The Role of the Attachment Styles and Coping Strategies in Predicting the Marital Adjustment in Female Teachers

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Abstract

This descriptive-correlational study aimed to investigate the relationship between the attachment styles and coping strategies and marital adjustment. The statistical population consisted of all female teachers of high school in Rasht City in educational year of 2013-2014, of whom, 130 were selected using a random cluster sampling method. For data collection, Simpson's Attachment Styles Questionnaire (1990), Endler and Parker’s Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations (1990) and Busby's Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1995) with high reliability and validity were used. Results showed a positive correlation between the secure attachment styles, problem-oriented coping strategies, and marital adjustment. In contrast, there was a negative and significant relationship between the variables of the avoidant and anxious attachment styles and avoidance-oriented coping strategies and marital adjustment. Multi-variable regression analysis showed that problem-oriented coping strategies, anxious and secure predict 0.41 of marital adjustment variance significantly in three steps. The results show the importance of variables of the attachment styles and coping strategies in relation to the marital adjustment.

Keywords: Marital Adjustment, Coping Strategies, Attachment Styles.
Introduction

Family is the first communicative canon and the core of the healthy relationships. The pleasant marital relationships lead to the children’s personality development and are of their most important needs (Monjezi et al, 2012). Marital adjustment and satisfaction is the important issue for the constant marital relationships. Marital adjustment means the marital agreement and compliance in a certain period (Locke and Wallace, 1959). Ellis (1980) defines the marital adjustment as the objective marital satisfaction with all marital aspects. Marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and marital happiness and so on imply the marital quality that are investigated in a wide range of the studies (Chen et al, 2013; Mikhila et al, 2013; Hosseini Dowlat Abadi et al, 2013; Shin et al, 2012). Other studies considered different factors influencing on the quality of marital relationships.

Heshmati et al. (2010) found that there is a negative and significant relationship between sensation seeking and the rate of the injury in the veterans and marital adjustment. Kalantarkousheh and Hassan (2010) showed that there is a positive significant correlation between the meaning of life and effective marital relationships. Aliakbari Dehkordi (2010) found that there is a significant positive correlation between sexual function and its components in women and their marital adjustment and their husbands. Moreover, the components of sexual function of women predict 25% of their marital adjustment variance and 34% of their marital adjustment variance of their headbands. Terimourpour et al. (2011) showed that there is a significant relationship between the sense of sexual guilt and the attachment styles of the married women. In fact, there is a significant and negative relationship between secure attachment style and sexual guilt. In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship between a sense of sexual guilt and marriage period. Age and avoidant attachment style and ambivalent attachment style as the predicting variables could predict 25% of the variance of the criterion variable or the sense of sexual guilt.

Bowlby (1988) believes that the attachment style is one of the most important factors influencing the interpersonal interaction that have been developed in the childhood and affected by the environment in the next years of their life. Attachment in developmental psychology is defined as the emotional constant bond between mother and the children that is formed since the birth. The parent-child relationships are classified in three groups of secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent. The theory of attachment implies the interactions between the mother and child that lead to their emotional attachment (Bowlby, 1969). There is a positive and significant correlation between the avoidant and anxious attachment styles with syndrome of depression and anxiety but there is a significant negative relationship between this syndrome and secure attachment style (Priceputu, 2012).

There is a relationship between coping strategies and marital adjustment and satisfaction (Esmaeili Kia, 2013; Badger, 1990). Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral
efforts to prevent, manage, and reduce the stress that people use in the stressful situations (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Endler and Parker (1990) divide people into three groups based on the coping strategies: problem-oriented coping strategies, emotion-oriented coping strategies and the avoidance coping strategies. People who use problem-oriented strategies seek for more information about the problem, the change the cognitive structure, and prioritize the problem solving. People who use emotion-oriented coping strategies try to reduce their unpleasant feelings and people who use emotion-oriented strategies are nervous, upset, crying, blame others and are pre-occupied. Moreover, people with avoidant coping strategies try to escape from the stressful situations.

Based on the results of previous studies, the variables of the attachment styles and effective coping strategies are related to the quality of life, mental health, and marital quality and improve the quality of people and families. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the attachment styles and coping strategies and marital adjustment. Therefore, coping strategies for the stress and attachment styles are considered as predictor variables. Finally, this study investigates the extent to which these variables can explain the variance of the marital adjustment variable.

Methodology
Statistical population, statistical sample, and sampling method

This is a descriptive-correlational study. The statistical population consisted of all female teachers of high school in Rasht City in educational year of 2013-2014, of whom, 130 (average age: 35-58) were selected using a random cluster sampling method based on Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970).

Research Tools
Adult Attachment Inventory (AAI): This 13-items questionnaire was developed by Simpson (1990) and is based on the five-point Likert scale with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five items in this questionnaire are used for evaluating the secure attachment style, four for the avoidant attachment style, and four for anxious – ambivalent attachment style. Simpson (1990) used the Rubin's love scale (1970; quoted in Simpson, 1990) and Bercheid and Fei's attachment scale (1977; quoted in Simpson, 1990). Attari et al. (2006) reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient and split-half coefficient of the questionnaire as 0.70 and 0.62, respectively (quoted in Aslani et al. 2012). The internal consistency of the test subscales using the Cronbach's alpha in the present study was 0.72, 0.73 and 0.70 for secure attachment style, the avoidant attachment style, and ambivalent-anxious attachment style, respectively.

Coping Inventory for Stress Full Situations (CISS-21): The short form of this 48-item questionnaire was developed by Endler and Parker (1990) as the 21-item questionnaire based on the five-point Likert scale from Never to Very Much for the adults and adolescents. Four items evaluate the problem-oriented coping strategies, four evaluate the emotion-oriented coping strategies, and seven evaluate the avoidant behaviors. Boysan (2012) reported the reliability of
the questionnaire using the retest method after 15 days for the Turkish students for the subscales of problem-oriented coping strategies, emotion-oriented coping strategies, and the avoidance-coping strategies as 0.79, 0.75, and 0.66, respectively. He also reported the internal consistency of the subscales using the Cronbach's alpha as 0.78, 0.78, and 0.70 for problem-oriented coping strategies emotion-oriented coping strategies and avoidance-coping strategies, respectively. Hojatinia et al. reported the internal consistency of t test as 0.76 in Iran. Internal consistency of the subscales using the Cronbach's alpha in the present study was as 0.71, 0.76, and 0.70 for problem-oriented coping strategies emotion-oriented coping strategies and avoidance-coping strategies, respectively.

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS): This questionnaire was developed by Spinner in 1976 for measuring the marital relationships and was reviewed by Busby et al. in 199. Currently, this 14-item questionnaire with six-point Likert scale measures three dimensions: marital consensus, marital satisfaction, and marital cohesion. The total score of this test is indicative of the marital adjustment. This questionnaire investigates the marital agreeableness in their decision-making, appropriate behavior, marital satisfaction, and sexual attraction. The minimum and maximum scores of this scale are 0 and 69, respectively. Busby et al. (1995) reported the internal consistency of this test using the Cronbach's alpha between 0.70 and 0.90. Crane et al. (2000) reported the internal consistency of this test using the Cronbach's alpha as 0.90 for couples. Alavian et al. (2006) reported the reliability of the test as 0.90. Busby et al. (1995) used the simultaneous implementation of Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) in order to determine the validity of the structure of this test and calculated the correlation as 0.68. Moreover, the correlation between the RDAS and the Spinner's main test (1976) was reported as 0.97. In the present study, internal consistency of this test using the Cronbach's alpha was calculated as 0.90.

Findings

The descriptive findings, the mean and standard deviation of variables as well as the internal consistency of all research instruments using Cronbach’s alpha among 130 female teachers are shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research variables</th>
<th>Sample total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>52.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>11.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency, alpha</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-oriented coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-oriented coping strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
<td>24.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal consistency, alpha</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoidance coping strategies  |  130  |  21.67  |  5.56  |  0.76  
Secure attachment  |  130  |  17.83  |  5.78  |  0.70  
Avoidant attachment  |  130  |  9.96  |  3.05  |  0.72  
Anxious attachment  |  130  |  5.60  |  3.55  |  0.73  

In order to analyze the relationship between the research variables, a Pearson correlation coefficient was used that is shown in Table 2. In order to perform the parametric tests (Pearson correlation and regression), normality of the data should be confirmed. For investigating the normality of the data, the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. The results showed that research variables were not significant at a significance level of $P \leq 0.05$. Therefore, the distribution of the scores of the research variables are normal and parametric tests can be implemented.

Table 2, correlation coefficients between the research variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Marital adjustment</th>
<th>Problem-oriented coping strategies</th>
<th>Emotion-oriented coping strategies</th>
<th>Avoidance coping strategies</th>
<th>Secure attachment</th>
<th>Avoidant attachment</th>
<th>Anxious attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital adjustment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-oriented coping strategies</td>
<td>** 0.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-oriented coping strategies</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance coping strategies</td>
<td>** -0.22</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure attachment</td>
<td>** 0.33</td>
<td>** 0.35</td>
<td>* 0.21</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant attachment</td>
<td>** -0.35</td>
<td>** -0.29</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>* 0.18</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious attachment</td>
<td>** -0.43</td>
<td>** -0.34</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>** 0.27</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>** 0.36</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$P < 0.01$ **  
$P < 0.05$ **
Pearson correlation matrix between the variables is presented in table 2. Results show that there is a significant and positive correlation between the variables of the secure attachment style with a correlation coefficient of 0.33, problem-oriented coping strategies with a correlation coefficient of 0.56 and marital adjustment variable at a significant level of P <0.01. In contrast, there is a significant and negative correlation between the variables of the avoidant and anxious attachment style with correlation coefficients of -0.35 and 0.43, respectively and avoidant coping strategies with the correlation coefficient of -0.22 at a significant level of P <0.01. Results also showed that there is a significant and positive correlation between the problem-oriented coping strategies and secure attachment style and a significant and negative correlation between anxious attachment style and avoidant attachment style at a significant level of P <0.01.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>variables</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>r²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Problem-oriented coping</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>59.73</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anxious attachment</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>39.47</td>
<td>-0.88</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-3.66</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Secure attachment</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>29.32</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to determine the contribution of variables of coping strategies and attachment styles in predicting the marital adjustment, stepwise regression was used. As shown in table 3, there is a high significant correlation between the problem-oriented coping strategies above and marital adjustment and its T coefficient is nearly 7.72 that is higher and more significant than other coefficient. In the second step, anxious attachment style was inserted into the equation that its T coefficient is -3.66 that is statistically significant. In the third step, the secure attachment style was inserted into the equation with a T coefficient of 2.43 that is statistically significant. Finally, in general, these variables explained 0.41 of the variance of marital adjustment.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the attachment styles and coping strategies and marital adjustment. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between the marital adjustment and problem-oriented coping strategies. It means that as the problem-oriented strategies are more used, the marital adjustment is more improved and vice versa. Results also showed that there is a significant negative correlation between the avoidance coping strategies and marital adjustment. There was no significant relationship between emotion-oriented coping strategies and marital adjustment in the present study. The results of the studies conducted by Esmaili Kia et al. (2013), Mahmoudi (2011) and Badger (1990) are consistent with the results of this study.

Therefore, the results of this study may be explained in the theoretical framework by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). When couples encounter the stressful situations, they use dynamic problem-
oriented coping strategies and provide their spouses and themselves with inner satisfaction, and intellectual cohesion. People try to concentrate on these kinds of situations and recognize the origins of the stresses, then control or manage them. In this way, they both identify the source of control and improve the quality of their marital life. Therefore, they achieve the marital satisfaction. Furthermore, proper coping strategies in stressful or problematic situations and avoiding the problematic or emotional behaviors lead to the marital adjustment and satisfaction. In this way, couples may solve their problems and improve their quality of life.

Results also showed a positive and significant relationship between the marital adjustment and secure attachment. It means that with as the level of secure attachment style is increased the marital adjustment is increased. In contrast, there is a negative and significant correlation between the avoidant and anxious attachment styles and marital adjustment. The results of the present study are consistent with those of Sohrabi et al (2013), Muraru and Turluc (2012), Egeci and Gencoz (2011), Ozmen and the Ethic (2010), Shaker et al. (2010), Besharat (2012) and Momenzadeh et al. (2015). Also, the positive and significant relationship between marital satisfaction and secure attachment style and significant negative correlation between the marital adjustment and avoidant attachment styles have been confirmed in a wide range of the studies (Lau and Peterson, 2011; Gouin et al., 2009). Sohrabi et al (2013) showed the positive significant correlation between marital forgiveness and secure attachment styles and the marital adjustment. In addition, the attachment styles and marital forgiveness significantly explain nearly 46% of marital adjustment variance.

Other results of this study showed that mental health and attachment styles significantly explain 135 of marital adjustment variance. Another study showed that secure attachment style and religious attitude predict the successful marital relationships. In other words, success and failure in marital relationships may be predicted using the variables of attachment styles and religious attitudes. Couples with higher secure attachment styles and religious attitudes and lower avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles are successful (Ghafouri et al. 2009). Feizabade and Khosravi (2009) conducted a comparative study on divorce-seeking women and non-divorce-seeking women to investigate the variables of attachment styles and their image of God. The results showed a significant relationship between the attachment styles and image of God between the divorce-seeking women and non-divorce-seeking women. This means that divorce-seeking women use more insecure (anxious and avoidant) attachment styles, and have more negative image of God.

Bowlby' view (1969) can be used for explaining the positive relationship between the secure attachment style and marital satisfaction. He believes that many forms of neuroticism, personality disorders, and interpersonal problems in adulthood are the result of the depriving children of maternal care or the instable relationship between the children and attachment concept. In fact, when people enjoy the secure attachment style they can trust their spouses, experience positive emotions, have higher self-esteem and less conflicts and seek for effective
solutions in the problematic or stressful situations. The results of this study can be used for the couples with marital problems in family counseling sessions in order to promote family health.
References


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