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Prevalence of Obsessive Love and Its Association with Attachment Styles

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Abstract

The purpose of current study was examined the prevalence of emotional immature or obsessive love and it has relationship between attachment styles of university students. The Sample of this study consisted of 290 students (117 female and 173 male) of Shahid Chamran University of Ahwaz that were selected with convenience sampling method. The instruments for collecting data consisted Passionate Love Scale and Adult Attachment Inventory. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistic, Pearson correlation and multiple regression through software program SPSS (version 16) and the significant level of analysis were $P < 0/05$. Results showed that the prevalence of obsessive love among population was 17/9 percent. The results of multiple regressions showed that ambivalent attachment style significantly ($P < 0/01$) can be predicted obsessive love. The research findings could be Based on concluding that activity of attachment system is not limited to childhood, And it remain during of life and the emotional ties such as friendships and romantic relationships, so that ambivalent attachment style in romantic relationships can be immature to predict.

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Introduction

Love is psychological state that during three decades has been considered by psychologists (Farahbakhsh & Shafieabadi, 2007). According to Soloman (1988), romantic love has been conceptualized as a “dynamic structure of experience that must be continually reanimated” to continue. Dietch (1973, quoted by Farahbakhsh & shafieabadi, 2007) knows mature love as one of the basic psychological needs that its absence lead to psychological deficit. Curtis (1983) suggested that the elements of mature love relationship are: (1) needing, (2) giving, (3) romance, and (4) companionship. Mature love relationships provide growth environment that mutual may feel motivated to acquire additional education and earn money. During such relational each partner achieve greater self-knowledge, self esteem and mental health that to permit an even more mature relationship attachment (Acevedo & Aron, 2009). Immature love, on the other hand, tends to create a maladaptive social environment. Curtis (1983) suggested that elements of immature love are: (1) power, (2) possession, (3) protection, (4) pity, and (5) perversion. These features appeared as obsessive thoughts in immature love. Individual dose not confidence to her/ his partner and continually

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check him/ his (Acevedo & Aron, 2009). Immature romantic love, when: (a) permeating one's daily life, (b) involving repeated out of control behavior, and (c) resulting in negative consequence, may be considered obsessive love (Timmreck, 1990). Many psychologists believed that model of obsessive love is similar to/as like as drug addiction / drug abuse (Reynaud, Karila, Blecha & Benyamina, 2010). Obsessive love as a substance using has negative career, social and family consequences. In addition; similar consequences, obsessive love and substance abusing has similar processes. It has been suggested that there is a need for markedly increased amounts of behavior to achieve the desired emotional effect. There are subjective urges to continue the behavior when one tries stop engaging in behavior (e.g. feeling desperate and alone when not in a relationship, heartache and lasting, like drug withdrawal). There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful effort to cut down or control the behavior is engaged in over a longer period than was intended. One may tended to replace end, relationship and finally a great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to begin or continue the behavior, or recovered from its efforts (Reynaud et al, 2010; Eiseman & dantzker, 2004). Because of similarities, obsessive love is also called 'addictive love'. Timmreck (1990) estimates that the prevalence of obsessive love is 5-10% of the U.S. population.

Obsessive love may stem on the social learning processes and cultural effects. Developmental experiences such as formation of social attachments in childhood can produce obsessive love (Susman, 2010). According to theory Bowlby, human is born with psychobiological system called attachment behavior. By helping of this system, the baby can stay close to adults and increase their survival chances; The purpose of this system in children is achieving to a sense of safety, trust and protection. (Ramezani, Esfand Abad, Tahmasebi, 2008). Ainsworth (1989) recognize three style attachments: secure, avoidant, ambivalent. Being sensitive caregiver to needs for child in the early years of life determines that three styles (Feeney & Noller, 1990). According to attachment theory, attachment system is not limited to childhood and extends to emotional relationships (e.g. friendships, marital relationships and etc). Attachment styles are usually resistant to modification and change (Ramezani et al, 2008). Securely attached subjects that reported stable relationships and able to trusts to others. They evaluate themselves lovely and valuable. Ambivalent subjects have unstable behavior and emotion. They were heavily dependent on the others, fear being left and fail more than others in love. Avoidant subjects reported mistrust of people and less intensity relationships (Sepah Mansour, ShahabiZadeh, Khoshnevis, 2009). For the first time, Hazan and Shaver (1987) extended attachment theory to adult romantic relationships. They believed that ambivalent attachment style is the cause of obsessive love. Feeney and Noller (1990) found that securely attached subjects reported trusting family relationships and stable love relationships. Avoidant subjects reported the low intensiveness of love experiences and fewer love experiences. Ambivalent subjects reported that depends on a desire for commitment in relationships. Love relationships were the least among this group. Furthermore, ambivalent subjects were relatively to idealize romantic partner. Hamidi (2007) found married students with secure attachment have more marital satisfaction from ambivalent or avoidant attachment. Arefi, Navabinezhad and Sanai observed (2006) ambivalent and avoidant attachment are negatively correlated with friendship quality.

The current study is designed on / for investigate the prevalence of obsessive love and its relationship between attachment styles of university students.

Methods

Participant

The research community consisted of all students of Shahid Chamran University. 290 students (117 female and 173 male) were selected with convenience sampling method.

Measures

Passionate Love Scale (PLS): This scale was made by Hatfield and Sprecher (1986). This scale consists of 30 items. Each item is rated on a nine-point liker scale and higher scores indicate higher levels of love. Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) gained the reliability .94 by using Cronbach's Alpha. They evaluate good validity for this scale. Its

reliability and validity were calculated in this research. Using Cronbach’s alpha, reliability was .97. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was .95

Adult Attachment Inventory: This scale was made Simpeson (1990). This scale consists of 13 items and 3 subscales: secure attachment style, avoidant attachment style and ambivalent attachment style. Each items was rated on a five-point liker scale. Alpha cronbach’s of this scale has reported 0.7 by Simpson (1992). Atari, Abbasi Sarchesme and MehrabiZadeh Honarmand (2006) gained the reliability co-efficient of the mentioned questionnaire in Iran 0.89 by using replication analysis method (after two years).

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, maximums and minimum of the variables.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Scales

Scale	M	SD	Maximum	minimum
Obsessive love	194.96	52.58	47	270
Secure attachment	14.54	2.42	8	13
Avoidant attachment	11.83	2.95	4	20
Ambivalent attachment	11.84	2.73	4	16

As shown in Table 2 , prevalence of obsessive love in population is 17.9 %.

Table 2. frequency and frequency percent in six level of passionate love according to standard deviation

level	Standard scores range	Raw score range	Frequency			Frequency percent		
			total	female	male	total	female	male
1	Between 2 to 3 SD above the mean	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Between 1 to 2 SD above the mean	247-270	52	31	21	17.9	26.5	12.1
3	Between mean to 1 SD above the mean	195-246	114	48	66	39.3	41	38.2
4	Between mean to 1 SD below the mean	143-194	69	26	43	23.8	22.2	24.9
5	Between 1 to 2 SD below the mean	81-142	44	10	34	15.2	8.5	19.7
6	Between 2 to 3 SD below the mean	47-80	11	2	9	3.8	1.7	5.2

As shown in table 3, there is only significant simple correlation between obsessive love and ambivalent attachment style (r=0.27, p<0/001).

Table 3. Pearson correlation between obsessive love and attachment styles

Predictor variables	AP : Dependent Variable		
	Secure	Avoidant	Ambivalent
Obsessive love	r = 0.044	r = 0.047	r = 0.269*

* Correlation coefficients significant at the 0.001 level

multiple regression analysis (hierarchical model) showed that ambivalent attachment style had a significant multiple correlation with obsessive love ($F=22.43$, $p< 0.001$). This variable determine %8 of obsessive love variance.

Results

The results of the present study showed that prevalence of obsessive love in population was about %17.9 while Timmreck (1990) estimated its prevalence between %5-10. Result of Pearson correlation showed that relationship between obsessive love and ambivalent attachment style is positive and significantly. Also result of multiple regression showed only ambivalent attachment style can predict obsessive love. These results were compatible with the researches of Feeney and Noller (1990), Hamidi (2007) and Arefi et al (2006). It can be said in explanation of findings that attachment style has important role in interpersonal interactions. According to attachment theory, internal model was developed in primary relations can affect on individual experiments and behaviors in various fields (family, peers and partners). So secure attachment will develop in people who have had sensitive, responsive and friendly caregiver and experience secure (Arefi et al, 2006). This security influences in their other relationships and prevent formation of aberrant forms of relationships such as obsessive love (Susman, 2010). Two basic characteristics of secure attached people are 'self-confidence and trust to others' (Arefi et al, 2006). In fact, they are honest in their relationships, knew well emotional behaviors of others and interpret them (Feeney and Noller, 1990). Avoidant attachment style will develop in people who have had inattention, inter current and unresponsive caregiver. These children will learn that they cannot rely on their caregiver's support. They are becoming indifferent to the mothers for self-defending. In fact, they try avoidant from more hopelessness. Avoidant defensive mechanism is becoming a fixed part of the personality. Child becomes an adult who is too independent and self-reliant (Crain, 2005). Avoidant attached person does not establish intimate relationships to others and therefore; less likely to be involved in obsessive love. According to attachment theory, ambivalent attached person's caregivers behaved in a manner inconsistent with them. Their parents sometimes were responsive and sometimes unresponsive. Caregiver's inconsistent behavior makes they constantly strive to keep close to their caregiver (Crain, 2005). Ambivalent attached persons who were becoming adult, that constantly worried about their relationships and fear from separation, rejection and betraying of partner. They are too dependent in love relationships. These conditions lead to develop obsessive love in ambivalent attached person.

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