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Multiple Relationships between Personality traits, attachment style and self-differentiation with fear of marriage among students of Tehran University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the multiple relationships between personality traits, attachment style, and self-differentiation and premarital fear, among Tehran University students. The study population included all students of Tehran University. The statistical sample was consisted of 195 students (including both girls and boys) who were selected randomly. The tools used in this study included Neo Questionnaire, Self-Differentiation Questionnaire (DSI), the questionnaire of fear from marriage and the scale of Parents and Peers' Attachment. The descriptive and inferential method was used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used in the descriptive section while in the inferential section correlation and multiple regressions were applied based on the hypotheses. The results of the present study indicated that there was a positive, significant relationship between premarital fears and neuroticism alone, among all other personality traits. Extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness, all had a negative, significant relationship with premarital fears. Moreover, among attachment styles, there was a positive, significant relationship only between maternal insecure attachment style and premarital fears. Among self-differentiation and its dimensions, emotional reactivity, emotional escape, emotional mixture with others and self-differentiation had a positive, significant relationship with premarital fears. However, there was a negative, significant relationship between my position and premarital fears.
Keywords: personality traits, attachment style, self-differentiation, premarital fear, students

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is considered as one of the most important and vital events in daily life of society members; and it can be investigated from different aspects. One of these aspects through which marriage can be studied is fear from marriage and in other words avoidance from marriage. In addition to meeting sexual and emotional needs of an individual, marriage also regulates individual's economical needs and socio-cultural communications. Moreover, it is accepted as a norm in all countries of the world, due to its importance and effect [1]. These days, when the issue of marriage is discussed in families and among the youth, individuals would often come up with a vague imagination and would actually depict marriage as a mountain of problems and obstacles standing up against them. Heavy dowries and huge costs of buying jewelry, gifts and various clothes, huge costs of engagement and wedding ceremonies and that of renting, mortgaging or purchasing a house, pregnancy, lack of jobs and thousands of other family, economic, and social problems have all associated marriage with fear and thereof have delayed it in the youth [2].

The issue of fear from marriage and delayed age of marriage and other issues such as increasing divorces, etc. can be explained in type of the structure and function of family institution, also in nuclear dimension. That is because, looking back to the past of the extended families in Iran indicates that early marriages and social prohibition of divorce and emphasizing endogamy marriages were all family issues of that period of time. However, today, in nuclear families we encounter delayed ages of marriage, repetition of marriage and increasing divorces and emphasizing exogamy marriages. Available statistics show that the average age of marriage in Iran has been faced with major changes. Based on such statistics, the age of marriage in women has gradually increased during 1966 to 2002. Moreover, such an increase has

accelerated within the last two decades, so that more than one-fourth of girls with ages 25 to 29 years old were still unmarried in 2002. Furthermore, the age of marriage in Iranian women has gradually increased, during census years of 1966 to 2002, from 18.4 to 23.2 years old. While the average age of marriage in men has just changed from 25.8 to 25.9 years old [3]. Although such statistics belong to the 90s, it seems that one of the factors which can increase the age of marriage and thereof to delay such an important matter is fear from marriage.

On one hand, the matter of personality can play a role in every aspect of individuals' life including fear from marriage. Human is a unique and valuable being who has values, needs, beliefs and expectations of its own, which all shape his personality and become the determining factor of his adaption to the environment. Man is always endeavoring and attempting in order to satisfy his needs and by working he tries to satisfy some part of such needs. This way, man spends his energy in an optimal way and develops his social communication with others as well. Moreover, he expresses his personality through choosing a specific profession and somehow manifests his attitudes and opinions [4]. Furthermore, attachment is another variable which plays a significant role in marital relationship of couples. The variable of attachment is a particular emotional relationship that involves an exchange of pleasure, care and comfort. John Bowl by has carried out extensive researches about the concept of attachment. He has described attachment as follow: "mental and enduring communication and relation between two people" [5].

Another variable which can affect fear from marriage is differentiation. Self-differentiation refers to the individual's ability to distinguish his mental and emotional processes from those of others. In the theory of family systems, the key to an individual's mental health lies in having both senses of belonging to a family and differentiation [6].

Fear of marriage is as an avoidance behavior where people are trying to keep themselves far from marriage subject. Fear of marriage can bring many social implications; thus identifying the variables involved in this fear is of research necessities of present society.

According to what was said, since decide to marry is of major decisions and marriage is necessary for human life, this question arises that is there any significant relationship between personality traits, attachment styles and self- differentiation with premarital fears?

According to the research purpose and research background, the following hypotheses were tested.

Main hypothesis: There is significant relationship between personality traits; attachment styles and self-differentiation with premarital fears.

Firstsub-hypothesis: there is significant relationship between personality traits and premarital fears.

Second sub-hypothesis: there is significant relationship between attachment styles and premarital fears.

Third sub-hypothesis: there is significant relationship between self-differentiation and premarital fears.

Tools and methods

Present study was a descriptive one. The study population consisted of all male and female students at Tehran University in 2012 to 2013.Of this196people were selected using cluster sampling methodas sample size. Research design is correlation one. The tools used in this study include premarital fears questionnaire of Samiee [7], NEO Personality Test, and differentiation questionnaire of Skowron [8].

Premarital fears questionnaire: It is built, validated and standardized by Samiee [7].It consists of83itemsthatwill score on five-degree range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This questionnaire involves 6 factors(fear from spouse, fear from inability in finance management, fear of spouse limitation, fear from self, fear from spouse infidelity, financial fear).Samiee [7] has reported its internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha of 0.97. He also investigated its convergent validity and construct and has reported them to be appropriate.

NEO Questionnaire: NEO Personality Test (revised form) is a comprehensive one. It measures five main dimensions of personality characteristics associated with these aspects including neuroticism, extraversion, and openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness. These five aspects or main areas that are examined in test indexes provide a comprehensive review of adults 'personality. In this study, the short form of the questionnaire (i.e. the 60 questions version) was used. Long-form of the questionnaires validated indifferent countries, including Iran. However, the studies done by Costa and McCrae [9] showed that the correlation of 5scalesof short form to long form ranges from77% to 92%.Moreover, the internal consistency of its sub scales was estimated in the range of68% to 86%.

Differentiation questionnaire: it is made by A Skowron [8]; it is 45-item tool which is used to measure the rate of individual's differentiation. It is comprised of four subscales: emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cut-off and emotional fusion with others. Each question is scored on a scale of 6 degrees. The validity of this questionnaire was approved by experts; it has been confirmed in researches of Skowron [8], Skowron and Smith [10]. In study of Skowron and Smith [10] the reliability of whole test was calculated using Cronbach's alpha of 0.971 with internal consistency of 0.86.In addition, the reliability of

the subscales of emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cut-off and emotional fusion with others was computed by 0.81, 0.86, 0.89 and 0.84 respectively. In

Inventory of parent/peer's Attachment (IPPA): This scale is a75-item questionnaire in which each articles designed on a 5-point Likert scale. It provides separate ratings for attachments of mother, father, and peers(each item has 25 articles).

RESULTS

The total average age of the participants was 26.2 years old ranging from 18 to 34 years old and the standard deviation was 5.3. Moreover, the average age of male students was 27 years old and the standard deviation equaled 6, while the average age of female students was 25.3 years old and the standard deviation was 2.2.

Descriptive indices of the study variables, such as mean and standard deviation, have been generally shown among participants in table 1.

Table1. Mean and standard deviation of study variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Pre-marital fears	224.93	49.78	Safe father-attachment style	50.98	13.10
Neuroticism	34.94	8.51	Unsafe father-attachment style	23.94	7.59
Extroversion	37.20	5.45	Self-differentiation	137.08	9.06
Openness	39.93	4.06	Emotional reactivity	33.20	4.63
Agreeableness	40.71	5.10	My position	34.63	4.02
Conscientiousness	44.00	6.30	Emotional escape	36.03	3.90
Safe mother-attachment style	55.56	10.89	Mixture with others	33.21	5.54
Unsafe mother-attachment style	21.78	7.73	Safe father-attachment style	50.98	13.10
Unsafe father-attachment style	23.94	7.59	Self-differentiation	137.08	9.06

First hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between personality traits and pre-marital fears.

The results in the table of consistency showed that neuroticism had a positive, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. Also, it showed that extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness all had negative, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. In order to investigate the most important factor among the mentioned ones in predicting pre-marital fears, the stepwise regression analysis was used. Table 2, indicates the results of stepwise regression analysis for pre-marital fears, based on neuroticism and agreeableness.

Table2. Stepwise regression analysis for predicting pre-marital fears on the basis of neuroticism and agreeableness

Step	Variables entered the equation	Regression coefficient	The square of regression coefficient	Pure share	F	Release degree 1	Release degree 2	Sign.
1	Neuroticism	0.612	0.374	0.374	115.397	1	193	0.000
2	Agreeableness	0.638	0.408	0.033	10.808	1	192	0.001

As it is shown in table 1, among the variables under investigation, in the second step, agreeableness has entered the regression equation with regression coefficient of 0.638 and besides neuroticism it is capable of predicting 40.8% of the pre-marital fears' variance (p<0.001).

Table 3, shows the coefficients of regression equation for predicting pre-marital fears based on neuroticism and agreeableness.

Table3. Raw and standard coefficients of regression equation for predicting pre-marital fears on the basis of neuroticism and agreeableness

Variable	Raw coefficient (B)	Standard error	Beta coefficient	T	Sign.
Fixed value	199.048	32.311	-	6.160	0.000
Neuroticism	3.053	0.361	0.522	8.44	0.000
Agreeableness	-1.984	0.604	-0.203	-3.28	0.001

As it is shown in table 3, the raw and standard coefficients of predicting the equation of pre-marital fears are presented and all are statistically significant. According to the above table, the equation of predicting pre-marital fears based on neuroticism and agreeableness is as following:

Pre-marital fears= 199.048– 1.984 (agreeableness) + 3.053 (neuroticism)

second hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between attachment styles and pre-marital fears.

The results of consistency table showed that the unsafe mother-attachment style and the unsafe father-attachment style had positive, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. However, safe mother-attachment style and safe father-attachment style showed a negative, significant relationship with pre-marital fears.

In order to investigate the most important factor among the mentioned ones, in the prediction of pre-marital fears, the stepwise regression analysis was applied. Table 4, indicates the results of stepwise regression analysis for pre-marital fears, based on safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style.

Table4. Stepwise regression analysis for the prediction of pre-marital fears on the basis of safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style

Step	Variables entered the equation	Regression coefficient	The square of regression coefficient	Pure share	F	Release degree 1	Release degree 2	Sign.
1	Safe mother-attachment style	0.430	0.185	0.185	43.691	1	193	0.000
2	Unsafe mother-attachment style	0.467	0.218	0.033	8.132	1	192	0.005

As it is shown in table 4, among the variables under investigation, in the second step, the unsafe mother-attachment style was entered into the regression equation by regression coefficient of 0.467 and along with safe mother-attachment style, it was able to predict 21.8% of pre-marital fears' variance ($p<0.005$).

Table 5, shows the coefficients of regression equation for the prediction of pre-marital fears according to safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style.

Table5. Raw and standard coefficients of regression equation for predicting pre-marital fears on the basis of safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style

Variable	Raw coefficient (B)	Standard error	Beta coefficient	T	Sign.
Fixed value	257.119	31.606	-	8.135	0.000
Safe mother-attachment style	-1.202	0.395	-0.263	-3.042	0.003
Unsafe mother-attachment style	1.589	0.557	0.247	2.852	0.005

As it is shown in table 5, the raw and standard coefficients of predicting pre-marital fears equation are presented and all are statistically significant. According to the above table, the equation of pre-marital fears on the basis of safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style is as following:

Pre-marital fears=1.589 (safe mother-attachment style) – 1.202 (unsafe mother-attachment style) + 257.119

Third hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between self-differentiation and pre-marital fears.

The results of consistency table showed that emotional reactivity, emotional escape, mixture with others and self-differentiation all had a positive, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. However, there was a negative, significant relationship between my position and pre-marital fears.

Table6, indicates the results of stepwise regression analysis for pre-marital fears based on mixture with others and my position.

Table6. Stepwise regression analysis for the prediction of pre-marital fears

Step	Variables entered the equation	Regression coefficient	The square of regression equation	Pure share	F	Release degree 1	Release degree 2	Sign.
1	Mixture with others	0.528	0.278	0.278	74.47	1	193	0.000
2	My position	0.553	0.306	0.028	7.67	1	192	0.006

As it is shown in table 6, in the second step, my position was entered into the regression equation with regression coefficient of 0.553 and along with mixture with others, it is capable of predicting 30.6% of the pre-marital fears variance (p<0.006).

Table 7, indicates the coefficient of regression equation for the prediction of pre-marital fears on the basis of mixture with others and my position.

Table7. Raw and standard coefficients of regression equation for predicting pre-marital fears based on mixture with others and my position

Variable	Raw coefficient (B)	Standard error	Beta coefficient	T	Sign.
Fixed value	193.627	48.981	-	3.953	0.000
Mixture with others	3.622	0.673	0.404	5.383	0.000
My position	-2.570	0.928	-0.208	-2.770	0.006

As it is shown in table 7, the raw and standard coefficients of predicting pre-marital fears equation are presented and all are significant statistically. According to the above table the equation of pre-marital fears are as following, on the basis of mixture with others and my position:

Pre-marital fears= -2.570 (my position) + 3.622 (mixture with others) + 193.627

Discussion

The results of the present study indicated that among personality traits there was a positive, significant relationship only between neuroticism and pre-marital fears. Moreover, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness all had a negative, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. Also, neuroticism and agreeableness had the power of predicting pre-marital fears. The present results were obtained from the first hypothesis of the study. This result means that by increasing neuroticism, the signs of pre-marital fears will also increase. On the other hand, by increasing agreeableness, the signs of pre-marital fears will decrease.

The present result can be explained that individuals' neuroticism increases an individual's chance in less adaptability to the environment, and those who obtained high scores in this index will more probably have irrational and distorted thoughts and negative fundamental beliefs towards intimacy and intimate relationships. Moreover, the consequences of such traits include inefficient and developed fears which an individual will experience in his relationships [8]. On one hand, agreeableness is a positive trait through which an individual tends to establish a relationship with others and also to be involved with others. Such an individual is basically altruistic and has a same feeling for others as his own. Therefore, a permanent feeling of trust and reliability is formed in his intrapersonal relationship [8].

In the second hypothesis of the study, the results showed that among attachment styles there was a positive, significant relationship only between unsafe mother-attachment style and unsafe father-attachment style and pre-marital fears. Moreover, safe mother-attachment style and safe father-attachment style showed a negative, significant relationship with pre-marital fears. Also, safe mother-attachment style and unsafe mother-attachment style had the ability to predict pre-marital fears. This result means that by increasing safe mother-attachment style, the signs of pre-marital fears will decrease and by increasing unsafe mother-attachment style, signs of pre-marital fears will also increase. The present result can be considered to be consistent with studies such as Finni et al [11] and Cohen et al [12]. In these studies, safe attachment is identified as a protective factor against couples' fears and also it is considered to be due to intimacy. In addition, the studies indicated that unsafe attachment to parents will provide the grounds for future fears in intrapersonal relationships.

In the explanation of the positive and negative relationships between unsafe mother-attachment style and safe mother-attachment style and pre-marital fears, as it was mentioned, mother has the main and central position for the psyche of an individual. Bowlby [13], indicates that the quality and type of a child's relationship with important people of his life in future can be predicted from the type of his attachment to his mother in his early years of life. In later studies, researchers, such as Lekan and other psychoanalysts, have highlighted the role of father and attachment to him and also stated that safe father-attachment can also predict the type and quality of individual's future relationship with others. However, the result obtained in this study, verifies what Bowlby, the theoretician of attachment relationships, has stated.

The results in the final hypothesis of this study indicated that among self-differentiation and its dimensions, there was a positive, significant relationship only between emotional reactivity, emotional escape, mixture with others, and self-differentiation and pre-marital fears. Moreover, there was a negative, significant relationship between my position and pre-marital fears. Also, among all, only mixture with others and my position had the power to predict pre-marital fears. This result means that by increasing mixture with others, the signs of pre-marital fears will also increase while by increasing my position, the signs of pre-marital fears will decrease. The present result can be considered to be in consistency with studies such as Tuason [14]. In their studies, these researchers indicated that all

constituents of self-differentiation except for my position, had a direct and significance relationship with avoidant and social-escape personalities. They explained their obtained results as such individuals permanently experience stress and fear in communication with others, due to non-self-differentiation, permanent and continuous fear of self-fusion with others, and loosing themselves in communication with others. Therefore, the results of this study can be predicted just as they were obtained, that means those who have obtained a separate identity and their family have previously provided such grounds for them, will experience such fears significantly less. It is predictable that those individuals whose "my position" has been obtained and who distinguish between feeling and thought and have the control of their emotions under the most difficult conditions, can efficiently and beneficially monitor a shared relationship and to continue that relationship without fear [1].

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