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PREDICTING MARITAL INSTABILITY BASED ON EMOTIONAL MATURITY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to predict marital instability based on emotional maturity and parental bonding of couples in Shiraz. Method: The current research is a correlational project. The statistical population of the study consisted of all couples living in Shiraz who lived in this city in 2017, and the sample size was 200 couples from the city of Shiraz; available sampling method was used to sample these couples. The research instruments consisted of Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS), Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), and Marital Instability Index (MII). Results: For data analysis, SPSS software had been used. Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis showed that care dimension could negatively and significantly predict marital instability, and overprotection dimension could positively and significantly predict marital instability. Based on other results, dimensions such as lack of Emotional stability and social maladjustment as well as lack of independence are able to predict marital instability positively and significantly.

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Introduction

One of the significant social institutions in terms of its importance, roles and function that are considered by religious and ethics scholars and professionals in education, sociology and psychology is Family. Therefore, the importance of recognizing and exploring the factors that strengthen this social institution and couples' relationships can be a useful step towards promoting the level of community culture.

Marriage is considered important in almost all societies (1). Marriage and marital relationship are the source of support, intimacy and enjoyment for humans. On the other hand, marriage will create cooperation, sympathy, interest, kindness, tolerance and responsibility towards the family. Furthermore, modernization and globalization have brought about significant changes in social, economic, cultural and legal institutions such as the family, and this process has posed a serious threat to many values of family relationship such as the stability of marital life.

One of the most important factors in couples' life which affects the survival and continuation of the family is marital stability. Kang and Jaswal in a research showed that marital stability is recognized as an indicator of mutual identity and sharing responsibilities and marital obligations of spouses. Marital Instability and other relationships has been one of the hallmarks of the last three decades of the twentieth century. Ending marriage can create distress and widespread concern for individuals. In a more precise definition, marital instability is a term used to identify couple's tendency to dissolve marriage. Marital instability has been used along with concepts such as marital dissolution, marital relationship disruption, divorce, low marital quality, and leaving marriage. Nazari, Sahebdel, and Asadi concluded that marital instability occurs when one or both couples think

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about divorce or separation, or showing behaviors that tend to end marriage. Hence, this great problem is closely related to divorce.

Marital instability includes three states: 1. an emotional state (how do I feel about my marriage)? 2. Cognitive Concerns about the relationship (What do I think about how I feel or what thoughts are involved behind my emotions?). 3. Certain actions (What I really do as a result of my feelings and as a consequence of my thoughts)?

In another definition, the concept of marital instability refers to the tendency of couples for divorce, which involves two situations: (1) a cognitive state (thinking about whether their marriage is in difficulty or the thought of divorcing). 2. Behavioral state (the behavior that a person shows as a result of his feelings or in a conversation with his spouse about divorce). In fact, marital instability is posed when one or both couples are thinking about divorce or separation, or they act in a way to end the marriage.

One of the factors that can be linked to marital instability in couples is emotional maturity. Once, an individual can correctly recognize his or her emotions and feelings and knows how to control and express them correctly then we can consider such person as emotionally mature. Emotional maturity is a process in which the personality of an individual constantly strives to achieve emotional, psychological, and individual well-being. Emotional maturity is defined completely by seven components of intimacy, empathy, self-expression, psychological stability, independence, mental balance, and the ability to observe emotional affirmations. Emotional maturity is the result of realizing that nothing or no one else can hurt, provoke, or make a person angry, unless that person himself give permission. But maturity does not merely mean specific attitudes and actions, but also includes the ability to fully enjoy them. The most prominent sign of emotional maturity is the ability to withstand tension, and another sign is the indifference attitude towards some types of stimuli that affect the individual, and make him feel bored or emotional. Additionally, a mature person has a continuous emotional perspective with a capacity for joy and pleasure. He enjoys both work and pleasure and maintains a balance between them (2).

The need to establish and maintain links and close relationships with others is considered as the central and fundamental motive of mankind. Most people consider marriage as the most intimate relationship of adulthood, which is the main source of emotion and support (3).

The relationship between parents and the child plays an essential role in regular and normal development of the child, and deviations from the development of attachment behaviors, lack of parental support and care allow children to be subjected to mental disorders in adulthood. To examine the relationship between the child and the parent, Parker (1979) refers to two basic dimensions of parental behavior: overprotection and care. Overprotection indicates meddler and inhibitor parents who strip their child from freedom of action. Parental care also indicates kindness, warmth and responsiveness to the needs of children. From combining these two dimensions, four behavioral styles are created: optimal style (high care and low overprotection), affectionate constraint (high care and high overprotection), affectionate control (low care and high overprotection), and neglectful Parenting (Low Care and Low overprotection).

Almost all parents certainly or implicitly know how to up bring their children, that is, they know what kind of learnings, moral values, and behavioral patterns are appropriate for the growth of their children. Parents, when trying to achieve their goals, use different methods because different methods are useful for different purposes. A study by Zapf JL, Greiner J and Carroll (2008), showed that cold behaviors and over-protection of parents cause mental disorders in adolescents, and will affect some types of relationships they have with their spouses in the future. In this regard, the Nazari, Sahebdel and Asadi (1) showed that between subjects with three attachment styles, there are significant differences in terms of the degree of marital instability. The mean of marital instability in a bilinear anxiety attachment style was significantly higher than secure attachment style. In this study, there was no significant difference between the mean of marital instability in both anxiety and avoidant attachment styles and between bilinear anxiety attachment style with both safe and avoidant attachment styles. According to the results, it cannot be claimed that people with a safe attachment style tend to experience more stability in marriage comparing to those with avoidance attachment style.

According to the discussion above and also based on the background review, the problem of the present research is that how much emotional maturity and parental bonding predicts marital instability of couples in the city of Shiraz?

Methods

The current research is a correlation study that predicts the instability of marriage based on emotional maturity and parental bonding of couples in Shiraz. The statistical population of the study consisted of all couples in Shiraz who lived in this city in 2017. This number was estimated to be 1,608,000 individuals. Considering the fact that 8 components of the research variables are used in the current study, for each component, 25 individuals were selected. Therefore, 200 of the couples in the city of Shiraz were selected using available sampling method. Exclusion criteria included any psychological disorders and addiction problems; therefore, individuals with these problems had been excluded from the research. The inclusion criteria included any ordinary couples with different educational levels and age of over twenty years.

Research instruments

Research instruments include:

1. Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS)

In the current study, the data were collected using Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) that was gathered in 1990 by Dr. Yashowiring and Dr. Mahesh Bhargava. This questionnaire consists of 48 questions. The first 10 questions measure emotional insecurity, questions 11-20 measure emotional regression, questions 21-30 measure social maladjustment, questions 31-40 measure personality disintegration, and the last 8 questions measure lack of independence.

The validity of this scale has been determined by Sinha and Singh for the external criteria, that is the "Gha" compatibility questionnaire for college students. In this questionnaire, the Gha area measures emotional compatibility of college students and there are 21 questions in this area. The momentum correlation between the total scores in 21 questions of Gha area and the total scores of emotional maturity scale is 0.67. Reliability was measured by a test-retest on the students, which included girls and boys aged 20 to 24 years. The interval between these two tests was 6 months and the momentum correlation between these two tests was 0.75. The reliability of this questionnaire was measured in a research by Fallah Chai, Amanolahi and Gheisari (4) and the obtained value was 0.80.

2. Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI)

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) was developed by Gordon Parker, Hillary Tupling and L. B. Brown in 1979 which consists of 25 items and 2 subscales of care (12 questions) and overprotection (13 questions) which is used to measure parental bonding.

Scoring questionnaire is based on a 4-point Likert scale; for "very like", "like", "moderately unlike" and "very unlike" scales, 0, 1, 2, and 3 points are considered, respectively.

Components and questions related to each component:

	Component	Questions	Number of question
1	care	1-2-4-5-6-11-12-14-16-17-18-24	12
2	overprotection	3-7-8-9-10-13-15-19-20-21-22-23-25	13

The maximum score for the subscale of care is 36 and the maximum score for the overprotection subscale is 39.

A high score for care subscale means that the parents are sympathetic, warm, supportive, and friendly. They are usually at the side of a teenager, conversing and understanding them. On the other hand, low scores on this subscale show that parents are cold and rejecting, without being a source of impression and paying enough attention to their child. At one end of the control scale they are described with statements such as "overprotection", "dependency and childhood persistent", as well as "offensive and controlling". At the other end of the spectrum, the parents give self-determination to their child. High score, which means extreme control or overprotection, is one of the major risk factors. Some findings suggest that a very low score may be a sign of parental indifference and neglect (5).

Through split-half method, parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) has a very good internal consistency with a reliability coefficient of 0.88 for the subscale of care and 0.84 for overprotection subscale. The PBI also has a 3-week re-test correlation coefficient score of 0.76 for care subscale and 0.83 for the overprotection subscale.

PBI has a good concurrent validity, and has a significant correlation with independent grading judgments, parental care and overprotection. Over all, the care and support of mothers comparing to care and support of fathers was more significant. Cronbach's alpha in the initial studies of validity test by Parker, obtained 0.62 and 0.63 for the subscale of care and 0.66 to 0.87 for overprotection subscale. High scores for overprotection and low scores for care subscales refers to problematic bonding. PBI has high convergence validity (0.81) which is independent of mood (6).

The authors of this questionnaire have reported a three-week retest reliability of 0.76 and 0.83 for protection and care measures, respectively. The validity of this test for the care scale was 0.76 and for the overprotection subscale was 0.63. Cronbach's Alpha for Parental care is 0.93, and for Parental over protection is 0.87 (7). Cronbach's Alpha for this questionnaire in the study of Narimani et al. (7) was 0.44 for care scale and it was 0.78 for overprotection scale. In assessing the psychometric adequacy of the English version and comparing it to Dutch population, this questionnaire was assessed with appropriate validity and reliability. In reviewing the validity of the Japanese version, factor structure was reported similar to the Australian sample and its reliability had been reported as desirable (Kitamura and Suzuki, 1993). In another study by Capsey and Kukuker, the credibility and reliability (range domain of 0.70 to 0.91) of the questionnaire were reported in Turkey at a desirable level. Another study in Chinese community was conducted by the researchers that evaluated the validity of the questionnaire as appropriated and suggested a four-factor content condition According to the results from factor analysis of the main components of this questionnaire in Iran, the results support a four-factor content condition and the reliability and validity (range domain of 0.72 to 0.85) of this questionnaire have been reported to be satisfactory (8).

The validity and reliability of this questionnaire was investigated in a study by Mohammadi et al. The validity of this questionnaire was calculated by factor analysis, which kmo value was equal to 850 and the coefficient Bartlett sphericity test was 3636.26. The internal consistency was achieved as -0.72 for care subscale and -0.67 for protection. The reliability of this questionnaire was also obtained using Cronbach's alpha for these dimensions as 0.83 and 0.67 respectively.

3. Marital Instability Index (MII)

Marital Instability Index was prepared and developed by John N. Edwards, David R. Johnson, and Alan Booth. This indicator is a tool that has 14 questions and measures marital instability. This test was first applied in 1989 to 2034 married women and men under the age of 55, as well as 1578 married women and men in 1983.

For scoring this questionnaire, the first 14 questions are in the Likert scale of, never = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3 and very = 4. The scores between 14 and 28 indicate that the amount of marital instability is low. The score between 28 and 42 indicates that the degree of marital instability is moderate. The score between 42 and 56 indicates that the degree of marital instability. The validity of this scale has been evaluated and confirmed in several researches and its positive correlation with the scale of marital problems and its negative correlation with marital satisfaction had been approved. The reliability of this scale has been reported as 93% using Cronbach's Alpha method. Yavaripour (9) used a split-half correlation test to assess the reliability of the test and the coefficient of validity was reported as 70%.

Data analysis

SPSS software was used to analyze data. Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used to test the research hypotheses at inferential level.

Research Findings

The raw data were analyzed with SPSS software using descriptive and explanatory methods. At the descriptive level, indicators such as mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores were calculated. At the explanatory level, hypothesis of the research was investigated using regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient tests. As shown in Table 1, descriptive index of all variables is calculated.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of research variables

variable	Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Emotional Maturity	Emotional instability	23.24	3.08	10	34
	Emotional Regression	21.15	2.99	11	35
	Social Maladjustment	19.44	3.65	10	32
	Personality disintegration	24.29	3.84	10	37
	Lack of independence	25.63	3.29	12	40
Marital Instability		29.52	5.00	19	49
Parental bonding	Care	27.39	4.53	13	36
	Overprotection	12.74	3.69	3	26

Table 2 shows the matrix of Pearson correlation coefficients between the research variables. As it can be seen, marital instability has a significant relationship with all research variables.

Table 2: Pearson correlation matrix table between research variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Care	1							
Overprotection	0.456**	1						
Emotional instability	-0.393**	0.236**	1					
Emotional regression	-0.393**	0.256**	0.326**	1				
Social maladjustment	-0.309**	0.379**	0.346**	0.409**	1			
Personality disintegration	-0.278**	0.413**	0.358**	0.327**	0.272**	1		
Lack of independence	0.378**	0.321**	0.287**	0.428**	0.326**	0.311**	1	
Marital instability	-0.296**	0.200**	0.317**	0.298**	0.398**	0.289**	0.302**	1

According to Table 3, in order to predict marital instability on parental bonding, simultaneous multiple regression tests were used. As can it be seen R is equal to 0.400 and R² is equal to 0.160. In other words, parental bonding accounts for 16 percent of the variance in marital instability scores. Also, care dimension can negatively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.005$, $\beta = 0.29$); and overprotection can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.009$, $\beta = 0.231$).

Table 3. Regression test to predict marital marriage based on parental bonding

Criterion Variable: Marital Instability							
Predictor Variable	R	R ²	F	P	β	T	P
Care	0.400	0.160	23.847	0.100	-0.298	3.327	0.005
Overprotection					0.231	2.658	0.009

According to Table 4, in order to predict marital instability based on emotional maturity, simultaneous multiple regression tests were used. As it can be seen, R is equal to 0.555 and R² is equal to 0.308. In other words, the dimensions of emotional maturity account for 31% of the variances in marriage instability scores. Also, emotional instability can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.008$, $\beta = 0.235$); and social incompatibility can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.331$). Also, lack of independence can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.312$).

Table 4: Regression test to predict marital instability based on emotional maturity

Criterion Variable: Marital Instability							
Predictor Variable	R	R ²	F	P	β	T	P
Emotional Instability	0.555	0.308	32.768	0.001	0.235	2.678	0.008
Emotional regression					0.109	1.009	0.132
Social maladjustment					0.321	3.987	0.001
Personality disintegration					0.165	1.765	0.098
Lack of independence					0.312	3.763	0.001

Discussion and Conclusion

To test the hypotheses, Pearson correlation test and simultaneous multiple regressions were used and the results are presented in Tables 3 and 4. First, the results of Pearson correlation test showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between the dimensions of parental care and marital instability. However, there was a positive and significant correlation between parental overprotection and marital instability. As shown in Table 3, R is equal to 0.400 and R² is 0.160. In other words, the parental bonding accounts for 16% of the variances in the scores for marriage instability. Also, care dimension, negatively and significantly, predicts marital instability ($p = 0.005$, $p = 0.298 = \beta$). Moreover, overprotection can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.009$, $\beta = 0.231$).

Overall, the results indicate that when parental care increases, marital instability decreases in women, but when parental overprotection increases, marital instability also increases.

The results of this research are consistent with the research of Shahani Yeylagh, Basak Najad and Mohebbi, Fazeli Mehrabadi et al., Shayeghan et al. (6), and Klietman and Muscrope .

Regarding the negative relationship between care style and marital instability, it must be noted that those who grow with a caring style, their relationship is based on trust, intimacy, warmth, self-esteem and balance. Individuals who experience care style have a high level of self-esteem. These people are comfortable when they rely on others and also they are comfortable when others depend on them. Choline and Red (1994) observed that when secure individuals are placed in stressful situations, they use regulated coping mechanisms and deal effectively with stress (10). According to Choline and Red (1994), those individuals with low-levels of care are looking for a high independence and fear having close relationships with others; a person who experiences safe and secure attachment and receives care seeks to openly express positive and negative emotions; they seek support from loved ones in distress and urgency; and in times of need, they give peace and support to their close ones. Since these individuals have high levels of self-esteem and self-regard, they usually have full confidence in their bodies and their physical appearances. Children of parents with a caring style show a behavior that was called "energetic-friendly" behavior by Baumrind. These individuals are very self-reliant and well-behaved; they cope with pressure very well and they are progress oriented.

In explaining the positive and significant relationship between overprotection and marital instability, it should be noted that in overprotection style, parents have expectations and requests from their children and define a responsible behavior for their children. These parents determine many standards; they impose the rules without any flexibility which in terms of parenting, it is violent and punishing; they confront any misbehavior and punish a misbehaved child. These parents show low levels of love and intimacy to their children. They do not consider children's desires and they don't ask about their opinions. Children with such parents do not have mental and psychological stability, and they consider themselves to be miserable; they get upset easily and are vulnerable to psychological distress. These types of parents create a severe sense of hostility in their children, but they do not allow them to express such feelings. Sometimes the child is restrained so that he cannot even consciously perceive hostility. Hostile and restrict parents create nervousness in their children. These children have suicidal tendencies in adulthood, they try to hurt themselves and they are shy and in social relationships. The combination of hostility and constraints create hatred and disgust, some of which are directed towards one's own self and also perceived as internal conflict and distress (11).

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Also, the results of Pearson correlation test showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between all dimensions of emotional maturity with marital instability. As shown in Table 4, R is equal to 0.555 and R^2 is equal to 0.308. In other words, the dimensions of emotional maturity account for 31% of the variance in marital instability scores. Also, emotional insecurity can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.008$, $\beta = 0.235$). Social maladjustment dimension can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.331$); also, the lack of independence can positively and significantly predict marital instability ($p = 0.001$, $\beta = 0.312$).

Overall, the results indicate that with increasing emotional distress, the rate of marital instability increases in women. In explaining the above results, it can be said a structure which plays an essential role is emotional maturity. If psychology wants to activate its potentials and empower human beings, it must seriously concentrate on emotional maturity capacities. Emotional maturity, based on self-regulation, has an unrivaled effect on survival, because among our saved cognitions, it is the only cognitive subject that one has to deal with in order to maintain its survival. Hence, the higher the emotional maturity, the greater the psychological compromise would be. This finding suggests that emotional maturity processes have the capacity to enhance human abilities. Emotional maturity is a process in which personality of an individual constantly strives to achieve emotional well-being in terms of psychology and personality. Seven components of intimacy, empathy, self-expression, psychological stability, independence, psychological balance, and the ability to observe emotional affirmations are used for a complete definition of emotional maturity. Emotional maturity results from the realization that nothing or no one can hurt, provoke, or make a person angry, unless the person himself gives the permission. But maturity does not merely mean specific attitudes and actions, but it is the ability to enjoy them fully. The most prominent sign of emotional maturity is the ability to withstand tension, and another sign is indifference to some types of stimuli that affects the individual, and makes him feel bored or stunned. Additionally, a mature adult has a continuous emotional perspective with a capacity for joy and pleasure. He enjoys both work and pleasure and maintains a balance between them (2).

As we have seen, various factors, especially parental bonding and emotional maturity, have a significant role in marital stability. Therefore, controlling the factors which increase marital stability is very important. Cultural and economic factors as well as couples' awareness of marital stability factors can help the improvement of quality of life; therefore, considering the importance of the family institution in promoting individual, cultural, economic, and social levels, it is suggested that institutions associated with the improvement of living standards in order to ensure marital stability, should pay attention to educating young people and strengthening their awareness of marital criteria and premarital counseling; Also raising the level of knowledge and skills of newly married couples should establish ways for strengthening marriage.

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