

## The relationship between emotional intelligence, attachment styles and optimism with Marital satisfaction

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, attachment styles and optimism with mental health and marital satisfaction of couples who refer to Andimeshk counselling centers in the period of 3 months. **Material & Method:** 150 volunteer couples who were selected by applying multi cluster sampling method. Measurement tools include Emotional intelligence scale (Wang and Lu, 2002) Adult attachment scale (Collins and Reid, 1990) Optimism inventory of couples (Rajabi, 2002) Goldberg's general health questionnaire (1989) and marital satisfaction scale (sanaee, 2001) were applied to measure variables. **Findings:** The data analysis was performed by Pearson correlation coefficient and step by step regression. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence, Adult attachment scale, Optimism, general and marital satisfaction. results of regression analysis show that emotional intelligence, Adult attachment scale, Optimism, general health can predict marital satisfaction significantly **Discussion:** finding reveals for finding marital satisfaction couples should be able to emotionally and cognitively manage themselves and find optimism ad general health.

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## 1. Introduction

Marriage is usually as a source of satisfaction and gratification for individual but sometimes become a source of failure. (Jelvani, 1390). Satisfactory marriage is a shield against mental pressures and negative life events, while unstable and stressful marriages have negative consequences for physical and mental health (Bloom, Usher and Whit, 1987). Studies have shown that emotional intelligence (understanding of emotions and the knowledge of how interpersonal relationships) is effective in married life (leucine, 2006, quoted by Rahby, Mousavi nejad and Taghipoor, 1393).

The ability for perception and reception of thoughts, feelings and emotions of each other in marital life that it is accompanied by more satisfaction impression. therefore, men and women who report a high level of satisfaction and intimacy regarding their marriage, they are very carefully in anticipation of your partner's feelings and beliefs, and maintain similar values and beliefs about the amount of proximity and intimacy between themselves (Sadeghi, 1380).

## 2. Research Background

According to a theory that salovey and Mayer (1990) developed; emotional intelligence can enhance thinking , problem solving , promote well-being and facilitate social functioning .Also, Emotional Intelligence(EI) describes four relatively distinct emotion abilities: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotion(Salovey & Sluyter, 1997).

Many researchers have shown that emotional intelligence can influence marital satisfaction and mental health (Hen and Goroshit , 2012; Yazici et al., 2011;Parker et al.,2004; Barchard , 2003; Bracket & Mayer, 2003; Lam & Kirby, 2002). Another factor that next to EQ, can be important is personality traits like optimism. There is evidence that optimism can predict marital satisfaction and mental health (Clark and Schroth, 2010; Komarraju et al., 2009; Poropat, 2009).

One of Personality and Individual factors related to marital satisfaction, is attachment style. Attachment is one of the personal important variables that affect marital relations and intimacy of individuals (Finney, 1996). Attachment theory offers a useful and consistent framework for the study of the function and the marital relationship (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Attachment plays an important role in an interactive way of couples with each other. For example, attachment plays a role in the regulation of emotions, intimacy, and jealousy. On the other hand, interest plays a role in many fields, including conflict, relationship and sex (Khushabi and Abu Hamzah, 1386).

Attachment behavior anticipates a response by the attachment figure which will remove threat or discomfort” (Wong & Law, 2002). Such bonds may be reciprocal between two adults, but between a child and a caregiver these bonds are based on the child's need for safety, security and protection, paramount in infancy and childhood. Bowlby (1998) begins by noting that organisms at different levels of the phylogenetic scale regulate instinctive behavior in distinct ways, ranging from primitive reflex-like "fixed action patterns" to complex plan hierarchies with sub goals and strong learning components. In the most complex organisms, instinctive behaviors may be "goal-corrected" with continual on-course adjustments (such as a bird of prey adjusting its flight to the movements of the prey).

The concept of cybernetic ally controlled behavioral systems organized as plan hierarchies (Miller, Gelernter, and Program, 1960) thus came to replace Freud's concept of drive and instinct. Such systems regulate behaviors in ways that need not be rigidly innate, but—depending on the organism—can adapt in greater or lesser degrees to changes in environmental circumstances, provided that these do not deviate too much from the organism's environment of evolutionary datedness. Such flexible organisms pay a price, however, because adaptable behavioral systems can more easily be subverted from their optimal path of development. For humans, Bowlby speculates, the environment of evolutionary datedness probably resembles that of present-day hunter-gatherer societies for the purpose of survival, and, ultimately,

genetic replication. (Srivastava & Misra, 2001) Attachment theory is not an exhaustive description of human relationships, nor is it synonymous with love and affection, although these may indicate that bonds exist. Rosander, P., Bäckström & Stenberg (2011) believes that some infant's direct attachment behavior (proximity seeking) toward more than one attachment figure almost as soon as they start to show discrimination between caregivers; most come to do so during their second year. These figures are arranged hierarchically, with the principal attachment figure at the top. Ono & etal, the set-goal of the attachment behavioral system is to maintain the accessibility and availability of the attachment figure (Parker & etal, 2005) "Alarm" is the term used for activation of the attachment behavioral system caused by fear of danger. "Anxiety" is the anticipation or fear of being cut off from the attachment figure. If the figure is unavailable or unresponsive, separation distress occurs.

Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham (2004) in infants, physical separation can cause anxiety and anger, followed by sadness and despair. By age three or four, physical separation is no longer such a threat to the child's bond with the attachment figure. Threats to security in older children and adults arise from prolonged absence, breakdowns in communication, emotional unavailability, or signs of rejection or abandonment (Poropat, 2009).

Optimistic is another important factor that it effects on marital satisfaction and mental health. Optimistic has a pervasive and wide concept as part of positive psychology and is humor or attitude that is associated with the expectation of a better future and individual evaluates it socially according to his question (Mir Ahmadi, 1387). Attachment style and emotional intelligence and optimism of individuals can be effective in their mental health. Supplying hygiene of all people of society is the most important basic issues of each country; this was considered in three physical, mental and social aspects , if mental dimension of hygiene isn't taken into consideration enough , plenty of psychological and behavioral problems will increase , to the extent that the effects of its neglect will result in irreversible and ill effects in personal and social , family and human, political, economic and cultural dimensions (Navabinejad, 1376).

Studies were conducted in the field of satisfaction and mental health of young couples, including researches that follows. The researches results's Hafezi and Gamei nejad (1389) and Mardani, Hamole and Heidari (1389) suggest that there is the positive and significant relationship between secure attachment styles and marital satisfaction and significant and negative relationship between unsafe and avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Mousavi and Iravanian (2011) showed that the components of emotional instability and emotional return of emotional intelligence has negative relationship with marital satisfaction. Kochak Entezar et al (2011) and Lvalykar et al (2010) showed that there is a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and marital satisfaction.

Study of Lopez et al (2011) that there is negative and significant relationship between avoidant and anxious attachment styles with marital satisfaction. Batzr and Campbell's research (2008) showed that there is the positive and significant relationship between secure attachment style and marital satisfaction and significant and negative relationship between avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Blu et al's and Lemmens et al (2007) showed that there is the significant positive relationship between secure attachment style and marital satisfaction.

Christina et al (2006) found that there is the positive and significant relationship between secure attachment style and marital satisfaction and significant and negative relationship between avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles and marital satisfaction. So with regard to the stated matters, aim of present study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence, attachment styles and optimism with mental health and the couple's satisfaction of Andimeshk city.

### 3. Method

#### 1.3. Research Model

The present study was practical according to the purpose and descriptive and correlational according to research method. The statistical society of this study included all married couples of Andimeshk city who refer to counseling clinics and had no history of disease, physical and mental illnesses. First of all, for data gathering 5 clinics were selected from among all clinics. Then, all the couples who refer within the period of Aban Month to Bahman month (three months). Those couples who were not within the frame of research were considered vague and were removed. Finally, 150 volunteered couples who completed all the measurement tools completely were entered to data analysis of research and nearly 30 couples were omitted.

#### 2.3 Measurement tools

**2.3.1. Emotional intelligence scale** was used in order to measure emotional intelligence variable. This scale was made by Wang and Lu (2002) for the assessment of individual differences in the ability to identify and regulate their emotions and others which contains 16 articles and was graded in a range of 5 options (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). High scores indicate high emotional intelligence. Cronbach's alpha of this scale has been reported 0.94 by Wang and Lu (2002).

**2.3.2. Adult attachment scale (AAS)** was used to measure the attachment. this scale includes a self-assessment of forming relationships skills and self-descriptive forming method of attachment relationships to close attachment figures that they were provided by Collins and Reid in 1990 and contains 18 articles and is scored in a range of 5 degrees (1= it in no way does not comply with the specification to 5= it fully complies with the specifications). Collins and Reid (1990, from the chaste, 1380) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of subscales secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachment, respectively, 0.81, 0.78, 0.85.

**2.3.3. Optimism inventory** was used to measure optimism couples. 14-point scale of couple optimism was developed in the marital relationship based on the optimism literature (Rajabi, 1388). Materials of this scale were set on a five rank Likert spectrum from 0= very high to 4= very low that a higher score indicates greater optimism of couples to each other. Goldberg's general health questionnaire with 28 questions was used to assess mental health. Short form of marital satisfaction scale was made to assess and identify potential problematic areas and identify areas of strength and fruitful marital satisfaction and has 13 articles. Its scoring method is graded for Likert on a 5-point range (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In this study, first, descriptive statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation and then inferential statistics such as the Pearson correlation coefficient multiple regression analysis for prediction of the criterion variable was used

### 4. Findings

The results of the descriptive statistic reveal that the mean and standard deviation of emotional intelligence was (4.02) and (0.49), Also the mean and standard deviation of attachment styles, was (4.07), (0.82) and Also, the mean and standard deviation of optimism was (4.09) and (0.26). in addition, this is (4.27) and (0.32) for mental health and also (4.19) and (0.45) for marital satisfaction. the significance level and correlation coefficients of emotional intelligence, attachment styles, optimism, mental health with marital satisfaction was 0.01-0.09 and 0.1-0.29 and 0.-0.49 and 0.5-0.69 and 0.7-0.99. as the results showed there was positive and significant relationship between all variables. The results of Pearson

correlation test showed that the Pearson correlation coefficient was significant between optimism and mental health.

In addition, these results of regression analysis suggest that independent variables include emotional intelligence, optimism and attachment styles had the explanation ability of 0/23.8 the dependent variable variance. In addition, the amount of calculated F, was significant at level 99% ( $F=12.12$ , and  $P=0.001$ ) which shows the significant regression.

Table 1- regression analysis results of effect of independent variables on the dependent variable (mental health).

Variable	B	Beta	t	P
fixed number	0.84	-	3.71	0.001
optimism( $x_1$ )	0.312	0.254	2.97	0.04
emotional intelligence( $x_2$ )	0.166	0.255	2.022	0.0001
attachment styles( $x_2$ )	0.127	0.322	3.77	0.003
Sig=0.0001, F=12.12	R=0.5		Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.238	R <sup>2</sup> =0.259

Studying the regression coefficients show that optimism variable ( $B=0.312$ ) had greater role and share in explaining the dependent variable than other variables. Furthermore, the variables of attachment styles development ( $B=0.166$ ) and emotional Intelligence ( $B=0.127$ ) can predict higher perdition than other variables. In other words, for every one standard deviation(SD) change in the optimism, attachment styles and emotional intelligence variables create respectively, 0.312, 0.166, 0.127 (SD) in dependent variable (mental health of couples). Positive values of these factors indicate that with increasing the amount of optimism, attachment styles and emotional intelligence, mental health and marital satisfaction will be more in couples.

Table 2-step by step regression analysis for predicting marital satisfaction

Variable	B	Beta	t	P
fixed number	0.84	-	1.27	0.2
optimism( $x_1$ )	0.388	0.22	2.73	0.007
emotional intelligence( $x_2$ )	0.22	0.23	4.88	0.0001
attachment styles( $x_2$ )	0.21	0.45	2.88	0.005
Sig=0.0001, F=14.8	R=0.54		Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =0.279	R <sup>2</sup> =0.3

Adjusted coefficient of determination shows that independent variables of emotional intelligence, optimism and attachment styles have the explanation ability (0/27.9) the dependent variable variance. In addition, the amount of calculated F, was significant at level0/99 ( $F=12.12$ , and  $P=0.0001$ ) which shows the significant regression. Moreover, the amount of calculated F is significant at 99% level ( $F=14.8$  and  $P=0.0001$ ) that indicates the significant regression. Multiple correlation coefficient is between independent and dependent variables ( $R=0.54$ ). Also, studying the regression coefficients show that optimism variable ( $B=0.388$ ) has greater role and share in explaining the dependent variable than other variables and then the variables of emotional Intelligence development ( $B=0.22$ ) and attachment styles ( $B=0.21$ ) placed. In other words, for every one (SD) change in the optimism, attachment styles and emotional intelligence variables create respectively, (0.38), (0.22), (0.21) (SD) in dependent variable (satisfaction of couples). Positive values of these factors indicate that with increasing the amount of optimism, attachment styles and emotional intelligence, satisfaction will be more in couples.

## 5. Discussion

Results indicate a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and satisfaction of couples. So, there is positive and significant relationship between emotional intelligence and satisfaction of couples. These findings show that as emotional intelligence be more for individuals, they will be more satisfied. Also, the finding showed that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction of couples and attachment styles variables. On other hand, their satisfaction will increase with improving attachment styles in individuals. Studying correlation coefficient shows that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction of couples and optimism. The test results show that correlation coefficient 0.331 is for these two variables.

Significance level between two variables between satisfaction of couples and optimism was 1%. So, we can say with sure 99% that there is a significant relationship between satisfaction of couples and optimism. On other hand, their satisfaction will increase with increasing amount of optimism in individuals. The results of study effective factors on mental health showed that independent variables of emotional intelligence, optimism and attachment styles have the explanation ability of 23.8 % the dependent variable variance. Also, the findings showed that independent variables of emotional intelligence, optimism and attachment styles have the explanation ability of 27.9 % the dependent variable variance.

Yazici, Seyis & Altun (2011) showed that individuals with low level of emotional quotient (EQ) and non-safe styles of attachment have lack of self-awareness, lack of understanding of constructive feedbacks, lack of sensitivity to others' feelings and such individuals use others to satisfy their emotional needs. Such individuals feel they are judged by others, they feel they are not appreciated by other people, and they feel they are abused by others. Considering a different view, according to many researchers (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2010; Cupani & Pautassi, 2013; Coglisier, Gardner, Gavin & Broberg, 2012; Downey, Mountstephen, Lloyd, Hansen & Stough, 2; Hen & Goroshit, 2012) it can be stated that Individuals who have a high intelligence quotient (IQ), but have a low EQ have many problems in their lives. Such individuals feel they are superior to others and think they are aware of everything while such individuals usually have low recognition of their emotions and feelings.

In regard to the following argues some other studies (Bar-On, 2006; Barchard, 2003; Halford, 2004; Ghiabi & Besharat, 2011) believe that They usually do not understand empathy and sympathy. They always feel they are right because they are intelligent. This makes individuals' approach defensive and reduces empathic feelings in them. This vicious cycle disrupts and destroys individuals' communications. In short, individuals who have a high level of EQ usually enjoy satisfying individual communications and individuals with a high level of EQ express their feelings politely and non-aggressively. They also understand expressed emotions (James, Bore & Zito, 2012; Elfenbein, Polzer & Ambady, 2007; O'Connor & Paunonen, 2007; Komarraju, Karau & Schmeck, 2009; Ono, Sachau, Deal, Englert & Taylor, 2011).

Joseph & Newman (2010) believes that attachment styles and optimism have an important fundamental role in the establishment and stabilization of marital satisfaction and mental health. The findings of (King & Gardner, 2006) supports Goleman's belief and shows that emotional competency is an important factor in attachment styles and optimism and improving the quality of mental health. Therefore, individuals with high levels of optimism are expected to establish high quality behaviour and have better attachment styles and also positive view toward other people, one of which is marital relationship (Rosander, Bäckström, & Stenberg, 2011; Ramo, 2009; Vahedi & Nikdel, 2011; Srivastava & Misra, 2001; Saklofske, Austin, Rohr & Andrews, 2007).

The limitation of the present study was that the researchers in cooperation and partnership faced difficulties in the response to the marital satisfaction questionnaire that a number of the questions had sexual nature.

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