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The Relationship between Attachment Symbols, Attachment Styles and Self-Differentiation with Marital Intimacy

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Abstract

Intimacy is a basic human need and is recognized as an important process in the development of friendly relationships. Given the importance of this structure in marital relations, the purpose of this study was to investigate the role of self-differentiation, attachment symbols and attachment styles in the prediction of marital intimacy of marital couples in Zanjan city. The research method was correlation. All married couples living in Zanjan city in 2018 formed the statistical population of this study. The final sample consisted of 278 people selected by stepwise cluster sampling. The instruments of the Bagarozzi intimacy scale (2001), self-differentiated R-DSI revised questionnaire, Hazan and Shaver (1995), attachment style questionnaire and Hazen Attachment Symptom Questionnaire (1987). Non-parametric correlation test showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intimacy with security and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between rational intimacy with support. There is a positive and significant relationship between sexual intimacy with adjacency and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between spiritual intimacy with security. There is a positive and significant relationship between the aesthetic intimacy with security. There is a positive and significant relationship between social-entertainment intimacy and proximity. There is a positive and significant relationship between the overall score of intimacy with proximity, security, and support. Pearson correlation showed that Pearson correlation indicated that there is a negative and significant relationship between the avoidant attachment style and the total score of intimacy and the components of social recreational intimacy and emotional intimacy. There is a negative and meaningful relationship between the attachment style of social-communicative intimacy. There is a negative and significant relationship between the ambivalent attachment style and the general score of intimacy and the components of social intimacy-emotional and emotional intimacy. The results of regression analysis indicated that only anxiety attachment style could predict marital intimacy among attachment styles and self-differentiation dimensions (R2 = 0.02).The findings of this study can be used to develop and implement educational and therapeutic programs in order to increase marital intimacy of couples.

Key words: *Self-differentiation, Attachment Styles, Marital Intimacy, Married Couples.*

Introduction

The family is the most important institution in society in which individual, social, moral, responsibility, ability and trust characteristics are developed. Husbands and wives' satisfaction with marital life is effective in how the family and individuals in society grow and grow. Marital life satisfaction is considered as family satisfaction and family satisfaction is one of the important components of life satisfaction **(**4**)**. One of the important and effective factors on marital satisfaction and consequently life satisfaction is marital intimacy. Intimacy is the key to a successful marriage and an important source of happiness, sense of meaning and marital satisfaction **(**5**)**. The concept of intimacy in recent years has been considered as an important construct in the dynamics of marital relationship **(**7, 6**)**.

Bagarozi considers intimacy as a basic need and defines it as closeness, similarity, and romantic personal relationships, often emotional with another person, which requires deep knowledge and understanding of the other person, acceptance and expression of thoughts and feelings. And considers it as a sign of love threshold and not determined the component for the need for intimacy that is related to each other: 1- Emotional intimacy **(**need to communicate and share all the feelings and emotions of the spouse, comfortable expression of feelings**)**, 2. Psychological intimacy **(**need to share fears, worries, doubts and internal conflicts with the spouse**)**, 3. Rational intimacy **(**need to share their ideas, thoughts and beliefs with each other**)**, 4. Sexual intimacy **(**need to share sexual feelings, desires and fantasies with the spouse and arouse sexual desires**)**, 5. Physical intimacy requires physical contact with the spouse so that it is not a prelude to sexual intercourse. 6. Spiritual intimacy **(**need to share feelings, beliefs and spiritual, value and moral experiences with the spouse**)**, 7. Aesthetic intimacy **(**need to share feelings, perceptions, thoughts and experiences related to aesthetics with the spouse**)**, 8. Social and recreational intimacy **(**need to do enjoyable activities and experiences together with the spouse**)** and 9. Temporal intimacy **(**the amount of time that each couple likes to spend together**)**

(8**)**. Namouran Garmi, Moradi, Farzad and Zahra work in a qualitative study of marital intimacy of Iranian couples in the dimensions of physical intimacy **(**physical intimacy, holding hands, kissing, hugging, caressing**)**, recreational social intimacy **(**intimate conversation, contact, spending time**)**, sexual intimacy **(**continuation of sexual intercourse, loving sex**)** and financial intimacy **(**financial sharing**)**

(9**)** Intimacy in couples relationships is a means of exchanging and mutual satisfaction of emotional and psychological needs to an acceptable and expected level, as well as strengthening loving relationships and marital satisfaction.

(10, 11**)**. Research evidence also shows that there is a significant relationship between the degree of intimacy of couples and marital satisfaction and marriage stability.

(12, 13**)** Marital intimacy of horizontal stressors **(**including stressful events that occur from the beginning of marriage to the end of life for couples, such as the birth or marriage of children, death, etc. expected due to illness or accident, chronic illness**)**, horizontal stressors of the surface system include social, cultural, political, religious, and economic influences in addition to extended family influences on marriage, and vertical stressors include couples' internal perceptions. Which they acquire from major families **(**such as memories, acquired patterns of behavior, marriage myths, family secrets, expectations, customs**)** and enter into a marital relationship.

(14**)** The effect of the present study on vertical stressors on the intimacy of couples and the most important of them are attachment and differentiation.

Many psychologists and family therapists consider couples' personality traits and how their childhood experiences and the quality of relationships between key members to be the most important factor in the success or failure of any marriage and the establishment of intimate relationships between couples. The most influential of these views are the theories of Bali attachment styles and Bush's self-differentiation.

Theories of attachment styles and self-differentiation emphasize the initial relationships in the family environment and consider it to be effective on subsequent relationships. They consider attachment and self-differentiation styles as enduring and multi-generational factors and describe how a person's family of origin can affect his or her marital relationships.

(15**)** Attachment is a lasting emotional bond between two people, so that one of the parties tries to maintain proximity to the idea of attachment and act in such a way as to ensure that the relationship continues **(**16**)**. Attachment behavior is activated when a person has emotions such as fear, sadness, and illness, forcing the person to seek by staying close to the familiar

(17**)** An important variable at the end of the first year of a child's life is the child's overall functioning pattern of the attachment symbol, meaning that the child, based on his or her daily interactions, gradually develops an outline of the caregiver's response and availability **(**18**)**. Attachment symbol when present in states such as:

1- Preferably seeking and maintaining intimacy with a particular person and objecting to separation from that person,

2- Using that person as a safe haven during times of distress, and

3- That person is used as a safe haven to explore the world. Theorists describe the symbol of attachment to relationships that employ these three actions and deal with the emotional connection that may be felt by others as a bond of attachment

(19**)**. In attachment theory, it is emphasized that early childhood relationships form attachment styles and affect a person's perception of themselves, others, and the way interpersonal relationships are organized

(20-21-20**)**. Described three styles of secure attachment, avoidance, and ambivalence in childhood that have been confirmed in adulthood. In general, when we play the role of a good caregiver and form an atmosphere of trust in our child.

The child will feel safe and can endure even temporary distances and not feel rejected or left alone. This situation leads to the formation of a secure attachment style. On the other hand, if the mother can not establish a balance between care and leaving, this situation will lead to the formation of avoidant or ambivalent styles in which, in the first model, the child receives little care and does not develop a sense of security. And in the second model, the child receives care in uncertain and conflicting ways and with the fear of leaving.

(23-24**)**. People with secure attachment styles are comfortable in intimate relationships, willing to receive support from others, have a positive self-image, and have positive expectations of others. People with an avoidant attachment style find themselves emotionally cold and suspicious, find it difficult to trust and rely on others, and feel anxious when others become too close to them.

People with a two-pronged attachment style view themselves as people who are not well understood by others and lack self-confidence. And they are worried that others will leave them or that they will not really like them.

(25-26**)**. Studies by Khadoma, Gordon, and Bolden Hallt, and Howard Eglio, Trimble et al., And Teymouri Asifchi et al., Suggest that attachment can predict marital intimacy

(30 29 28 27**)** Other variables that affect marital intimacy include self-differentiation. The behavior of family members is a function of the behavior of other family members, and often the conflict that arises between the couple is the result of the direct influence of the main family. Morara and Torlick's research shows that the perceived concepts of individuals from the main family predict marital patterns.

(31**)**. One of the hallmarks of a healthy family is helping members differentiate themselves. According to Button's theory, an emotional system governs the structure of the family that has the ability to transfer the consolation pin, and the mental health of individuals depends on the separation from this emotional system.

(32**)**. Differentiation is the ability of a family member to differentiate emotions from recognizing and maintaining objectivity **(**Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1397; Glading, 1397**)**

(33**)**. According to Bowen's systems theory, self-differentiation at interpersonal levels refers to the ability to distinguish emotional processes from rational processes and the ability to choose which of the two to prioritize in a particular situation.

(35, 34**)** At interpersonal levels, differentiation refers to an individual's ability to experience autonomy from others while being intimate with them.

(36**)**. Differentiated people have a clear definition of themselves and their beliefs. They can choose their own direction in life and not lose control in extremely emotional situations that lead to involuntary behaviors and harmful decisions in many people, and make decisions by reason and logic. These people are aware of their emotions and are able to assess the situation thoughtfully. These people have the ability to grow independently in intimate relationships and can maintain their peace and comfort in interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, people with low levels of differentiation change their behavior and beliefs for the sake of satisfying others, and they are dominated by emotions and environmental influences, and experience high levels of chronic anxiety. And they spill it over into their relationships.

(37, 38, 39, 40**)**. Less differentiated people focus more of their energy on experiencing and intensifying their emotions. They are trapped in an emotional world, and in their close relationships they are too involved or mixed with others, and instead of expressing their true values and beliefs, they express their false inclinations.

(41**)**. The high proportion of marriages leading to divorce indicates that the couple's relationship has undergone structural changes and has undergone transformation and fragmentation. This can cause problems in the family system and even lead to disintegration. Therefore, maintaining and promoting family relationships requires that the degree of stability and quality of marital relationships be evaluated by evaluating concepts such as compatibility, intimacy.

(42). Intimacy is a basic human need that grows from one of the basic human needs called the need for attachment and includes the need for physical closeness, bonding and contact with other people. And one of the necessities of continuity is satisfaction and success in marriage. Therefore, research on marital intimacy and the factors affecting it is important (8). On the other hand, studies that have examined the relationship between attachment and differentiation on marital intimacy are not extensive and even published research on the relationship between the symbol of attachment and marital intimacy has not been found. There is a research gap that confirms the necessity of the present study.

Based on the mentioned provisions, the present study, with the aim of the relationship between self-differentiation, symbols and attachment styles with marital intimacy of married couples, seeks to answer the question of what is the relationship between self-differentiation and symbols and attachment styles with marital intimacy of married couples? And to what extent can self-differentiation and attachment styles predict couples' marital intimacy?

Method

The statistical population of the present study consisted of all married couples in Zanjan. In this study, sampling was done by cluster sampling method from three high schools of Shams, Shahed and Tizhooshan in the second district of Zanjan. After estimating the number of students (1500 people), sampling was done by Cochran's formula and the sample number was 305. Questionnaires were provided to students' parents. In order to comply with the research ethics, parents were also told that their identities about the questionnaire would remain confidential.

They were given oral or telephone explanations on how to fill out the questionnaire. After collecting the completed questionnaires, incompletely answered questionnaires as well as distorted questionnaires were excluded from the study and finally 278 correctly answered questionnaires were collected. The scores obtained from each questionnaire were analyzed by SPSS software and ETA correlation, Pearson correlation and multivariate regression by stepwise method. All inferential calculations were performed at a significance level of 0.05.

Research tools

1. Bagarozi Marital Intimacy Scale: This scale was created by Bagarozi in 2001 and includes 41 items that measure intimacy in eight dimensions: emotional (items 5-1), psychological (items 10-6), rational (items 15-15), sexual (items 16-20), physical (items 25-25), spiritual (items 31-26), aesthetic (items

36-32), and recreational-social (items 41-37). The items are set based on a 10-point Likert scale (not a strong need at all (1) to an extremely strong need (10)).

In the study of Khamseh and Hosseinian in determining the reliability of the questionnaire by open method, Cronbach's alpha coefficient test for emotional intimacy 0.89, psychological intimacy 0.82, intellectual intimacy 0.81, sexual intimacy 0.91, social-recreational intimacy 0.51 ،

Aesthetic intimacy is 0.76, physical intimacy is 0.80, spiritual intimacy is 0.65 and for total intimacy is 0.82. In addition, to determine the validity of the test, this questionnaire along with the marital intimacy questionnaire was answered by 30 couples at the same time, and the correlation coefficient between the results of the two intimacy tests indicates a significant correlation of 0.65 (43).

In the present study, the reliability of this scale was calculated to be 0.77 using Cronbach's alpha.

2. Differentiation Questionnaire (DSI): This questionnaire, developed by Scuron, is a 46-item tool used to measure the degree of differentiation of individuals. It consists of four subscales: "Emotional reactivity", "My position, emotional inclination and emotional integration with others" (2). Each question is scored on a scale (44). The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed by experts and has been confirmed in Scorne, Scorne and Smith and accommodation researches.

In Scorne and Smith research, the reliability of the whole test was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method of 0.92 and the reliability of the subscales of emotional responsiveness, my position, emotional escape and emotional integration with others were calculated as 89.0, 0/86, 0/81 and 0.84, respectively. (36). In Iran, in the study of Skyan and Changizi, the reliability of the whole test with Cronbach's alpha method has been reported as 0.88.

(44). In Jahanbakhshi and Sheriff Koosheh research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.69 and for the subscales of emotional responsiveness, my position, emotional escape and emotional integration with others were reported 0.73 , 0/64, 0/61 and 0.75, respectively.

(41). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.89.
3. Hazen and Shiver attachment style questionnaire:

This questionnaire was made by Hazen and Shaver and has 15 questions that I completely disagree with the three styles of safe attachment (questions 10-10), avoidance (questions 5-1) and ambivalent (questions 11-15), on a 5-point Likert scale 1, I disagree 2, I have no opinion 3, I agree 4, I completely agree 5) It measures (3).

This questionnaire was developed by Hazen and Shaver and has 15 questions that measure the three styles of secure attachment **(**questions 6-10**)**, avoidance **(**questions 5-1**)** and ambivalent **(**questions 11-15**)**, on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 have no opinion, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha coefficient **(**reliability**)** of safe subscale questions, avoidance and bias in a student sample **(**1480 people including 860 girls and 620 boys**)** for all subjects were calculated 0.86, 0.84, 0.85, **(**For female students 0.86, 0.83, 0.84 and for male students 0.84, 0.85 and 0.86**)** respectively. Which is a sign of good internal consistency on the adult attachment scale. Kendall agreement coefficients **(**validity**)** for secure, avoidance and bidirectional attachment styles were calculated to be 0.80, 0.61 and 0.75, respectively **(**45**)**.

In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.83.

4. Attachment Symbol Questionnaire: The revised version of the Hazen Attachment Symbol Scale identifies with whom one feels close and with whom one can feel secure and rely on. This questionnaire has three subscales; Proximity, security and support. The questions of this questionnaire are:

1- Who do you most like to spend your time with?

2- Who do you like not to be separated from?

3- Who do you like to be with when you feel upset or bored?

4- Who can you have as a consultant by your side?

5- If you get something good, who is the first person you would like to tell?

6 Who can you always count on?

Findings

68% of the participants in the study were female and 32% were male. 2% had a bachelor's degree, 3% an associate degree, 52% a bachelor's degree, 41% a master's degree and 2% a doctorate.

46 percent of study participants were between 25 and 30 years old, 34 percent were between 30 and 35 years old, 14 percent were between 35 and 40 years old, 4 percent were between 40 and 45 years old, and 2 percent were between 45 and 50 years old. The duration of marriage was 44% between 1 and 5 years, 32% between 5 and 10 years, 14% between 10 and 15 years, 7% between 15 to 20 years and 3% between 20 to 25 years. 55 percent of study participants had one child, 30 percent had two children, 5 percent had three children, and 10 percent had more than three children.

The standard deviation	Average	Variable	Variable
6/46	22/81	Emotional intimacy	Intimacy
5/09	19/16	Psychological intimacy	
5/82	20/20	Rational intimacy	
5/32	21/51	Sexual intimacy	
6/23	20/35	Physical intimacy	
6/90	24/33	Spiritual intimacy	
6/05	21/55	Aesthetic intimacy	
6/08	21/41	Social-recreational intimacy	
2/96	21/44	Overall score of intimacy	
4/83	39/48	Emotional reactivity	Self-differentiation
5	38/51	My place	
5/59	42/83	Emotional escape	
4/79	42/91	Emotional fusion with others	
4/40	41/43	Overall score of differentiation	
3/82	11/71	Avoidant attachment style	Attachment styles
2/51	13/58	Safe attachment style	
3/29	11/71	Ambivalent attachment style	

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of research variables

As can be seen in Table 1, spiritual and emotional intimacy has a higher mean in the subjects compared to other types of intimacy. Research participants are at a moderate to low level. Differentiation and attachment styles of study participants are moderate; however, the average secure attachment style is higher than the avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles.

Before performing multivariate regression by stepwise method, the assumptions of normality, lack of alignment relationship and independence were first examined. Examination of the normality of the data showed that the research variables do not have a normal distribution, so the inverse function method was used to normalize the variables. Therefore, after normalization of Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics, they indicate that the research variables are normal, because their significance level is higher than 0.05 (Table 2).

Significance level	The value of K-S After normalization	Significance level	The value of K-S Before normalization	Variable
0/20	0/047	0/000	0/080	Attachment Styles
0/20	0/028	0/022	0/058	Differentiation
0/20	0/016	0/022	0/023	Intimacy

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for data normality

The amount of variance, variance inflation factor, specific value and status index were equal to 1, 1, 0.025 and 8.87, respectively, and for the differentiation variable were equal to 1, 1, 0.006 and 18.88, respectively. These results indicate that there is no correlation between the predictor variables and regression can be used. The Durbin-Watson test to examine the independence of observations showed that attachment styles were 2.06 and for differentiation were 2.13, indicating that the observations were independent. After examining the regression assumptions and their validity, regression analysis was performed and the results are presented below.

17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Variables	Row
																1	Emotional intimacy	1
															1	3** 0/4	Psychological intimacy	2
														1	4** /60	01 0/9	Rational intimacy	3
													1	4** /30	1** /90	2** 0/3 -	Sexual intimacy	4
												1	3** /70	00 /7 -0	1* /2 -0	3** 0/4 -	Physical intimacy	5
											1	6** /50	4** /70	03 /50	1* /3 -0	3** 0/6 -	Spiritual intimacy	6
										1	6** /80	5** /20	2** /20	04 /5 -0	1* /4 -0	3** 0/1 -	Aesthetic intimacy	7
									1	4** /40	4** /30	3** /30	2** /70	07 /7 0	2** /1 -0	2** 0/6 -	Social intimacy	8
								1	5** /40	6** /30	7** /40	6** /30	6** /70	4** /60	3** /10	04 0/2 -	Overall score of intimacy	9
							1	03 /00	08 /10	09 /20	03 /70	01 /60	06 /0 -0	06 /8 -0	04 /40	03 0/2 -	Emotional reactivity	10
						1	6** /30	02 /00	01 /00	07 /70	01 /80	04 /30	03 /6 -0	08 /6 -0	02 /70	01 0/6	My place	11
					1	6** /80	6** /90	00 /6 -0	07 /60	05 /00	03 /00	03 /2 -0	05 /7 -0	11 -0/	02 /60	01 0/9 -	Emotional escape	12

				1	6** /9 0	7** /5 0	6** /2 0	03 /7 0	1* /2 0	11 0/	02 /8 0	01 /5 0	06 /5 -0	09 /0 -0	01 /7 0	00 0/8 -	Emotional fusion with others	13
			1	8** 0/7	8** /9 0	8** /7 0	8** /4 0	02 /2 0	08 /2 0	09 /3 0	03 /3 0	01 /1 0	06 /2 -0	10 -0/	03 /3 0	01 0/3 -	Overall score of differentiation	14
		1	** 2 /4 0 -	3** 0/6 -	1** /6 -0	1** /8 -0	1** /5 -0	1* /5 -0	2** /9 -0	02 /5 -0	07 /6 -0	01 /8 0	07 /1 -0	00 /3 0	04 /7 0	1** 0/6 -	Avoidance attachment	15
	1	6** 0/3	** 3 /1 0 -	3** 0/3 -	2** /0 -0	2** /7 -0	2** /8 -0	07 /9 -0	2** /1 -0	02 /1 -0	05 /9 -0	02 /5 0	05 /6 -0	03 /6 0	08 /0 0	08 0/7 -	Safe attachment	16
1	5** /9 0	7** 0/0	** 2 /1 0 -	3** 0/6 -	04 -0/	1** /9 -0	1** /6 -0	1* /2 -0	1** /8 -0	07 /1 -0	04 /6 -0	04 /8 0	05 /1 -0	00 /9 -0	06 /0 0	2** 0/0 -	Ambivalent attachment	17

*n = 278 *P<0/05. **P <0/10*

Table 3. Correlation matrix of differentiation and its dimensions and attachment styles with marital intimacy and its dimensions

The results of Pearson correlation coefficient in Table 3 show that there is no significant relationship between differentiation and its components with intimacy and its dimensions ($p < 0.01$). There is a negative and significant relationship between avoidant attachment style with the overall score of intimacy and the components of socio-recreational intimacy and emotional intimacy ($p < 0.01$).

There is a negative and significant relationship between secure attachment style and socio-recreational intimacy ($p < 0.01$). There is a negative and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style with the overall score of intimacy and the components of social-recreational intimacy and emotional intimacy ($p < 0.01$).

Dimensions of the attachment symbol			Dimensions of intimacy
support	Security	adjacency	
0/32*	0/36*	0/21	Emotional intimacy
0/28	0/24	0/25	Psychological intimacy
0/31*	0/26	0/29	Rational intimacy
0/31*	0/29	0/34*	Sexual intimacy
0/25	0/28	0/19	Physical intimacy
0/29	0/31*	0/29	Spiritual intimacy
0/27	0/35*	0/28	Aesthetic intimacy
0/27	0/27	0/31*	Social-recreational intimacy
0/40*	0/38*	0/34*	Overall score of intimacy

Table 4. ETA correlation results to examine the relationship between the dimensions of the symbol of attachment and marital intimacy

To examine the relationship between the dimensions of the symbol of attachment and marital intimacy, the Eta coefficient is used and above 0.3 means that the relationship is significant. Accordingly, the results of Table 4 show that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intimacy and security and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between rational intimacy and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between sexual intimacy and proximity and support.

There is a positive and significant relationship between spiritual intimacy and security. There is a positive and significant relationship between aesthetic intimacy and security. There is a positive and significant relationship between socio-recreational intimacy and proximity. There is a positive and significant relationship between the overall score of intimacy with proximity, security and support.

The amount of variance, variance inflation factor, specific value and status index were equal to 1, 1, 0.025 and 8.87, respectively, and for the differentiation variable were equal to 1, 1, 0.006 and 18.88, respectively. These results indicate that there is no correlation between the predictor variables and regression can be used.

The camera-Watson test to examine the independence of the observations showed that the attachment styles were 2.06 and for the differentiation was 2.13, indicating that the observations were independent (45). After examining the regression assumptions and their validity, regression analysis was performed and the results are presented below.

P	T	β	B	R^2	R	F	The average of the squares	Degrees of freedom	The sum of the squares	Indicator
/0140	2/48	0/15 -	0/11 -	/0220	0/15	/186	53/42	4	53/42	regression
							8/64	273	2376/88	surplus

Table 5. Summary of multivariate regression model of stepwise attachment styles and dimensions of differentiation on marital intimacy

The results of Table 5 show that among the attachment styles and differentiation dimensions, only the avoidant attachment style was able to predict marital intimacy and the observed F is significant for the mentioned variable (P <0.05). Accordingly, secure and ambivalent attachment styles and dimensions of differentiation including emotional reactivity, my position, emotional escape, emotional fusion with others were removed from the regression equation due to their inability to explain. Based on the results, 0.022 variance related to marital intimacy is explained by the avoidance attachment variable (β = -0.15, t = 2.48).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment symbolism, attachment styles and self-differentiation with marital intimacy of married couples in Zanjan. The results of Pearson correlation indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between avoidant attachment style and overall intimacy score and the components of socio-recreational intimacy and emotional intimacy. There is a significant negative relationship between secure attachment style and socio-recreational intimacy. There is a negative and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style with the overall score of intimacy and the components of socio-recreational intimacy and emotional intimacy.

Stepwise multivariate regression analysis to predict marital intimacy based on attachment styles and self-differentiated dimensions showed that only avoidant attachment style can predict marital intimacy and the amount of this prediction is not strong. (R2=0.022). Self-distinct dimensions and ambivalent and secure attachment styles cannot predict marital intimacy. The result indicates that the prediction is negative, meaning that increasing avoidant attachment will lead to a significant reduction in marital intimacy of couples.

This result is consistent with the findings of the study of Teymouri Asifchi et al. But it is not consistent with the studies of Teymouri Khadoma et al. And the results of the research of Trimble et al. And the reason for this discrepancy, in addition to the cultural conditions of the study place and the individual differences of the studied people, can be considered as the degree of differentiation of individuals in the studies. This means that in the present study, the degree of differentiation was moderate, but in the studies mentioned, the level of differentiation was high, so the difference in the degree of differentiation can be important in predicting.

In explaining the negative predictability of marital intimacy from avoidant attachment style, it can be said that avoidant attachment is related to patterns of activation of others in relationships. And people with this style deny the vulnerability and claim that they do not need close relationships and tend to fear intimacy. Adults with an avoidant attachment style tend to be afraid of intimacy and emotional ups and downs, find it difficult to trust others, and worry about getting too close to others. (46).

Adults with a avoidant attachment style see themselves as self-sufficient, and people with this style deny vulnerability, claiming that they do not need close relationships and tend to avoid intimacy. It has been found that these people are reluctant to invest in their romantic relationships and therefore have the lowest level of commitment, so the result is not unexpected. (47).

Explaining the inability of predictability of marital intimacy from self-differentiation, it can be said that self-differentiation is conceptualized as a personality variable that is placed on a hypothetical scale from 0-100. Which represents different levels of individual differentiation at both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels (37). The people at the bottom of the scale are those whose minds and emotions are so intertwined that their lives are dominated by the emotions of those around them. As a result, they simply become abusive, one of the manifestations of which can be intimacy in marital relationships (48).

As discussed earlier, there are several factors involved in the development of marital intimacy. Such as the quality of premarital relationships, how to get married, the way of communication, the personality of couples and the way of dealing with marital problems that are known factors in this field. On the other hand, marital intimacy requires the efforts of couples.

The results of ETA nonparametric correlation coefficient showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between emotional intimacy with security and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between rational intimacy and support. There is a positive and significant relationship between sexual intimacy and proximity and support. There is a positive and significant relationship

between spiritual intimacy and security. There is a positive and significant relationship between aesthetic intimacy and security.

There is a positive and significant relationship between socio-recreational intimacy and proximity. There is a positive and significant relationship between the overall score of intimacy with proximity, security and support. These results confirm that having support, security and closeness, which are known as symbols of attachment, can increase marital intimacy.

A published study that examined the relationship between attachment symbolism and marital intimacy was not found, so it was not possible to compare the findings. Explaining the findings, it can be said that this symbol of attachment is considered by someone with whom a child or adult has a relatively long emotional connection and that person is particularly important to him and is irreplaceable with anyone else. Also, the feeling of emotional security, happiness and well-being of the person should depend to some extent on the quality of his relationship with the person in question so that he can be called a symbol of attachment. (49).

Theorists describe the symbol of attachment to relationships that employ three actions (1- Preferably seeking and maintaining intimacy with a particular person and objecting to separation from that person; 2- Using that person as a safe haven during times of distress; 3- uses that person as a safe haven to explore the world), and deal with the emotional connection that may be felt by others as a bond of attachment.

Balbi believed that although the pattern of attachment is formed during the child's relationship with his caregiver during the first year of life, it can change in later times, although the basic structure of this attachment remains almost constant. Initially, the baby's attachment to the attachment face ensures its survival. In adults, too, when exposed to danger, their attachment system, formed in early childhood, is activated, leading to the emergence of support-seeking attachment behaviors. (22).

People in childhood and before marriage mostly use their parents as a safe base to explore the world. Dependency relationships play an important role throughout life, but people who use them as indicators of their initial attachment change as people who move from one stage of life to the next. Although children are more likely to use their parents to perform attachment-related tasks such as secure basic functions, adults are more likely to use their romantic partners to use these goals. (19).

Therefore, romantic partners who are considered to be the same as their spouses after marriage, if they are available, give a sense of security and support, can play an important role in creating or improving marital intimacy. Therefore, based on the mentioned measures, the results are not far from expectation.

Considering that the study group in the present study consists of married couples in Zanjan, it is prudent to generalize the results to other geographical areas and other strata and groups. Descriptive results showed that among the dimensions of intimacy, psychological intimacy between couples is weaker than other dimensions of intimacy. Therefore, according to the result and the importance of psychological intimacy in marital satisfaction, it is necessary to provide solutions, training and empowerment of couples to increase psychological intimacy.

The results of descriptive findings indicate the average degree of differentiation, secure attachment style and marital intimacy of the studied couples. Accordingly, educational and therapeutic interventions are recommended to increase differentiation, secure attachment style and marital intimacy of couples. The results indicate the important role of avoidant attachment style in negatively predicting marital intimacy in comparison with safe and ambivalent style. And during the engagement and marriage and during the marriage to receive educational and therapeutic interventions from counselors and psychologists to reduce the style of avoidant attachment. The results showed that having support, security and closeness, which are known as symbols of attachment, can increase marital intimacy. Based on this, it is suggested that families try to increase the mentioned symbols in their children during the period of growth and formation of attachment. In addition, couples who find that they are not in a good position in the symbols of support, security and closeness, seek help from counselors and psychologists to improve their situation.

It is suggested that further research be done with a higher sample size and the effect of sample size be compared with the results obtained in the present study. Carrying out research similar to the subject of the present study in other cities and provinces and comparing the results with the results of the present study should be considered. In future research, the variables of education, age, duration of marriage and number of children should be used as control variables. The study of the research background showed that there is no published research on the relationship between intimacy and attachment symbols, so it is suggested that the relationship between intimacy and attachment symbols be emphasized in future research.

The authors of the present study undertake that this study has no heterogeneity of benefits and that the results have no economic benefit to the authors. Also, this research was not influenced by specific relationships with the people or centers where the research was conducted.

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