] This process (personal independence or differentiation) occurs in adolescence period. In line with these researches, some studies like Garbarino, Swang, Person & Grech, 1990, quoted by Daneshpour, 2007, believe that it is possible at least among adolescents that women face more problems with men independence in independent personality development within family. Other researches [14, 15, 16] indicated that men and women are different with each other in methods in which differentiation problems are expressed. Men state the problems with emotional problem and women have problems with emotional reaction. Bowen (1978) believes that gender differences do not affect one's capacity and ability for self-differentiation [19]. Like Bowen, Williamson [20] assumes that there is no relationship between gender and ability of adolescent in obtaining independent personality in relationships between parents and friends.

Like most studies, in this research it was not possible to control all intervening variables and this influences the internal and external validity of research. One of the limitations was using several questionnaires. High number of questions and lengthening the answer time probably affect the research results. This research should be repeated for samples with higher volume and in wider geographical level so that generalization capability of results would increase. It is recommended that research be carried out between couples and life satisfaction. Due to the effect of differentiation on health and matrimonial satisfaction and also the attachment quality it is better to use workshops for couples and persons who are going to marry

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