

Predicting marital conflicts based on attachment styles and identity bases in couples referring to counseling centers

Predicción de conflictos conyugales basados en estilos de apego y bases de identidad en parejas que se refieren a centros de asesoramiento

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is the disagreement and opposition between individuals with each other, the incompatibility of the views, goals, and behaviors that are in opposition to others. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and identity styles with marital conflicts in couples referring to counseling centers in Mashhad. The present research is descriptive - correlation. For this purpose, 223 males and females from Mashhad counseling centers in 2016-2017 were selected with the objective sampling method. The research tools were the marital conflict questionnaire (MCQ), Collins and Reid's attachment styles questionnaire (1990), and Bonie and Adams identity styles questionnaire (OMEIS-2) (1989). Data were analyzed by statistical methods including frequency, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation coefficient, and multivariate regression. The results showed that there was a significant correlation with marital conflicts ($P = 0.0001$, $r = 0.77$), as well as identity styles showed a significant correlation with marital conflicts ($p = 0.0001$, $r = 0.89$). Marital conflicts can be predicted based on attachment styles and identity styles, and attention to those factors guide behavioral science experts in assessing and treating marital problems.

Keywords: marital conflict, attachment style, identity.

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RESUMEN

El conflicto es el desacuerdo y la oposición entre individuos, la incompatibilidad de los puntos de vista, los objetivos y las conductas que se oponen a los demás. El propósito de este estudio fue investigar la relación entre los estilos de apego y los estilos de identidad con los conflictos matrimoniales en parejas que se refieren a los centros de asesoramiento en Mashhad. La presente investigación es descriptiva - correlación. Para este propósito, 223 hombres y mujeres de los centros de asesoramiento de Mashhad en 2016-2017 fueron seleccionados con el método de muestreo objetivo. Las herramientas de investigación fueron el cuestionario de conflicto marital (MCQ), el cuestionario de estilos de apego de Collins y Reid (1990) y el cuestionario de estilos de identidad de Bonie y Adams (OMEIS-2) (1989). Los datos se analizaron mediante métodos estadísticos que incluyen frecuencia, media, desviación estándar, coeficiente de correlación de Pearson y regresión multivariable. Los resultados mostraron que hubo una correlación significativa con los conflictos maritales ($P = 0.0001$, $r = 0.77$), así como los estilos de identidad mostraron una correlación significativa con los conflictos maritales ($p = 0.0001$, $r = 0.89$). Los conflictos maritales se pueden predecir en función de los estilos de apego y los estilos de identidad, y la atención a esos factores guía a los expertos en ciencias del comportamiento a la hora de evaluar y tratar los problemas maritales.

Palabras clave: conflicto conyugal, estilo de apego, identidad.

RESUMO

Conflito é o desacordo e a oposição entre os indivíduos uns com os outros, a incompatibilidade das visões, objetivos e comportamentos que estão em oposição aos outros. O objetivo deste estudo foi investigar a relação entre estilos de apego e estilos de identidade com conflitos conjugais em casais referindo-se a centros de aconselhamento em Mashhad. A presente pesquisa é descritiva - correlação. Para este fim, 223 homens e mulheres dos centros de aconselhamento de Mashhad em 2016-2017 foram selecionados com o método de amostragem objetiva. As ferramentas de pesquisa foram o questionário de conflitos conjugais (MCQ), o questionário de estilos de apego de Collins e Reid (1990) e o questionário de estilos de identidade de Bonie e Adams (OMEIS-2) (1989). Os dados foram analisados por métodos estatísticos incluindo frequência, média, desvio padrão, coeficiente de correlação de Pearson e regressão multivariada. Os resultados mostraram que houve correlação significativa com os conflitos conjugais ($P = 0,0001$, $r = 0,77$), assim como os estilos de identidade mostraram correlação significativa com os conflitos conjugais ($p = 0,0001$, $r = 0,89$). Conflitos conjugais podem ser previstos com base em estilos de apego e estilos de identidade, e a atenção a esses fatores orientam especialistas em ciência comportamental na avaliação e tratamento de problemas conjugais.

Palavras-chave: conflito conyugal, estilo de apego, identidade.

Introduction

The family is the first social institution since the beginning of human life, which is founded on the marriage between men and women. The existence of healthy and constructive interactions between human beings and the existence of love, empathy with each other and acclaim the positive emotion to other people are the manifestation of human social life. In fact, family is the place of satisfaction of different physical, rational and emotional needs (Huber, Navarro, Womble and Mumme, 2010). Conflicts arise where there is disagreement, difference or incompatibility between spouses (Salari, 2012). Conflict is related with the growing risk of various types of mental disorders, including depression, especially in women, drug abuse, especially in males, sexual inequality in both genders and growing behavioral problems in children, especially behavioral disorders in boys (Salari, 2012). Based on the findings, it has been found that multiple variables create a sense of satisfaction among spouses, and it is said that the attachment style between spouses is one of those important and effective factors in marital life (Kerpelman et al., 2012). Attachment is the deep and lasting bond of emotion that a person has with another person (such as a mother with a child or a woman and a man) (Berk, 2001). Some researchers believe that marital problems are rooted in couples' attachment styles. Kobak, Ruckdeschel & Hazan (2013) suggested that marital disturbance is the sign of unsafe attachment. Spouses' dissatisfaction often comes from the fears that arise from their attachment style (fear of being released or lack of intimacy).

Emotion-Circuit Couple Therapists believe that couples problems are rooted in their attachment styles, which should be re-examined, processed and modified to create secure emotional links between couples. Hence, theory and research support the belief that insecure attachment is related to marital disturbance (Davila & Bradbury, 2001). Feelings of insecurity are associated with a small marital satisfaction, and it is possible that some spouses will be caught in a cycle of negative interactions that sustains chronic feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction (Davila, 2001). Also, the insecure attachment style of the spouses is at risk of remaining in an unpleasant marriage (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994). Armsden and Grenberg (1988) concluded from their various studies that the quality of attachment to parents and peers was related to mental health of adolescents, identity formation, coping with various crises and life satisfaction (pakdaman, 2001). The formation of identity and achievement to a consistent definition of self-identification is the most important aspect of human psychological and social development. Choosing the values, beliefs, and goals of life is one of the most important attributes of identity in adolescence and youth. In studying human personality, (identity) is a fundamental and internal aspect which with help of that individual is connected with his past, he feels the continuity and integrity in his life (Kroger, 2000). In other studies, there was a positive relationship between safe attachment and the pioneering identity, and in some studies, there was no relationship between these two structures (Nosrati, Mazaheri and Heidari, 2006).

The results of Avila, Cabral and Matos (2012) research on 236 undergraduate students showed a significant relationship between attachment styles and identity styles. The results of the other studies showed that the secure attachment between mother and child facilitates the process of identity development (Arseth, 2009). The results of Baker (2006) study showed that secure attachment had a significant

positive correlation with identity cohesion and had a significant negative relationship with identity disturbance. Since attachment styles play one of the most important roles in one's attitude towards oneself and relationships between individuals, it is also one of the most important factors affecting relationships and identity. Thus, in this research, the researcher tries to study the relationship between attachment styles, identity styles and marital conflicts and to answer the question whether marital conflicts can be predicted based on attachment styles and identity styles in couples referring to Mashhad counseling centers?

Method and materials

Participants and design of study

The population of this study was all couples referring to Mashhad counseling centers during the second 6-month of 2016 and their marriage duration was between 2 and 10 years. Based on estimation of Estate Welfare Organization of Iran, the number of these people were 1,500 people which according to the entry criteria, 400 people could enter the investigation. Participants were selected as volunteers among couples who were referred to all counseling centers of Mashhad and these sample size were determined 223 based on krejcie and Morgan table. After completing consent letter, the participants completed questionnaires.

Inclusion criteria: Age range from 17 to 30 years, lack of psychiatric disorders such as personality disorders, non-drug abuse, lack of mental retardation.

Tools

Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ): This questionnaire is a 42-item tool designed by Berati and Sanaei (1996) to measure marital conflicts. This questionnaire measures some marital conflicts that include reducing cooperation, sexual decline, increased emotional reactions, increased individual interactions with relatives, reduction of relationship with the spouse's family, increased attract support of children and separating financial affairs from one another (Ghannad Baghdadi, 2013). The options are expressed as Likert scale "always, often, sometimes, rarely, and ever. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale was 0.71 and for its seven subscales, it varied from 0.30 percent (reducing cooperation) to 0.73 percent (, increased emotional reactions).

Collins & Reid Attachment Styles Questionnaire: This scale consists of 18 item that is marketed on a Likert scale. By factor analysis, 3 sub-scales determined and each scale includes 6 items, 3 sub-scales are characterized: dependence (D), proximity (C), anxiety (A). The scores are 0 to 4, for grades 1 to 5, respectively. But in cases where reversal scores should be considered (marked with *). Cronbach's alpha is equal or greater than 0.80 (Pakdaman, 2001). Also, the results of the re-test are 0.95.

Bonie and Adams identity styles questionnaire (OMEIS-2): This questionnaire was developed by Benjon and Adams in 1989 based on the theory of Erickson and Marcia on identity, and was translated by Aqa Soltani (1999) at the University of Isfahan and its validity and reliability were calculated for Iranian students. The questionnaire consists of 64 questions and consists of 4 sub-scales. The subscales of this questionnaire are as follows: 1- Successful identities 2- Deferred 3- Early-4-Disturbed. Each subscale has 16 questions. The questionnaire is appropriate

for measuring the identity status of people aged between 14 and 56. Carlsson estimated internal consistency of 0.69 for turbulent identity subscale, 0.81 for early subscales, 0.66 for post-identity subscale, and 0.76 for a progressive identity subscale with a mean of 0.77 with selecting 162 students (Aqa Soltani , 1999)

Collecting data

After selecting the participants, the questionnaires (marital conflicts, Collins and Reid's attachment styles, Benign and Adams identity styles) were provided to clients through coordination and cooperation of the Estate Welfare Organization of Mashhad in Iran. We first outlined the purpose of the research and asked them to answer the questionnaire honestly. Finally, after data collection, data analysis was performed using SPSS software.

Results

The research findings are presented in two sections. The first part contains descriptive information about the variables and the second part contains the findings of the regression analysis. In Table 1, the indexes include mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum score, and in the next sections, correlation matrix for the research variables has been presented. In this study, 70% of subjects were 19 to 22 years old, 20% of subjects were 23-26 years old and 10% older than 26 years. The descriptive indexes of the research variables are presented in Table 1.

Table1. Descriptive indexes related to variables of attachment styles, identity and marital conflicts

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Standard Deviation	Mean	Number
Proximity	22	53	5.58	37.52	233
Anxiety	12	50	8	27.58	233
Dependence	11	50	9.07	26.85	233
Successful identity	27	54	5.45	39	233
Deferred identity	22	55	5.61	41	233
Early identity	16	63	8.53	29.34	233
Turbulent identity	20	62	10.01	26.30	233
Marital conflict	120	420	24.88	215.51	233

Table 2. Matrix of correlation between research variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1-Marital conflict	1							
2-Approximity	-.**0.20	1						
3-Anxiety	**0.36	0.056	1					
4-Dependence	*0.28	**0.006	**0.35	1				
5-Successful identity	**-.021	**0.19	**0.30	**0.47	1			

6- Deferred identity	**-.025	**0.18	0.40	0.053	**0.50	1		
7-Early identity	**0.22	**0.18	0.33	0.053	0.039	0.09	1	
8- Turbulent identity	**0.26	**0.62	0.16	*-0.15	0.02	0.02	0.08	1

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient between marital conflict and successful identity among individuals $R=0.21$. This correlation is significant due to its significant level ($SIG = 0.001$). This means that these two variables have a reversal and meaningful relationship. The correlation coefficient between marital conflict and attachment style of anxiety was $R = 0.36$ which this correlation is significant due to its significant level ($SIG = 0.001$). This means that these two variables have a positive and significant relationship with each other. Correlation coefficient between success rate of identity with proximity attachment style is $R = 0.19$. This correlation is significant due to its significant level ($SIG = 0.001$). This means that these two variables have a positive and significant relationship with each other.

To examine the role of attachment styles and identity styles in the prediction of marital conflicts, multiple regression tests were used in step-by-step method. The results of multiple regression implementation are shown in Tables 3 and 4 simultaneously.

Table 3. A summary of multiple regression model in step-by-step method based on correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination

Criterion Variable	R	R2	Adjusted R square	Standard deviation
Marital conflict	0.92	0.84	0.84	18.03

According to the data in the above table, the correlation between marital conflict variables with identity styles and attachment styles is 0.92, which predicts 84% of variance in marital conflict.

To determine if attachment styles and identity styles can be used to predict the criterion variable (marital conflict) from the predictor variables, or whether the proposed model is meaningful, the variance analysis is used which results are as follows:

Table 4. Analysis of variance

Model	SS	DF	MS	F	Significant level	R ²
Regression	390965.88	3	9206094	150.20	0.001	0.84
Residual	69827.13	182	842.98	-	-	-
Total	460793.59	185	-	-	-	-

To examine the role of attachment styles and identity styles (as predictor variables) on marital conflict (as a criterion variable), the variables entered into the regression analysis equation. For analysis of regression, an analysis of variance is first performed to prove that at least one of the variables has the ability to predict the criterion variable. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 4-10, the total regression model is significant at the level ($P = 0.001$).

Table 5. Standardized regression coefficients

Variable index	B	Error	Coefficient β	T	Significant level
Approximity	-0.33	0.39	-0.05	-6.35	0.02
Anxiety	3.37	1.04	0.67	4.21	0.0001
Dependence	0.48	1.05	0.11	3.45	0.001
Successful identity	-0.33	0.39	-0.05	-2.23	0.004
Deferred identity	3.37	1.04	0.67	-0.63	0.005
Early identity	0.48	1.05	0.23	7.65	0.0001
Turbulent identity	2.2	0.14	0.55	14.96	0.0001

Table 5 evaluates the multiple regression model of the standardized beta coefficient for evaluating the contribution of each variable in the model. The values of t and the significant level refer to the effect of each of the predictor variables. The large t value and the small P value indicate that the predictor variable affects the criterion variable. As it is seen, proximity with the value of $t = -6.35$ and the significance level ($p = 0.02$), anxiety with the amount $t = 4.21$ and significance level ($p = 0.0001$), dependence with $t = 3.45$ and significance level ($p = 0.001$), successful identity with $t = 2.23$ and significance level ($P = 0.004$), early identification with $t = 7.65$ and significant level ($p = 0.0001$), turbulent identity with $t = 14.96$ and significant level ($p = 0.0001$) which are meaningful in comparison with critical values, can be observed in the model in the regression analysis model, so the above hypothesis is confirmed.

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between marital conflict and attachment styles and identity styles. The results showed that there was a significant correlation between each of the attachment styles (safe, anxiety and affiliated) with marital conflict. The results of this study were consistent with findings (Kirpleman et al., 2012), Cook and Jones (2002), Rostam pour (2014), Asghar Pour Bariki (2013), Abdi and Khanjani (2006). It is believed that human behavior can only be understood through the observation of its adaptive environment, that is, the fundamental environment in which the behavior has evolved in that environment. Indeed, children, during the stages of attachment, establish a stable emotional bond with childcare which can use it as a safe base in the absence of their parents. This inner representation is an important aspect of personality that acts as a real inner model with a range of expectations about the availability of attachment characters and the possibility of providing support in stress situations. This mental image is a template or guide for intimate relationships in the future (Berk, 2001). Hazan and Shaver (1987) stated that the type of childhood attachment has an effect on the type of romantic relationship of the adult age group. According to the pattern of adult attachment style (Bartholomew, 1990), there are two levels of their image (positive or negative) and two levels of the image of others (positive or negative) with two levels of anxiety and avoidance in individuals, with an attachment level and creates three non-secure styles.

Establishing and maintaining a strong base of identity is very important and its absence is one of the first determinants of psychological harm and incompatibility.

Erickson believes that in adolescence, people acquire awareness of his identity, and is formed with greater unity of the past in relation to the group, occupation, gender, culture and religion in adolescence. The psychological conflict of this period relates to the formation of the sense of identity and the dispersion of its various components. The vital task of a teenager is to solve this conflict and create a single, coherent identity for himself. He must be able to link the past life and the identity of his earlier periods of life with his new state of affairs, and find the right answers for the most important questions (where do I live in my life? What do I want of my life?). Contrary to previous periods that child had these questions from older adults, he now asks himself (Kirpleman et al., 2012). This successful resolution of the identity crisis is one of the readiness of the individual to succeed in other crises.

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