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The Study of Relationship between Attachment Styles and Obsessive Love Style

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Abstract

The aim of this study was investigating the relationship between the attachment styles and obsessive love style of university students. The samples included 306 graduate students University of Nyshaboor-Iran that were selected with proportional random assignment procedure. The data were collected by using Adult Attachment Style (AAQ) and Love Attitude Style (LAS) Questionnaires. By employing SPSS software, the data were analyzed by using Pearson correlation coefficient and Multiple Variable Regression procedures. Therefore we can conclude that the Ambivalent Insecure Attachment Style has a role in producing Obsessive Love Style. The results of different analysis showed significant relationship among Obsessive love Style and Attachment Styles.

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1. Introduction

Early experiences of everyone have important effect on his personality growth and behaviour in adulthood. Such experiences can be named a strong emotional relation with a caregiver (especially parents). This strong emotional relation with the caregiver that is called attachment has an essential role in psychological characteristics of a person

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(Bowlby, 1969, Quoted in Seligman and Raider, 2009).

Attachment behaviours include stress responses and exploratory behaviour and are shaped by cognition, affect, and interaction with the caregiver. Early attachment provides an 'internal working model' that guides relational behaviour and expectations as an adult, and forms the basis for adult romantic attachments (Rholes and Simpson, 2004). These cognitive-affective representations of the self and of others are proposed mechanisms underlying continuity and stability of attachment patterns across the lifespan; they influence personality development, psychological functioning, behaviour, and affect regulation in later relational contexts (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2012).

Attachment styles can be secure or insecure. Insecure attachment styles that have been proposed include anxious, avoidant, fearful, unresolved, ambivalent, disorganized, preoccupied and dismissing. Factor analysis has identified anything from one to four attachment types (Armour et al., 2011) and the majority of research focuses on anxious and avoidant styles. These child's experiences cause him to maximize his environmental opportunities and form his social support relationships. The increase of child's sense of security allows him to come out of his inner experience and be able to gain more knowledge and understand him and others and perceives that his behaviours are organized throughout status, thoughts, emotions, beliefs and desires. Bowlby emphasized excitements are essential component of attachments and also children with secure attachment style have rich secure experiences and away from disturbance anxiety, and in contrast, children with insecure attachment style (avoidant and ambivalent) imagine the world insecure and stressful environment and do not have the effective and creative ability to stressful situations and problems (Jounston and Finney, 2010).

Bowlby believes that attachment in the parent-child relationship is alienated to an adult romantic relationship and can effect on behaviour, cognition and emotions in any time of life, from infancy to adulthood. Attachment in relationships is not broken off in a voluntary manner or completely, and any break in relationships is painful and cause to mourning in person (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1991). The Individual differences in adult attachment behaviour reflect the beliefs and expectations that people have about themselves and their intimate relationships in a previous attachment relationship. These activation models are relatively constant and reflect the individual's primary relationship with his mother. Thus, childhood attachments affect his adult romantic relationships. Then, the persistence the primary patterns in later periods is determined by two methods, first it is expected to make a stable relationship between child and caregiver that is continue up to adulthood. Second the development of mental models or attachment system occurs out of person awareness, can direct and guide his behaviours, thoughts and emotions in next romantic situations (Simpson and Rowlz; 1998). To determine and explain the social relationships, romantic relationships and sexual relationships in adulthood and youth periods, Hazan and Shaver use the theory of attachment styles. From their opinion the attachment styles reflect the mental representation of themselves and the others, and leads to different orientation in close relationship and are considered as fixed personality dimensions which not only has a very essential role in communicate with other in childhood, but also in adulthood (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). The interpersonal style of the adult and their corresponding attachment strategies will continue to be influenced by the internal working models developed in childhood, meaning that the securely attached adult will regard themselves as deserving of attachment and others as being able to meet their needs, whereas the opposite is likely to be true for those considered insecurely attached (Ma, 2006).

The sense of security and belonging is the main features of attachment. So that the person does not feel loneliness and sadness (Hutchison, 2006). Studies of attachment especially anxious attachment style (obsessive) indicate that the maladaptive interaction patterns of child and caregiver can cause a sense of need in child to control the attachment system in order to maintain the relationship (Cassidy and Berlin, 1994). One figure attachment of available and responsible provides a secure base in order to back the emotional balance in the time of distress and can make a positive model of others with confidence, support, adequacy and popularity, which all of them cause to make a secure attachment style. In contrast, in insecure attachment style the figure of attachment appears as a form of irresponsible or instable to satisfy the needs and stress times. Two important patterns of insecure attachment avoidant and ambivalent (anxious) attachment by creating the deactive attachment systems (neutral) and hyperactive attachment systems, respectively, are characterized as secondary strategies to attachment (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2012). In such cases, a sensitive and hypervigilance position is activated toward the relationship with caregiver and there might be appears some signs of obsessive behaviour. Also because person thinks it is his responsibility and duty to maintain the relationship, he felt guilty relative to autonomy and relationship release and

due to fear of losing the person of his choice, creates a self-compliant in himself as a caretaking strategy and this can lead to problems in romantic relationships in adulthood and cause to hardly break an abusive and not satisfying relationship (Weiss and Sampson, 1986; Winnicott, 1960; in quoted Hutchison, 2006).

It can be appeared based on pathology that in obsessive love person tends to over focused on his love object, but to some extent in maintaining the relationship and connection with the love object evolutionary has adaptive aspect that certain amount of abnormality is expectable even in normal people when they fell in love (Fisher,1992; Liebowitz,1983). Fisher (2004) stated that lovers became obsessive, and wills more to think about their love object. An explanation of love consisted of positive and negative emotions according to attachment theory: like fear of intimacy, jealousy, emotional pain and pleasure periods, caring, devotion and trust. This theory examined the separation and absence and explains how the relation of love and loneliness is. Individuals with different attachment styles have different beliefs about romantic love period, availability, trust capability of love partners and love readiness. These beliefs might be part of a circle (false circle on insecure individuals) in which experiment affect the beliefs of him and the others and also these beliefs have effects on behaviour and connection consequences .In consider of the tendency to become preoccupied with a love object, the anxious style of attachment is particularly relevant in reason of the overlap of symptoms between this attachment style and obsessive behaviour .For example ,preoccupation ,vigilance ,and rumination ,which are characteristics of romantic love(Fisher,2004;Tallis,2004) and obsession(American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder,IV-TR,2000) are also associated with anxious attachment.

Based on conducted researches that showed the continuity of attachment styles during the life and individual's adulthood romantic and intimacy relations are formed in the respect of cognition and behavioural dimensions on the basis of child-parent's attachment styles, in this study we examined the relation between attachment styles and obsessive love style, due to the significant role in adults' romantic relationships that is determined by attachment styles.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The study subjects included 306 graduate girl students Science and Research University of Nyshaboor branch Iran ;(Mean age 28.7 years in range of 25 to 40 years ;Standard Deviation(SD) = 4.30)and also over 50% were married and the rest were single, and 1% were divorced or widowed . The majority were first child of family that were selected by proportional random assignment procedure.

2.2. Measures

Demographic characteristics questionnaire: is used to determine sex, age range, marital status, profession, birth order. Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ): This is the first measure of adult attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) made by Hazan and Shavar (1987). It is a three-item questionnaire designed to measure one's attachment style. It is consisted of two parts, in the first part, (AAQ 1) three essential paragraphs are proposed as descriptive sentences that the responder should answer on rating based on Likert-scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree; which is the fact of the determination of the extent in which this description is in conformity with the responder characteristics. In the second part, (AAQ 2) the same descriptions are represented but this time the responders are supposed to check only one of them to express their similarity with one of these descriptions. Different researches have gained acceptable reliability for this questionnaire by using the test-retest method. For example, in the respect of categorical measure (AAQ), retest stability method is 70% and in the continuous scales which description ratings happens there (AAQ), retest stability is estimated 60% during first week to eighth for triple variables rating (Feeney and Noller · 1990).On the other hand In this study the test reliability is calculated by means of the Cronbach's alpha level is equal to 78% that is relatively high.

Love Attitude Scales (LAS): The Love Attitude Scales (LAS) (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1986) measures the beliefs about romantic relationships. This tool is a combination of 42 items and 6 subscales (styles of love) consist

of: Erose, Ludos, Storge , Pragma, Mania ,Agape, that each of its 7 questions are assessed one type of love styles. Each scale is rated on 5-point Likert scales (1= strongly disagree , 3= neutral , 5= strongly agree). Reliability analysis of LAS produced the alpha coefficient for the entire scale is %70 ,and coefficients for the six subscales are ranged from %62 to %84 (Tzeng ,1993). In current study the test reliability is calculated by means of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal to 86% than indicates to the very well reliability of the test.

2.3. Data analysis

By employing SPSS -17 software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) package, the data were analyzed by using Pearson correlation coefficient and Multiple Variable Regression procedures.

3. Results

The maximum and minimum scores mean and standard deviation of various components' questionnaires of attachment and love styles are shown in table 1 separately.

Table 1. The descriptive features of variables

	Subscale	At least	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Love styles	Eros	7	35	25.70	5.762
	Lodus	7	32	19.77	4.423
	Pragma	7	34	24.64	4.043
	Storg	8	40	31.42	4.415
	Mania	8	35	23.33	5.009
	Agapeh	7	35	23.28	7.018
Attachment styles	Avoidant attachment style	1	7	3.44	1.917
	Ambivalent attachment style	1	7	3.03	1.872
	Secure attachment style	1	7	4.47	1.780

Pearson correlation test results in Table 2 indicate that, between secure attachment style and obsessive love style (mania), there was no significant relationship. In table 3 the result of multiple variable regression tests is summarized, the prediction of obsessive love style on the basis of secure attachment style did not show any effect.

Table 2. Results of secure attachment style's correlation coefficient with obsessive love style (mania)

Love style	Attachment Style	Secure Attachment Style
Obsessive Love style (mania)	Pearson correlation coefficient	.046
	Significance level	.427
	Number	306

Table 3. Results of regression analysis of the relation between secure attachment style with obsessive love style (mania)

Model	Not standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T coefficient	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant amount	10.478	2.367		4.426	.000
Secure Attachment Style	-.26	.153	-.009	-.169	.866

In table 4 there were no significant relation between avoidant insecure attachment styles with obsessive love style. Also table 5 showed no effects of avoidant insecure attachment style on prediction of obsessive love style.

Table 4. Results of avoidant insecure attachment style’s correlation coefficient with obsessive love style (mania)

Love Style	Attachment Style	Avoidant Insecure Attachment Style
Obsessive Love Style (mania)	Pearson correlation coefficient	.012
	Significance level	.831
	Number	306

Table 5. Results of regression analysis of the relation between avoidant insecure attachment style with Obsessive love style (mania)

Model	Not standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T coefficient	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant amount	10.727	2.321		4.622	.000
Avoidant Insecure Attachment Style	-.176	.143	-.068	-1.233	.218

Table 6 showed a significant relation in ($p < 0/001$) between ambivalent insecure attachment style with the obsessive love style (mania). Also it can be said based on coefficients’ results of table 7 that ambivalent insecure attachment style is calculated with a significant level $sig = 0/05$ and $=\beta 0/140$ that effects on prediction of obsessive love style (mania).

Table 6. The results of ambivalent insecure attachment style with obsessive love style (mania)

Love Style	Attachment Style	Ambivalent Insecure Attachment Style
Obsessive Love Style (mania)	Pearson correlation coefficient	.258(**)
	Significance level	.000
	Number	306

Table 7. The results of regression analysis of between ambivalent insecure attachment style with obsessive love style (mania)

Model	Not standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T coefficient	Significance level
	B	Standard error	Beta		
Constant amount	11.091	2.303		4.815	.000
Ambivalent Insecure Attachment Style	.373	.153	.140	2.437	.015

4. Discussion

The results showed that there is a significant relation between ambivalent insecure attachment styles with obsessive love style, so that this type of attachment style can be a prediction of obsessive love style, there is no significant relation between secure attachment style and avoidant insecure attachment style with the obsessive love style (mania). Based on attachment theory, the effective inner patterns that are trained by the individual's first connections with his attachment figures overshadowed his new behavior and experiences in different fields, especially romantic relationships. More recently research has also indicated that attachment is not fixed or stable. Belsky et al (1999) found that fifty percent of people do not fit into the same attachment category once retested three months after the initial questionnaire. Research also supports the notion that the romantic relationship itself might influence and regulate the attachment style of a person. Fraley and Davis (1997) propose that a transfer of primary attachment from the parents to peers begins in early adulthood and this suggests that as romantic partners begin to consume the primary attachment role, these relationships should influence attachments. Although many of scholars including, Dion and Dion, 1985; Lee, 1973; Sternberg, 1986; Tennov, 1979, quoted in Hazan and Shaver, 1987, try to assess different figures of love, but the attachment theory can describe how different attachment styles are developed, especially the obsessive love style that was noticed in this study and how similar the underlying dynamics that are common to all people can be formed by early experiences and lead to different relational styles. The Obsessive-dependent lovers feel a strong need to love and showing extreme jealousy towards their beloved. Some characteristics of the patient (in fact impatience toward the beloved) are of the aspects of dependency that a person refuges to a figure that he thinks this is his attachment subject, in order to escape from inner anxiety (Abdi, Golzari, 1389). The research of Arnold and Kenmasa (1995) are in the same direction with the above results. Child-parent relation attachment moves to adulthood romantic relations and can have effects on cognitions, Emotions and behaviors in life (Botlani et al., 1389; Salary et al., 1390; Collins and Read, 1990). The study results are in conformity with results of Heaven et al, (2004) that anxious attachment style can certainly predict mania and lodus love styles.

Obsessive love style (Mania) is in relevant with emotional dependency and lodus love style (fancy) is irrelevant with dependent to others, that both reflect different aspects of anxious attachment orientation (ambivalent). This study clarify the relation of both styles, mania and lodus, with neuroticism and this indicated that people with emotionally unstable personality characteristics are involved in either possessive behaviors and jealous attitudes or mental games and no obligation behavior (Alan-Cook, 2012; Mikolincir and Shaver, 2007; Crafold and Nuvak, 2008). Further, secure attachment will develop in people who have had sensitive, responsive and friendly caregiver and experience secure (Arefi et al., 2006). 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 (Ahmadi et al., 2013). This security influences in their other relationships and prevent formation of aberrant forms of relationships such as obsessive love (Susman, 2010).

5. Conclusion

Various studies assessment show the effects of attachment style on different fields of individual life, also this study examined the attachment styles with obsessive love style, the obtained results indicate that there is a significant relation between these two variables, so that one can have effect the other, statistical tests have shown these effects, so that the study questions and that attachment styles have effect on love style are answered, more secure attachment style more certain the love style goes. However, the finding that ambivalent attachment style was most strongly associated with obsessive love style. The existence of a secure attachment style in life and followed by it, the more positive relations with people can directly effect on psychological health and life quality and therefore we will have healthier society and people and interactions.

Confirming the study results and similar researches show that early experience with parents and family is important, and thus these experiences play an essential role in forming intimate and romantic relation and in encountering with emotional issues, show the attention and necessity of the subject. We can conclude that the ambivalent insecure attachment style has a role in producing obsessive love style. Therefore, by assessing the attachment styles of people, one can predict their love styles and may provide necessary counselling and instruction for increasing interpersonal relationship quality and psychological well-being of them.

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