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## **Designing a model of attachment styles in the reconciliation of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills in married students of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Background and Aim:** One of the successful factors in married life is proper communication skills between couples. Various researches have shown that communication problems are one of the most common problems expressed by couples. The present research was carried out in order to provide a model of attachment styles in the reconciliation of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills in students of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences. **Methods:** The current research method was correlation and structural equation modeling. The statistical population of this study included 410 married female students of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences in 2019-20, who were selected by convenience sampling. The data were collected using the Marital Compatibility Questionnaire (Spanier, 1976), Hazan and Shaver (1985) Adult Attachment Styles Questionnaire and Christensen and Salawi (1984) Communication Skills Questionnaire. Data analysis was done by path analysis using AMOS and SPSS version 20 software. **Results:** The results showed that secure attachment ( $\beta=0.14$ ;  $P<0.001$ ) had a direct effect on communication skills. Also, the indirect path of secure attachment with emotional compromise with the mediation of communication skills was significant ( $P<0.001$ ). **Conclusion:** Therefore, according to the significant role of the components of secure attachment style and communication skills, therapists can examine the level of responsibility, happiness, increase resilience against psychological pressure in the discussion of examining and treating marital adjustment problems and teach communication skills in couples.



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## Introduction

In the relationship between people, one of the important components is adjustment, defined as the desire to establish a relationship between any living being with the existing situation or environment. Adaptation is also the tendency to react constructively instead of reacting harmfully to a potentially destructive action, usually applied to social and psychological adaptation, which means a kind of adaptive behavior that allows an individual to face the demands of the environment (Baramb & Boiskar, 2013). In particular, marital adjustment is one of the areas of adjustment in human life. Marital stability and adjustment are success criteria for couples' romantic interaction (Menadal, 2014). Marital compromise refers to a situation in which couples perceive the dominant feeling in their marital relationship is happiness and mutual satisfaction (Wishman & Baucom, 2012). Also, marital reconciliation includes the process of adapting to external changes and establishing a balance between the expectations and needs of the other party (Fasilogo, 2001). Therefore, it can be said that marital reconciliation is a period of perfection and transformation in which the growth and progress of the couple are accepted and understood. If this growth is not understood and experienced, the end of the romantic relationship will be inevitable (Shojaei, Jazayeri, and Ahmadi, 2019).

Many factors affect married life and cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction in life. Factors such as the quality of premarital communication, the type of personality of the couple, the types of intelligence, the communication methods of the couple, and environmental factors such as family, behavioral problems, and mental and psychological background are known factors that can determine the degree of adjustment in romantic relationships. Those who have special skills have a healthy life. Life skills are a person's adaptive behavior in such a way that he can cope with the necessities of daily life. (Botvin, 2006) Another factor that can be related to romantic compromise is attachment style. Since attachment is formed in people's growth and development, people's attachment style will be one of the most important effective factors in interpersonal interactions. Inevitably, attachment style will be one of the personal factors affecting marital commitment and its quality. In fact, attachment theory describes how individual

characteristics influence relationship performance and also explains how specific relational attachment processes stimulate performance. This theory also deals with interpersonal processes and behavior in communication. Attachment theory helps us understand the interpersonal responses of people with different attachment styles (Johnson, 2010). By attachment theory, people with different attachment styles act differently in marital relationships. The attachment structure, which was initially used to describe the characteristics of emotional relationships between a child and his caregiver, refers to the process of forming and breaking emotional ties. However, later it expanded to adults' close (intimate) relationships (Seyedi, Falah Tafti, Sadeghi, and Rezaei, 2014). Adults' attachment style is divided into three categories: secure, anxious and avoidant (Hazen & Shaver, 1987). Veena (1984) believed that attachment is the starting point of the couple's communication system and is considered the basis of other patterns and processes such as communication and love. Vizon et al. (2015) state that attachment style is one of the effective variables in choosing a spouse and creates a regulatory role in romantic relationships and perhaps marital problems (Hadi et al., 2016). Compromise in marital relationships is how married people, individually or together, adapt to marriage. This is one of the most important factors of stability and durability of family life. Locke and Thomas state that a compatible marriage is one in which husband and wife agree on the main issues of marriage, such as financial issues and kinship issues, etc. (Ahn, 2006). In an adjusted marriage, they can be compatible with each other in interests, goals, and values; they are consistent in showing emotions and trusting each other, and they rarely complain about their marriage (Kitamura et al., 2014). Research has been done in this field that points to the importance of this issue. Gallo (2001) found that anxious attachment style is a stronger predictor of marital adjustment. Therefore, the secure attachment style will lead to more compromise in the relationship by creating a logical and quality relationship in couples. On the other hand, insecure attachment styles will cause slippage and improper functioning of the couple's relationship in the face of stressful situations by creating a disturbing relationship. People with a

secure attachment style interpret problems positively and find meaning quickly. This feature can greatly strengthen the family's ability to manage stress (Hosseini & Niknam, 2020).

Studies have been conducted in the field of the application of communication skills. In his research, Durana (2007) investigated the effect of teaching the practical application of intimate communication skills on reconciliation and couples' marital satisfaction and showed that this program increased marital satisfaction. Agrawal (2004) also conducted a study investigating the effect of interpersonal communication skills on inconsistencies in romantic relationships and concluded that the experimental group significantly improved regarding marital adjustment. On the other hand, studies have discovered the effect of marital adjustment on various functional family components. However, despite this, research has yet to study the role of attachment styles in reconciling romantic relationships with the mediation of communication skills. Therefore, the present study seeks to determine the design of a model for these variables. Therefore, the current research was carried out to provide a model of attachment styles in the compromise of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills in Hamedan University of Medical Sciences students.

### Method

The method of the current research was correlation and structural equation modeling. The statistical population of this research included all married female students of Hamadan University of Medical Sciences in 2019-2020. The sampling method was such that 410 people from among the faculties of pharmacy, nursing, and midwifery, health, dentistry, medicine and rehabilitation participated in this research as volunteers. By gaining the participants' trust that their details would remain confidential, they answered the research questions individually. The selection of people was based on the entry criteria of age between 18 and 40 years, minimum reading and writing literacy, being married and consenting to participate in the study, as well as the exclusion criteria of having a history of mental illness, and using psychological treatments in the last 6 months and during the study. The sampling method was available purposive method. The sample size was estimated based on the opinion of Klein (2016) and a minimum sample size of 400 people. Taking into account the drop in participants, 420

questionnaires were distributed, ten questionnaires were removed due to being distorted, and finally, the data of 410 samples were analyzed statistically ( $n = 410$ ).

### Tools

**1. Hazan and Shaver adult attachment style questionnaire (1985):** This attachment scale, which was standardized for Tehran University students, is a 15-question test and includes three attachment styles: secure, avoidant, and ambivalent on a 5-point Likert scale (very little - 1, low-2, medium-3, high-4, very high-5). In the research of Nejadian Tannah et al. (2017), Cronbach's alpha coefficient (reliability) of the safe, avoidant and biased subscale questions for a student sample (1480 people, including 860 girls and 620 boys) for all subjects was 0.86, 0.84, 0.86 respectively. 0, 0.85 (for female students 0.86, 0.83, 0.84, and male students 0.84, 0.85, and 0.86) have been calculated, which is a sign of good internal consistency of the adult attachment scale. Kendall's coefficients of agreement (validity) were calculated for secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment styles, respectively 0.80, 0.61, and 0.75.

**2. Spiner's marital adjustment questionnaire (1976):** Spiner's marital adjustment questionnaire includes a self-assessment questionnaire that consists of 32 questions and obtains people's subjective impressions about marital adjustment. The scores of this questionnaire vary from 0 to 151, where scores equal to or more than 100 mean compatibility of people and scores less than 100 mean problems in marital relations and lack of adjustment and family understanding. This questionnaire has 4 components of couple satisfaction, 10 items of solidarity, 5 items, 13 items of agreement, and 4 items of affection. People whose score is 101 or less are considered to have marital problems and incompatibility. This scale was translated, implemented and standardized in Iran in 1374 by Amozgar and Hossein Nejad. Studies related to the reliability and validity of this scale have always been positive. Spiner reported an internal consistency coefficient of 0.96 and a high-reliability criterion for this scale. The total score of this scale has significant internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 (Kalal Ghoochan Atiq et al., 2016).

**3. Communication Patterns Questionnaire of Christensen and Sullaway (1984):** This questionnaire was designed by Christensen and Sullaway (1984) at the University of California to examine couples' mutual communication

skills. This questionnaire has 35 questions and is graded on a nine-point scale from not at all possible (1) to very possible (9). The studies that used the couple's communication patterns questionnaire have shown acceptable validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha obtained in the past studies on communication patterns questionnaire is reported from 0.44 to 0.85, which results are satisfactory (cited by Karimi, Ahmadi, and Zaharakar; 2020). Ibadat Pour (1379) has estimated Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.70 and in order to validate the questionnaire, he has obtained a correlation between these two questionnaires and the marital satisfaction questionnaire. The results show that the couple's communication patterns questionnaire is correlated with marital satisfaction.

### Results

The mean  $\pm$  standard deviation of the age of the participants in this research was  $8.4 \pm 34.3$ . In order to check the normality of the research data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. According to the findings, the mean and standard deviation for communication skills were calculated as  $(46.40 \pm 13.44)$ , and for marital adjustment  $(87.57 \pm 23.79)$ . Also, among attachment styles, anxious attachment, with a mean and standard deviation of  $(66.27 \pm 11.58)$ , has the highest mean, and secure attachment, with a mean and standard deviation of  $(55.76 \pm 15.19)$ , has the lowest mean.

Regarding the indirect relationship between the components of emotional intelligence and attachment style with the compromise of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills, the results of the estimation of the research model showed that the indirect path of secure attachment with a compromise with the mediation of communication skills is positive and significant at the 99% confidence level.

The results showed that the F ratio obtained in the factor of the results of the research model estimation showed that the secure attachment style has a positive role with 99% confidence in the communication skills of female students. The model fitting program was used to check the goodness of fit of the model. The reason for using Brazandan model program is that this program provides indicators that can be used to measure the model's overall fit with the data. In fact, the overall fit of the model determines how well the model can explain the data. According to

Thompson's proposal, the fit indices, including chi-square test (CMIN), comparative fit index (CFI), and smoothed fit index (NFI) are the most important of these indices in examining model fit (Gamest, Meyers & Guarino, 2006).

The chi-square on the degree of freedom in the assumed model of mediating the communication skills of female students in the relationship between attachment styles and marital adjustment is equal to 5.128, which is higher than 3 and is not acceptable (Klein, 2011). Although the IFI and CFI statistics show that the model has a good fit, based on the chi-square statistic on the degree of freedom, corrections were applied to the model. The chi-square on the degree of freedom in the modified model equals 2.981. Also, NFI and CFI should be above 0.8. These numbers show that the modified model has a good fit.

### Conclusion

The present research was conducted to provide a model of attachment styles in the reconciliation of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills in students of Hamedan University of Medical Sciences. The results showed that the indirect path of secure attachment with the compromise of emotional relationships with the mediation of communication skills is positive and significant. The summary of the results of this research is as follows: First of all, better relationship quality and higher marital satisfaction are reported by spouses with secure attachment. Next, it is reported by couples, one of which has a secure attachment. Many empirical studies show that attachment plays an important role in adult relationships, including their "emotional" and "marital" relationships. Therefore, couples' attachment styles can be effective in determining the quality of emotional bonds and marital relationships. The more people have a more secure attachment style, the more their marital adjustment increases. The more they have an insecure attachment style, the more marital adjustment decreases, and family conflicts and conflicts increase (Mikulincer & Philip, 2005). In Tangney, Baumeister, and Boone's research, three sets of variables related to attachment style, interpersonal relationships, and capacity for interpersonal sympathy were studied. The results showed that high scores in interpersonal skills, including self-control, are associated with higher quality in relationships, more sympathy, willingness to forgive others, and a secure attachment style. Therefore, we will see more compromise in marital relations. Also, the families of spouses with a secure attachment style and compatible couples have higher

stubbornness compared to insecure styles and incompatible couples. Families in which spouses have a secure attachment style and the necessary agreement and adjustment on important issues and vital life issues have a higher ability to manage and tolerate tensions and have a better relationship (Seyedi et al., 2014).

Attari, Hosseinpoor, and Rahnavard (2009) have conducted a study on the effectiveness of communication skills training in couples' communication programs in reducing marital boredom in couples. The results indicate that applying communication skills in the way of the couples' communication program effectively reduces marital burnout, and this effect has been stable in the follow-up session. Marchand and Hook (2000) also used a relationship enrichment and prevention program to help couples acquire skills and attitudes related to marital success. Their results showed that the trained couples showed lower levels of negative communication and physical aggression and higher levels of marital compromise and positive communication compared to the couples of the comparison group. Bilateral negotiation about conflict resolution is the single most important factor that brings marital satisfaction for men and women. This refers to the importance of interpersonal communication skills in marital reconciliation (Feeny, 1994).

The estimation of the research model showed that the standard coefficients of the role of communication skills in marital adjustment are positive and significant. These findings are partially consistent with the research results of Hosseini and Niknam (2020), Attari, Hosseinpoor, and Rahnavard (2009), Shirali Nia (2007), and Cleary Bradley & et al. (2011). In the explanation of these findings, it can be said that the application of communication skills in the relationship of couples will be effective in reducing marital boredom in such a way that when people have interpersonal conflicts if they can control these tensions, and can significantly facilitate interpersonal emotional relationships, and achieve marital adjustment. Skills such as: mutual understanding, reflection of content and feeling, being a listener, using the pronoun "I", expressing feelings instead of reasoning and expressing a respectful request in the present tense (Ismaili et al., 2014).

The limitations of this research were: the available sampling method, the sample may not be a complete representation of the statistical population, and it is better to generalize the results only to the population from which the sample was selected; the presence of intervening variables such as the cultural load of some sentences and words in the questionnaires, as well as the refusal of people to answer all the questions in the questionnaire, which the

researcher spent a lot of time in order to collect the questionnaires. This research should be done in other groups and by random sampling methods. The findings of this research can be used in premarital and family counseling. Also, since attachment styles and emotional intelligence play an important role in forming people's expectations about the emotional reconciliation of couples, it has a close relationship with marital life satisfaction and improves family health. Thus, to improve the mental health of couples, special attention should be paid to families. Also, teaching interpersonal communication skills can improve the quality of couples' emotional relationships. Therefore, counselors, psychologists, communication media and education and higher education custodians, by teaching these skills and raising awareness to families and by raising the level of people's information (even in a mandatory way, such as defining the headings of academic textbooks, etc.) can prevent the emergence of unhealthy interpersonal relationships and marital dissatisfaction and boredom in the future.

### Conflict of Interest

According to the authors, this article has no financial sponsor or conflict of interest.

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