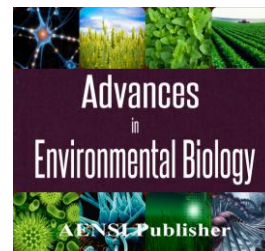




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# Investigating the Relation of Attachment Styles with Intimacy and Satisfaction of the Couples

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### ABSTRACT

Family is a natural social system, where in all of its developmental stages couples have been the main subsystem and hence, various factors like attachment styles have contributed to their marital intimacy and satisfaction. Thus, the paper aims to investigate the relation between attachment styles with intimacy and marital satisfaction of the staff at hospital 525 in the city of Khorramabad in 2013-2014. The sample size was estimated at 65 people by using the Cochran formula and the sampling method was selected to be simple random. To collect data, the Enrich marital satisfaction, Hazan and Shaver attachment styles and Thompson and Walker intimacy questionnaires were applied. In order to analyze the data, descriptive statistics indices (average and standard deviation) and the Pearson correlation method were used. Findings revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between safe and ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff, while there was a significant and negative relationship between the avoidant attachment styles and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff. Also, there was a positive and significant relationship between safe attachment styles and intimacy of the male and female staff, but there was a negative and significant relationship between the avoidant attachment styles and intimacy of the male and female staff. The findings of the research support the fact that the primary relationship of people in the family setting will give rise to the formation of special attachment styles and these primary experiences have direct impacts on interpersonal relations of the couples in adulthood.

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## INTRODUCTION

Choosing mates and marital bond are both signs of personal prosperity and progress. Spouse is undoubtedly one of the most important decisions made in life [1]. In the past, spouses were selected by the parents and the young people had limited familiarity with each other. They entered marital relations with special definitions of their roles and expectations offered by parents and the culture. During the past decades, with changes in the family structure from extended to nuclear families, socioeconomic developments, growing education levels, women's occupation and tendency to independence in decision making for choosing a partner to life subjected the fundamental reasons of traditional marriage to changes [2]. Today, young people are inclined to choose their own life partners freely and independently and to have intimate relations in marital life. Researchers, also consider an absence of intimacy and marital satisfaction as one of the main turbulence indices in the marital life. The ability to express intimacy is once created when the person has reached an emotional independence and mental maturity in him so to transfer it to his own relations [3].

The World Health Organization has introduced family as a primary social agent in increasing health and rehabilitations. Family has been defined as a social institution that derives from the marital bond of the couples. If family encompasses a constructive and healthy environment and some warm and interpersonal intimacy relations, it will prepare the situation for headway and progress among the members as a whole. Constructive relations in the family depend on an effective establishment of communication and adoption of a positive perspective towards each other. Couples constitute the cornerstone of the family, where health and happiness of them serve as the main factors for the sustainability of the families. Marital satisfaction is concerned with happiness and pleasure of the relations among the couples. Marital satisfaction refers to having a favorable feeling of life and marriage. Marital satisfaction is defined as the extent to which the couples perceive their

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partners will meet their needs and tendencies. It appears that this is directly and indirectly related with the unit of family and a better quality of life, while it has been ascertained that marital dissatisfaction will lead to stress, anxiety and even collapse of the family.

In accordance with the modifying functions of the family and preventing from its collapse, it seems necessary to recognize the factors related with marital satisfaction which is the consolidating basis for the family life. Thus, by paying attention to factors affecting the marital satisfaction, we can expect as the marital satisfaction level increases, most mental, emotional and social problems will decrease. Also, with the promotion of marital satisfaction level and of life satisfaction, people in the society will address more with social and cultural and economic services and reach transcendence and meantime families too will take benefit from this [4]. One of the factors affecting intimacy and marital satisfaction is the variable of attachment styles. The term attachment refers to an emotional linkage between the infant and mother. It is stable throughout time and contributes a main role to the mental health of the people [5]. Attachment is a relatively stable emotional-affection bond formed between mother and infant and those whom the infant interacts and those who take care of him [6]. Attachments styles are stable throughout time and don't change much, which is to say there is a consistency between peoples' attachment in childhood and adulthood [7-8-9].

Experiences the child has with his caretaker are internalized in the future of his relations with others and these internalized patterns are effective in the formation of the concept of self and others for the child and the child will generalize these concepts to relations with others [10]. The failure of mother or the near caretaker of the child to create warm, intimate and responsive relations will cause to appear stable behavioral problems in the first years of life in the child [11].

Experience of an arm, and stable relation with mother or a permanent substitution for mother is a main and effective factor for the mental health of the child; should this relation formation fails, and the child is deprived of the motherly care and instability of the child's relations with attachment visage may cause many neurosis problems and personality disorders to appear [5]. In a research with the aim of determining the relation of attachment styles and mental health with marital adjustment in couples, results indicated that people with safe, concerned and dismissing attachment styles, there is a positive and significant relation between the mental health and marital satisfaction, while in people with fear attachment styles, there is a negative and significant relation between mental health and marital satisfaction. In a research Eidi and Khanjani (2010) investigated the impact of attachment styles on the couples' marital satisfaction which indicated there was a difference between different attachment styles in terms of marital satisfaction levels. Safe people, whether man or woman have higher marital satisfaction compared to other styles and when both man and woman have safe attachment styles, their marital satisfaction is higher than that of couples that one or both of them have unsafe attachment styles (avoidant or ambivalent). Results also found that when the couples' attachment styles are homogenous, i.e. both are safe, avoidant or ambivalent, their marital satisfaction is higher than that of couples with heterogeneous attachment styles. In terms of attachment styles, the lowest marital satisfaction belongs to couples where one of them had avoidant attachment style and the other had ambivalent attachment styles [12]. Also, of other factors affecting the marital satisfaction is intimacy. Intimacy is defined as the ability to communicate with others with maintaining individuality. A person who experiences higher intimacy level is able to expose himself quite favorably to the public and to express his needs effectively with his/her partner.

Marital satisfaction could be higher among couples with higher intimacy or in other words, the couples with high intimacy may be more capable to deal with problems and changes and as a result, they will experience higher marital satisfaction [12]. Various researches have been done in the area of attachment styles and marital satisfaction and have mostly shown that there are differences between attachment styles in terms of marital satisfaction level. Also, research in the area of relationship of attachment styles and intimacy of the couples indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between attachment styles and intimacy. However, researches in this area are limited. On this basis, the current research addresses the relationship between attachment styles and intimacy and the level of marital satisfaction.

#### *Methodology:*

The paper aims to investigate the relation between attachment styles and intimacy and marital satisfaction of the staff at hospital 525 in the city of Khorramabad in 2013-2014. The statistical population included all the staff at the hospital 525 of the Khorramabad in 2013-2014, where the total number of them was 87. The sampling method was selected to be simple random. To collect data, the Enrich marital satisfaction, Hazan and Shaver attachment styles and Thompson and Walker intimacy questionnaires were applied. In this paper, given the unavailability of the variance of the population, researchers proceeded to implement the introductory questionnaire on 30 people of the staff randomly and the variance of the sample was estimated. Then, by using the Cochran formula, the sample size was determined. The sample size was estimated at 65 people.

$$n = \frac{\frac{t^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left( \frac{t^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right)}$$

$$68 = n = \frac{\frac{2^2 (0/5)(0/5)}{0/05^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{2^2 (0/5)(0/5)}{0/05^2} - 1 \right)}$$

*Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire:*

The Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire was applied to measure the marital satisfaction of the couples. This questionnaire consists of 115 questions and 12 subscales. Answers to questions contain a 5 choice form (totally agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and totally disagree). This questionnaire was designed by Olson and his colleagues in 1989 and is applied for assessing the potential problematic situations and identifying strong points of the marital relations. This questionnaire is also used for identifying the couples who need consultation and enhancement of relations. In Iran the short form with 47 questions was standardized. Olson *et al* (1983) reported the reliability of this questionnaire at 0/95 by using the Cronbach's alpha. In the present research the overall reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0/93 through the Cronbach's alpha and the correlational coefficient of the questionnaire with the marital satisfaction scale is from 0/32 to 0/42 and with family satisfaction scales it is from 0/41 to 60, indicating the validity of the Enrich questionnaire's construct (14). The reliability coefficient of the present research was obtained at 0/8 by the Cronbach's alpha.

*Hazan and Shaver attachment style questionnaire (1987):*

The adulthood attachment scale has been designed by Hazan and Shaver by using the test items and has been standardized about the students of the University of Tehran. It is a 15 question test that measures three safe, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles in a 5-degree Likert scale [15]. The minimum and maximum scores of the subjects in the test subscales will be 5 and 25 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the questions of the safe, avoidant and ambivalent scales about a student sample of 1480 people for the total of the subjects were estimated 0/85, 0/84 and 0/85, indicating a good internal consistency of the adulthood attachment scale. The correlation coefficients among the scores of a sample of 300 people of the subjects were estimated for measuring the retest reliability in two turns with an interval of four weeks. These coefficients about safe, avoidant and ambivalent attachments styles for the total of subjects were 0/87, 0/8 and 0/84. The content validity of the adulthood attachment scale was investigated by measuring the correlation coefficients among the scores of 15 of psychological experts. The Kendall's agreement coefficients for the safe, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles were estimated at 0/80, 0/61 and 0/57 respectively. The results of factor analysis, by determining three factors of safe attachment, avoidant attachment style and ambivalent attachment style approved the construct validity of the adulthood attachment scale [16].

Walker and Thompson' intimacy questionnaire: This questionnaire has 17 questions formulated for measuring affection and intimacy by Walker and Thompson. This scale is part of a larger tool that encompasses several aspects of intimacy, but it can definitely be applied for evaluating intimacy. Walker and Thompson reported the reliability of this test by using the Cronbach's alpha as 0/91-0/97. Also, to investigate the validity of the test, the content method and face validity were applied. Thus, several professors of the psychology and consultation major investigated the mentioned questionnaire and expressed their own opinions. [4]. For analyzing data, in this research the descriptive statistics (average and standard deviation) and inferential methods like Pearson correlation coefficient (in order to investigate the relation between attachment styles and intimacy with marital satisfaction) were used. In this study, the significance level of the findings was considered to be less than 0/05.

*Findings:*

The average and standard deviation of all the subjects in total of the average scores were (11/77±2/77) for the attachment styles, (3/72±1/59) for safe subcomponents, (3/9±1/38) for avoidant and (4/10±4/10) for avoidant styles. Also, the average and standard deviation of the overall intimacy scale was (54/38±7/37) and the overall scale of marital satisfaction was (146/9±14/40). To determine the marital satisfaction level of the staff, in this research this variable was ranked into three high, middle and low groups. According to the findings obtained, 17 people approximately %25 had high marital satisfaction level, 36 people or %52/9 with average marital satisfaction and 15 people or %22/1 had low marital satisfaction. In this research, to determine the intimacy level of the staff, this variable was ranked into three high, middle and low groups. According to the findings obtained,

17 people approximately %25 had high intimacy, 41 people or %41 were having an average intimacy while 10 people or %14/7 had low intimacy levels.

**Table 1:** Correlation coefficient between safe attachment styles and marital satisfaction

Number of Sample	Sig	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Statistical index Variable	Variable
68	0/001	0/483	Marital satisfaction	Safe attachment style
68	0/001	-0/356	Marital satisfaction	Avoidant attachment style
68	0/001	0/246	Marital satisfaction	Ambivalent attachment style

Table (1) shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between safe attachment style and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is 0/483, indicating higher correlation between the two variables. In accordance with the significance level obtained, this hypothesis is confirmed at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more safe attachment styles of the staff increase, the more their marital satisfaction will increase. Also, the findings of table 1, indicates that there is a negative and significant relationship between avoidant attachment styles and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is -0/356, demonstrating averaged correlation between the two variables. Given the significance level acquired, this hypothesis is supported at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more the avoidant attachment styles of the staff increase, the more their marital satisfaction will decrease. Also, the findings of table 1, indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is 0/246, demonstrating weak correlation between the two variables. Given the significance level acquired, this hypothesis is supported at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more the ambivalent attachment styles of the staff increase, the less their marital satisfaction will be.

**Table 2:** Correlation coefficient between safe attachment and intimacy

Number of Sample	Sig.(p)	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	Statistical index Variable	Variable
68	0/001	0/483	Intimacy	Safe attachment style
68	0/001	-0/356	Intimacy	Avoidant attachment style
68	0/001	-0/546	Intimacy	Ambivalent attachment style

Table (2) shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between safe attachment style and intimacy of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is 0/483, indicating higher correlation between the two variables. In accordance with the significance level obtained, this hypothesis is confirmed at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more safe attachment styles of the staff increase, the more their intimacy will increase. Also, the findings of table (2), indicates that there is a negative and significant relationship between avoidant attachment styles and intimacy of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is -0/356, demonstrating averaged correlation between the two variables. Given the significance level acquired, this hypothesis is supported at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more the avoidant attachment styles of the staff increase, the less their intimacy will be. Also, the findings of table 2, indicates that there is a negative and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction of the male and female staff. The correlation coefficient obtained between the two variables is -0/546, demonstrating weak correlation between the two variables. Given the significance level acquired, this hypothesis is supported at the alpha level of 0/05. In other words, the more the ambivalent attachment styles of the staff increase, the less their intimacy will be.

#### Conclusion:

The paper aims to investigate the relation between attachment styles and intimacy and marital satisfaction of the staff at hospital 525 in the city of Khorramabad in 2013-2014. The sample size was estimated at 65 people. Findings of the research indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between safe attachment styles and ambivalent attachment styles with the marital satisfaction. Thus, it can be said that the more safe attachment styles and ambivalent styles of the staff increase, their marital satisfaction will increase. Thus, these findings of this research are in line with those of Eidi and Khanjani (2010), Pines (2005), Fogle (1997) and Bolby (1969). Also, findings revealed there is a negative and significant relationship between avoidant attachment and the variable of marital satisfaction, which is to say, the more the avoidant attachment style of the staff increase, the less their marital satisfaction will become. Hence, the findings are in concert with those of Eidi and Khanjani (2010). Also, results indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between

safe attachment styles and intimacy of the spouses, hence the more safe attachment style of the staff will increase, the more their intimacy increases too. Also, findings revealed that there is a negative and significant relationship between avoidant attachment styles and ambivalent attachment with intimacy of the spouse. Hence, the more avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles increase, the less their intimacy will be and vice versa. Therefore, it can be concluded that self-confidence and confidence in others and realistic expectations of the self and others thought as characteristics of safe attachment styles will lead to enhanced compatibility of people [17]. People qualified with unsafe and ambivalent attachment styles, due to cannot find a supportive social network in a new environment and for this it is possible for them to be affected with dissatisfaction and lack of intimacy. It should be said that emotional relations prevailing in families and attachment styles have a principal role in the socialization and extroversion process of people. Of course, to explain that we can refer to the psychoanalysis theory of Freud this is based on initial experiences of childhood in emotional relations of parents with the child. This theory states some of the personality characteristics of adults are products of unsettled and unconscious conflicts of the childhood era that arise as a result of relations with parents. For instance, dependence is one of the consolidated oral stage properties, where these people feel insecure in their interpersonal relations and for this; they have turbulent and differing relations which is so disappointing. They often for this reason feel ineffectual and become dissatisfied [18]. Of the limitations of this study, we can refer to quantitative method of the research and limitations pertaining to the method and lack of research resources in the area of research (simultaneous investigation of attachment styles with intimacy and marital satisfaction). A multitude of questionnaires and items will sometimes result in disillusionment and tiredness of the respondents and their lack of inclination for coordination in the area of the research. It is recommended that qualitative methods compounded with deep understanding of attachment styles relations with intimacy and marital satisfaction as well as effective factors be studied in future studies. The current paper was done on hospital 525 staff of Khorramshahr. Thus, the generalization of these findings should be performed with care and there is a need for such researches. Hence, it is recommended more samples be used in researches so that generalization of the findings is followed with fewer errors.

#### *Takeaway:*

Given the results of the research, it appears the officials can, by awareness of the couples' attachment styles, predict their intimacy and marital satisfaction or to assist them in increasing intimacy and marital satisfaction, because most couples having problems in life is due to their attachment styles in life.

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