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Assessment of the relationship of attachment styles and emotional intelligence with love among couples

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Abstract

Introduction: One of the most important elements in the strength of marital relationship is to remember love permanently. The present study is mainly aimed to determine the relationship of emotional intelligence and attachment styles with Sternberg's dimensions of love.

Materials and Methods: The statistical population consisted of couples referring to Binesh-e-Novin Counseling Center in order to participate in educational workshops among which 50 couples were selected using available sampling method. In order to collect data, Shoot's emotional intelligence questionnaire, Hazen and Shaver's attachment styles inventory, and Sternberg's love triangle scale were used.

Results: The results indicated that there is a positive correlation between the factor of optimism/emotional regulation and intimacy, emotion and commitment, while there is no positive correlation between the factor attachment styles and dimensions of love. There is a negative relationship between age and the level of commitment and also between duration of marriage and emotion and commitment.

Conclusion: In general, the results of the study indicated that emotional intelligence is highly correlated with dimensions of love, so that the attachment styles cannot predict the aspects of love.

Keywords: Attachment styles, Emotional intelligence, Love, Marriage.

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Introduction

Marriage is one of the universal foundations, and no other foundation has affected human life intimately (1). One of the most important elements in the strength of marital relations is always to remember love. Psychologists define

love as a primary and positive emotion, but there is no consensus on the concept of love and its types. According to Maslow's belief, the need to love is not only a response to a defect but a process triggered by impulses that create self-actualization (2). Asghari and Rafienia also

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considered love as one of the primary psychological needs, the lack of which leads to psychological damage (3).

Sternberg (4) believes that love consists of three components: "intimacy", "desire or passion", and "determination/commitment". Aronson (5) also acknowledges that intimacy refers to the feeling of closeness and connection with the beloved. Passion refers to the warm aspects of a relationship, that is, the excitement you feel towards your partner, including sexual attraction. Commitment consists of two decisions. A short-term decision to make love with your partner and a long-term decision to maintain that love and stay with your partner until death does you part.

A husband and wife who love each other become more dependent on each other's presence; so that the need to love one's wife as a general need for love decreases, and the need to love one's life partner increases in moments of despair and injustice from each other and makes suffering bearable (6). One of the essential factors in the strength of a couple's relationship is their attachment style. What couples bring from their original families and how they leave their families to form an essential part of choosing a spouse and getting married (7). Therefore, it can be said that one of the important and influential factors in people's love styles is attachment styles. The concept of attachment and belonging was proposed by Bowlby. He stated that the intimate experience of childhood led to the formation of schemas in people and named these schemas as cognitive models about intimate relationships. Bowlby believed that attachment is an emotional bond that continues from the cradle to the grave. Attachment plays an important role in the way couples interact with each other; for example, attachment plays a role in regulating emotions, support, intimacy, and jealousy, and on the other hand, attachment plays a role in many fields, including conflict, communication, and sexual relations (8). Research conducted on attachment shows the effect of early attachment experiences on a person's future communication and emotion regulation strategies in adulthood (9).

Another important factor in the strength of a couple's relationship is their emotional intelligence, and since love is considered an emotion, it can be said that emotional intelligence impacts the style of love. From Bar-On's point of

view, emotional intelligence includes a group of non-cognitive skills, talents, and abilities that increase a person's ability to succeed in dealing with pressures and environmental conditions (10). Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions to achieve constructive emotions that can be used to evaluate thoughts, understand emotions, and acquire emotional knowledge. Using it can provide the means to cultivate emotions and develop one's intelligence. (11) People have high emotional intelligence and high self-control and self-motivation. In research, Zeidner and Kaluda (12) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and love, and the results of this study showed that there is a relationship between these two variables. Bekendam (13) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and the quality of attachment. Those who obtained a high emotional intelligence score and adaptive emotion regulation styles had empathy in interpersonal relationships, showed little confusion and had a secure attachment style. On the other hand, those with an insecure attachment style had a low emotional intelligence score, maladaptive emotion regulation styles, disturbed minds with emotional disability, and little benefit from empathy. Considering the importance of emotional intelligence and attachment styles in the life process of people and the importance of love in the foundation of the family and its stability, the researcher is trying to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and attachment styles with different types of love in couples.

Materials and Methods

The present research study is the application of a correlational research design. The statistical population consisted of couples referred to Binesh Novin Counseling Center to participate in educational workshops, and 50 couples were selected as a sample. Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the data.

Research instruments

A) Adult Attachment Style Questionnaire: This scale was developed using Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment test materials and was standardized for Tehran University students (14). This tool assumes that attachment is a stable

personality trait and significantly determines emotional relationships in adulthood. The attachment scale consists of 15 items; 5 are assigned to each of the three secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles. Grading is done on a Likert scale from never (score zero) to almost always (score four). Hazan and Shaver obtained the test-retest reliability of this questionnaire as 0.81 and the reliability with Cronbach's alpha as 0.87. Collins and Reid also obtained high reliability with Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 regarding this instrument. Cronbach's alpha reliability of this tool for the whole test, ambivalent, avoidant, and safe style, was 0.75, 0.83, 0.81, and 0.77, respectively, which shows good reliability (14).

B) Schott's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire: This is a 33-question test created by Schott et al. The test questions measure three components of

the emotional intelligence structure, including regulation of emotions, the productivity of emotions, and evaluation of emotions on a 5-point Likert scale from one (completely disagree) to five (completely agree). In research on adolescents aged 13 to 15 years, the overall reliability showed $\alpha=0.84$, $\alpha=0.66$, and $\alpha=0.55$ (10).

C) Sternberg Triangular Love Questionnaire: This questionnaire was prepared by Robert Sternberg. This questionnaire has 45 questions, including three components: intimacy, excitement, and commitment. Sternberg, 1997 Cronbach's alpha of this test is 0.90. In research by Mahmoudi, the Cronbach's alpha of this test was 0.97 (4).

Results

The findings of the present study can be seen in Tables 1 to 3.

Table 1. Pearson's correlation test between emotional intelligence and its components with Sternberg's types of love

Variable	Statistics	Intimacy	Sexual desire	Commitment
Optimism/emotion regulation	The coefficient	0.318**	0.293**	0.3648**
	The coefficient of determination	0.101	0.086	0.132
	Significance level	0.002	0.05	0.000
Assessment of emotions	The coefficient	0.119	0.39	0.081
	The coefficient of determination	0.014	0.002	0.007
	Significance level	0.266	0.712	0.446
Social skill	The coefficient	0.224*	0.213*	0.367**
	The coefficient of determination	0.055	0.045	0.135
	Significance level	0.036	0.045	0.000
Application of emotion	The coefficient	0.158	0.038	0.273**
	The coefficient of determination	0.025	0.001	0.075
	Significance level	0.140	0.725	0.010
Emotional intelligence	The coefficient	0.264*	0.197	0.323**
	The coefficient of determination	0.070	0.039	0.104
	Significance level	0.013	0.064	0.002

Table 2. Pearson's correlation test between attachment dimensions and Sternberg's love dimensions

Attachment	Statistics	Intimacy	Sexual desire	Commitment
Avoidant Attachment	The coefficient	-0.055	0.076	-0.003
	The coefficient of determination	0.003	0.006	0.000
	Significance level	0.612	0.477	0.979
Secure Attachment	The coefficient	0.039	0.051	0.091
	The coefficient of determination	0.002	0.003	0.008
	Significance level	0.717	0.636	0.394
Ambivalent Attachment	The coefficient	-0.174	0.034	-0.088
	The coefficient of determination	0.030	0.001	0.008
	Significance level	0.103	0.749	0.408

Table 3. Pearson's correlation test between age, marriage duration and Sternberg's love dimensions

Variable	Statistics	Intimacy	Sexual desire	Commitment
Age	The coefficient	-0.157	-0.229	-0.253*
	The coefficient of determination	0.025	0.052	0.067
	Significance level	0.192	0.053	0.032
Marriage duration	The coefficient	-0.227**	-0.356*	-0.143
	The coefficient of determination	0.052	0.127	0.020
	Significance level	0.009	0.001	0.080

According to Table 1, the results show that there is a positive and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and intimacy and commitment components. In addition, among the subscales of emotional intelligence, there is a positive and significant correlation between optimism/emotion regulation and social skill with the degree of intimacy, sexual desire, and commitment, and between the factor of using emotions with commitment. According to Table 2, Pearson's correlation analysis shows no significant relationship between any attachment styles and Sternberg's three dimensions of love. According to Table 3, Pearson's analysis shows a significant positive correlation between age and

commitment, marriage duration, intimacy, and sexual desire.

Discussion

Marriage is a formal contract to accept a mutual commitment to form a family life so that the parties to the marriage are placed in a specific and known line of life under its shadow. This contract is concluded with the consent and desire of the husband and wife and based on the complete freedom of both parties, and in light of that, a very close relationship appears between the two individuals (15).

The results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between emotional

intelligence and the intimacy and commitment components of Sternberg's three dimensions of love. Also, the results showed a significant relationship between optimism/emotion regulation and social skill with the degree of intimacy, sexual passion, and commitment, and between the factor of using emotions and commitment. These results are consistent with other studies conducted on similar variables. The incredible intimacy that brings two people together often creates a ground for sexual passion (16). Therefore, it has been claimed that couples with higher emotional intelligence can communicate effectively, resolve their conflicts more effectively, and regulate their emotions better (12). Several recent studies support the claim that emotional intelligence can be important in couples' relationships. In a study reported that couples who scored high in emotional intelligence show a high degree of happiness in their relationships compared to couples who scored low in emotional intelligence. It is assumed that people with high emotional intelligence are better able to communicate and solve their conflicts more effectively. They believe that emotional intelligence, or at least some aspects, is the ability to enrich a marriage, along with compatibility and satisfactory satisfaction. They believe that the ability to understand and accept each other's thoughts, feelings, and emotions in married life is associated with a greater sense of satisfaction—people with higher levels of emotional intelligence experience more marital satisfaction than those with low emotional intelligence (17). Bradbury et al. (18) provide evidence that emotions are a significant factor in examining the variation in marital quality and state that positive and negative emotions are directly related to marital quality more or less (19). Also, the results showed a significant positive relationship between age and commitment and between the duration of marriage and intimacy and sexual passion (20).

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In further confirmation of this finding, Sternberg's research states that two other components, passion and commitment, pass over time and originate from the main component of intimacy. Thus, when the intimacy factor decreases with age, the commitment factor, which is influenced by intimacy, also decreases. Also, the results showed that with increasing age and years of marriage, the level of love scores decreases. However, Sternberg states in his hypotheses that the three dimensions of love undergo quantitative and qualitative changes over time and in the course of a relationship (4), for example, intimacy in relationships. It can exist in two forms, one open and the other hidden, and over time, the manifestation of open intimacy decreases, but the hidden type of intimacy continues to grow.

Therefore, from the point of view of the external observer, intimacy in the relationship may be mistakenly fulfilled less than the actual level. Sternberg also believes that passion decreases over time in a relationship. In the research conducted by Ahmetoglu (21) on the relationship between the dimensions of love, personality, and duration of the relationship, the findings indicated that there is a negative relationship between age and intimacy, and age and passion. There is a negative and significant positive relationship between age and commitment.

Conclusion

According to the results of this study, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between gender and intimacy, a significant negative relationship between passion and gender, and a negative relationship between gender and commitment. Likewise, there is a positive relationship between the duration of the relationship and intimacy, a negative relationship between the duration of the relationship and passion, and a significant positive relationship between the duration of the relationship and commitment.

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