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Comparing attachment to God and identity styles and psychological well-being in married teachers: With regard to demographic factors

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to compare attachment to God and identity styles and psychological well-being in married teachers with regard to demographic factors including gender and teaching level. The research method is descriptive and ex-post facto type. The research population involves all married teachers of Mashhad city in year 2013 who were studying in Farhangian university of Khorasan Razavi. 330 people, who were selected by using simple random sampling method, responded to Ryff psychological wellbeing, ISI identity styles and Sim and Loh attachment to God questionnaires. The data were analyzed in descriptive like frequency, average, standard deviation and inference statistic such as independent T-test with SPSS-20 statistic program. The results show that the average scores of attachment to God, psychological well-being and informational identity style have significant difference in male and female teachers (P<0.01). Nevertheless, the average scores of normative and avoidant/diffusive identity styles don’t have significant difference in male and female teachers. Also the results suggested that there is not a significant difference in the average scores of none of research variables among teachers with different teaching level.

Keywords: attachment to God; identity styles; psychological well-being; married teachers; demographic factors

1. Introduction

Although psychological well-being has been extensively evaluated (e.g., Diener, 1984; Diener & Emmons, 1984), when it comes to articulating the basic structure of psychological well-being, the researchers always center

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they possess stable and foreclosed self-concepts, are inflexible in encountering ambiguous situations and have a
values, and prescriptions held by significant others when confronting identity relevant problems (Berzonsky, 1990).
Erikson (1968) postulates that beginning in adolescence and possibly continuing through early
life (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) suggests that as a result of this self exploration and the evaluation of
possible alternatives to their current sense of self (Erikson, 1968). This commitment allows the individual to achieve a sense of
identity issue, especially the identity styles (Bersons ky, 1990; Vleioras & Bosma, 2005; Shokri and et.al, 2007;
Siahpoosh and et.al, 2007). According to Erikson (1968), a sense of identity emerges as the adolescent copes with
social demands and developmental challenges, and attempts to give meaning to his choices and commitments of his
life (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) postulates that beginning in adolescence and possibly continuing through early
adulthood individuals experience a “crisis” which is a process of exploration of their sense of who they are,
including their values, beliefs and behaviors (Erikson, 1968). This psychological process of self exploration is usually accompanied by some emotional discomfort and involves an evaluation of possible alternatives to their current sense of self. Erikson (1968) suggests that as a result of this self exploration and the evaluation of alternatives, new values, beliefs, and goals are integrated into a person’s sense of self and individuals become committed to this new sense of self (Erikson, 1968). This commitment allows the individual to achieve a sense of ego identity. This ego identity provides the individual with a sense of purpose and direction and an ongoing sense of which he or she is that is necessary for his or her optimal functioning as an adult. Berzonsky (1990) has identified three social-cognitive processing orientations or styles: informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant. An informational style is typical of adolescents who seek out and evaluate self-related information actively. This style is positively associated with cognitive complexity, self-reflection, problem-oriented coping style, rational epistemic style, and consciousness, planning, decision-making, and highest level of self-esteem, psychological wellbeing, academic autonomy and goal-directedness (Berzonsky, 2005, Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi and Kinny, 1997, Berzonsky and Kuk, 2000, dollinger, 1995). Adolescents with a normative identity style rely on the expectations, values, and prescriptions held by significant others when confronting identity relevant problems (Berzonsky, 1990). They possess stable and foreclosed self-concepts, are inflexible in encountering ambiguous situations and have a
high need for structure and cognitive closure. They display high levels of conscientiousness, have a crystallized self-
theory composed of change-resistance, have a rather low degree of emotional independence and their educational
objectives are controlled by others (Berzonsky, 005, Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi and Kinny, 1997, Berzonsky and
Kuk; Berzonsky, 1989b; Soenens & et.al, 2005). Adolescents with a diffuse-avoidant identity style, tend to have
behavior that is controlled and dictated by situational demands (Wiebe, 1999). This identity processing style is
associated with low levels of self-awareness, cognitive persistence, and low self-esteem, high levels of dysfunctional
cognitive strategies, emotion-oriented coping style, and lack of educational purpose (Berzonsky, 2005, Nurmi,
Berzonsky, Tammi and Kinny, 1997, Berzonsky and Kuk, 2000, dollinger, 1995). Diffuse-avoidant identity style,
leads to an inconsistent and fragmented self-theory and constant approval from others (Berzonsky, 1990).

In the other hand, religion and religious experience with regard to presenting perspectives, worldviews and a
special kind of philosophy to its audiences, seems to be associated with psychological well-being features. One of
the concepts which religion has been examined with it is attachment to God. In describing the attachment bond,
Ainsworth (1985) delineated four criteria: Maintaining proximity with the attachment figure, seeing the attachment
figure as a secure base of explorative behavior, considering the attachment figure as providing a haven of safety, and
experiencing separation anxiety when removed from the attachment figure (leading to grief if the attachment figure
is also lost). Using these criteria, Kirkpatrick (1999) as persuasively argued that relationship with God can be
described as an attachment bond. Generally, attachment to God can be defined in this way: the quality of affective,
cognitive, and behavioral bond with God which is the underlying of many religious and spiritual behaviors and
emotions (Miner and Ghobaribonab, 2011). One of the basic and influential parts in every society is the educational
system of that society and teachers are among the most important pillars of this educational system. Therefore,
carrying out surveys about this population in the society is so crucial and could resolve many problems. It is obvious
that existing a series of traits in teachers of a society like, balanced development, having strong identity, having
positive and acceptable relationship with God, progress, vitality, mental happiness and high psychological
wellbeing, could have considerable effects on personality aspects, personal and social development, emerging
competent behaviours, nurturing more talented people and decreasing the personality and behavioural abnormalities
of the people of that society. So conducting investigations about psychological wellbeing, identity styles and
attachment to God in teachers not only help to develop and increase the quality of life level of the teachers but also
leads to more growth and progress of the whole society.

2. Methodology

The research method of this study is descriptive and from the correlational type. The statistical population of the
research included all man and women married teachers of Mashhad city who were teaching in the academic year of
2012-2013 in the elementary and secondary levels and simultaneously they were studying in different campuses of
the Farhangian University of Khorasan Razavi. To reach the study goals, among the population with the size of
approximately 2000 people, Krejcie and Morgan table suggested choosing 330 people as the sample. 330 people
with the age average and standard deviation of 36.58 and 6.44 were selected as the sample by using the simple
random sampling method. Thus, first of all a list of all members of the research population were taken from the
Farhangian University of Khorasan Razavi and then the names were encoded and afterwards the sampling was done
by using the random-number table and with the help of computer.

2.1. Research tools

In this study, three Ryff psychological wellbeing, ISI identity styles and Sim and Loh attachment to God
questionnaires were used.

2.1.1. Ryff psychological well-being scale

This scale was developed by Ryff (1989) in the Wiskansin University of the United States of America and was
revise in year 2000. The mentioned scale has 84 items which assess the 6 components of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, mastery on environment, life with purpose and personal growth. The method of scoring in this scale is Likert type (1=completely disagree to 6=completely agree). It has 47 direct and 37 reverse items for scoring and the range of the total score of each person in this scale in all six components could fluctuate from 14 to 84. The reliability and validity of this scale has been reported in different studies. Ryff (1989) for examining the reliability of this scale calculated its relationship with the personality traits scales which at the same time are the psychological wellbeing criteria (like: Bradbourne affective balance scale, Newgorton life satisfaction and Rosenberg self-respect). The results of Ryff scale correlation with each of the mentioned scales were acceptable. Therefore, this scale is accounted reliable. For assessing the validity of this scale, Ryff (1989) used the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and acquired the following coefficients: self-acceptance 0.91, positive relations with others 0.84, autonomy 0.83, environmental mastery 0.86, purpose in life 0.88, personal growth 0.85 and the total psychological wellbeing 0.87. In Iran Shokri and et.al (2007 ) calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficients: self-acceptance 0.78, positive relations with others 0.74, autonomy 0.60, environmental mastery 0.77, purpose in life 0.75, personal growth 0.73 and the total psychological wellbeing 0.72. In the present study the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were achieved: self-acceptance 0.86, positive relations with others 0.84, autonomy 0.75, environmental mastery 0.81, purpose in life 0.85, personal growth 0.84 and the total psychological wellbeing 0.96.

2.1.2. ISI identity styles scale

This scale was developed by Bersonsky for the first time and after that it was twice reviewed. The mentioned scale involves 11 items for informational style, 9 items for normative style and 10 items for diffusive/avoidant style and 10 other items for commitment scale which is used for secondary analysis and are not accounted as an identity style. Scoring method in this scale is Likert type (1=completely disagree to 5=completely agree). The minimum and maximum score in the informational style is in order 11 and 55, in normative style 9 and 45 and in diffusive/avoidant style is 10 and 50. For examining the reliability of this scale, White and et.al (1992) evaluated the people’s responses in the three identity styles with the factor analysis method by using the varimax rotation with the main component. The correlation coefficient of each factor with the whole test for the first factor was 0.79, for the second factor was 0.81 and for the third factor was 0.84 that all of the amounts are high. In Iran, Farsinejad (2004) probe in the construct reliability with the factor analysis method which the sampling adequacy was 0.75. For examining the validity of mentioned scale, Bersonsky (1992) in the last reviewed version, reported the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the informational subscale 0.62, normative subscale 0.66 and for diffusive/avoidant subscale 0.73. In Iran, Khosroshahi and Aliloo (2012) acquired the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for informational subscale 0.78, normative subscale 0.71 and for diffusive/avoidant subscale 0.70. In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated 0.81 for informational style, 0.81 for normative style and 0.88 for diffusive/avoidant style.

2.1.3. Sim and Loh attachment to God scale

This scale includes 16 items which evaluate the attachment to God in four dimensions of: God as a safety haven, God as a secure base, seek close relationship with God and detachment from God. The scoring method of this test is Likert type (1=completely disagree to 6=completely agree) and the range of total score for each person in this scale could fluctuate from 16 to 96. Jouls (2007) well described the reliability of this scale in a way that in a research, he calculated the correlation coefficient of this scale with the religious beliefs and religious activities orderly 0.83 and 0.85. For assessing the validity of this scale, Jouls (2007) in a study acquired Cronbach’s alpha coefficient: 0.96 for safety haven, 0.97 for secure base, 0.96 for closeness and 0.97 for detachment and totally 0.99. According to this, attachment to God can be considered as a single construct which can be expressed in four different ways. In Iran, Nayeri and et.al achieved the amount of Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale equals to 0.96. In this research the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was also acquired 0.93.
3. Results

Descriptive results related to research variables can be observed in table number 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment to God</th>
<th>Psychological wellbeing</th>
<th>Informational style</th>
<th>Normative style</th>
<th>Diffusive/avoidant style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>90.47</td>
<td>365.06</td>
<td>40.13</td>
<td>30.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>57.82</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>7.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1. Research hypothesis

1. There is a significant difference between psychological wellbeing, identity styles and attachment to God in men and women married teachers.

2. There is a significant difference between psychological wellbeing, identity styles and attachment to God in married teachers with different teaching level.

As it can be observed in the above table, the average of Attachment to God, psychological well being and Informational identity style have significant difference between men and women. As the average scores of each three variables in women are more than men. Also, Normative identity style and Diffusive identity style doesn’t have any significant difference between men and women.

2. There is a significant difference between psychological wellbeing, identity styles and attachment to God in married teachers with different teaching level.

As it can be seen in the above table, none of the average scores of research variables have significant difference between men and women.
4. Conclusion and discussion

This research was done to compare attachment to God and identity styles and psychological well-being in married teachers with regard to demographic factors including gender and teaching level. The results stated that attachment to God, psychological well-being and identity styles could be affected by the gender factor whereas the normative and diffusive identity styles are not greatly dependent to gender and also attachment to God, psychological well-being and identity styles are not much influenced by teaching level of teachers. Despite the researcher’s investigation did not make any identical studies available but the results could be thought in accordance with results of Beyrami (2010) study which showed that there is a significant difference between male and female university student in identity. Also Watson and Morris (2005) confirmed that there is a significant difference in identity styles between male and female. Ghobari Bonab and Yusefi Namini (2009) and Sadeghi and Mazaheri (2008) found that girls are more attached with God and in their works depend more on God. The achieved results could be the outcome of the impact of different factors such as the type of culture, religion, customs, rituals and quality of life, educational level, social status and position, family situation and other factors of the same kind in the studied population, but more accurate explanation of the results requires more accurate researches, studies and examinations around this field. In conclusion, the result of the current study is a confirmation for the role of gender in attachment to God, identity styles, and psychological well being especially in married teachers. With respect to the achieved results, it is suggested that, other researchers repeat this study in other countries and societies to achieve more accurate and generable results. And it is suggested to the persons in charge of the educational systems of different countries to pay more attention to these three variables in teachers and even make diverse workshops available for this group for improving and promoting these three variables in them.

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