



## The Relationship between Measures of Attachment in Adults and the Marital Conflicts Resolution Styles among the Married Teachers of Bandar Abbas

Rooholah karamiboldaji\*, S. Reza Fallahchai and Eghbal Zarei

Hormozgan University, Bandar Abbas, Iran

\*Corresponding Author: karamiboldaji@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This research was performed in order to investigate the simple and multiple relationships between measures of attachment in adults and the marital conflicts resolution styles. Correlation was applied as the research method and the statistical sample included 285 married teachers who were chosen through random multistage cluster sampling and answered The Experience in Close Relationship Reviewed (ECR-R) and Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) questionnaires. Simple statistical correlation and simultaneous regression were used to answer the questions of research and determine the share of each one in prediction of the application of different styles to resolve marital conflicts. The achieved results showed that the attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance have a significant negative relation ( $p < 0.001$ ) with the styles of marital conflict resolution such as integrating and compromising while the anxiety dimension has a significant positive relation ( $p < 0.001$ ) with conflict resolution styles such as obliging, dominating, and avoiding. Another result indicated that measures of attachment can properly predict the conflict resolution styles in marital life.

**Keywords:** Attachment, Marital conflicts resolution styles, Teachers

### INTRODUCTION

The attachment theory has been considered a lot during the resent decade. It can be said that this theory has become more significant compared to other theoretical concepts in social and human sciences. This theory was firstly developed by Bowlby and then it was more completed by some other researchers.<sup>1</sup> and became a complicated and advance theory in personality development.<sup>2</sup>

Today, instead of typology, two continuum dimensions have been introduced as the foundation of dispersion in the style of adult attachments in order to conceptualize the individual differences of attachment in adults. It is assumed that multidimensional measures are more accurate and versatile than

## The Relationship between Measures of Attachment in Adults and the Marital Conflicts...

stratified ones. By and large, the previous studies <sup>1</sup> have tried to reduce the attachment styles to two dimensions. One dimension is contiguity, a bipolar situation one side of which is the tendency and another is the avoidance. The other dimension is the anxiety which is also bipolar just like avoidance, with comfort on one side and stress and worry on the other side.<sup>1</sup>

The multidimensional model presented by Bartholomew, introduces two main dimensions: attachment anxiety (or self-model) and attachment avoidance (or partner model) which determine four styles for the attachment in adults <sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup>.

The first factor i.e. attachment anxiety is to do with being abandoned, left or unloved and it refers to an intense desire and need to be close, accepted, supported and sure about the signs of attachment. This shows how much the person is worried about inaccessibility of his or her partner when she or he is needed <sup>8,9</sup>.

The second factor is related to avoiding intimacy and attachment which shows the tendency to be uncomfortable with contiguity, emotional self-disclosure, vulnerability and attachment in relationships.<sup>8</sup> Attachment avoidance shows how much the person is uncomfortable in relationship with his or her partner and tends to keep his or her power and emotional distance with the partner<sup>10</sup>.

Considering the similarities between self-action (anxiety dimension) others action (avoidance dimension) models in the pattern of attachment in adults and the emphasis on role of the self and others in Rahim Conflict Inventory styles <sup>11</sup>, Corcoran and Mallinckrodt<sup>7</sup> presented a model according to which, as a result of the interaction and composition of these dimensions, each of the four types of attachment are in relation to a particular conflict resolution style .

Conflicts are unavoidable in marital life. Systematic therapists refer to such conflict as a struggle for taking position, gains, power, or omission of each other's privileges. The action and reaction between two individuals who are not able to make their purpose clear is called conflict. These therapists also believe that a quarrel in close relationships happens when our close person does something that we don't like or avoids doing what we like. On the contrary, the attempt to resolve such conflicts between the partners usually includes negative conversations and arguments or an extraordinary cooperation between them to achieve marital satisfaction. Each of the partners perform their mutual commitments through taking actions such as disclosure of emotions and situations, reaching compromise and talking in order to reach an agreement, idea integration or expressing sadness and sympathy while resolving the conflict. Such actions improve the understanding of partners about each other and enable them to establish better and deeper relationships and express their feelings. It also helps them to evaluate and choose positive behaviors to deliver their message to other in line with keeping the commitments while resolving the conflict. <sup>12</sup>

Robert Blake and Mouton investigated the relationship between the employees of organizations and presented a bi-dimensional model to describe different styles conflict resolution in interpersonal situations. They indicated that in a conflict, individuals consider both themselves and others. They define considering the self as the level of personal support or the perseverance expressed by the individual to achieve his interests. Considering others is defined as the ability of individual to take care of others and their needs and adopt himself. <sup>5</sup>(High or low) level of individual's attempts to consider himself or others are two separated dimensions which can be compounded to create five styles of conflict resolution: dominating, obliging, avoiding, compromising and integrating <sup>11, 14</sup>.

Integrating style requires a high level of consideration about the self and others. This style needs collaborations among two sides such as openness, information interchange, and finding an acceptable solution for both parties<sup>15</sup>. The obliging (pledging) style requires a low level of self-consideration and high level of considering others. Anxiety is recalled in a different way in such individuals. They seek solutions which can be coordinated and adopted by others. Such individuals are intensely negative and unusual and it is very important for them to be known as a good person by others. Thus they want to meet their goals without hurting others.<sup>5</sup> Dominating style is characterized by a high level of self-consideration and a low level of considering others. This style is known as a competitive style. Individuals express constrictive behavior and try to meet his goals without caring about others.<sup>14</sup> the avoiding style is characterized by a low level of self-consideration and considering others. This style is usually along with resignation. The responsibility is assigned to others in this style. Such individuals don't hope to gain a benefit through resolving the conflict, though they prefer to resign. Passivity, avoidance, fear of encountering the conflict, underestimating the conflict and delaying its resolution is usually observed in such individuals.<sup>5</sup> with a moderate level of self-consideration and considering others, compromising has a moderate situation among the other styles. This style is based on a bargain style and mutually acceptable decision making. When two individuals enjoy equal privileges, they use this style <sup>5, 14</sup>.

Many previous studies, applying different methods, indicate that the principles and concepts of attachment theory has been used in line with the methodology of conflict procedures and attachment affects the different styles of conflict resolution <sup>15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20</sup>.

These researches have mostly investigated the relationship between attachment styles and conflict resolution styles.

Thus, the investigation of the relationship between resolution styles of marital conflicts as a variant related to attachment dimensions and specification of the common and singular share of each of these dimensions in application of

## **The Relationship between Measures of Attachment in Adults and the Marital Conflicts...**

conflict resolution styles in challenging situations, form the main objectives of the present research.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research is a correlation study. The statistical society of this research includes all married (middle school, high school and university preparatory school) teachers employed in 2011-2012 (1391-92) in Bandar Abbas.

The research sample includes 285 married teachers in Bandar Abbas who were chosen through multistage cluster sampling.

The Experience in Close Relationship Reviewed (ECR-R) questionnaire was applied in this research. In the parametrical investigation of this questionnaire, Fraley<sup>21</sup>; Sibley & Liu<sup>22</sup> achieved two anxiety and avoidance factors in accordance with the theoretical basis. These two factors also have a significant relationship<sup>22, 23</sup>.

Fairchild and Finney<sup>9</sup> indicated that each of the scales of anxiety and avoidance has a high internal consistency and  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.92 for anxiety scale and 0.93 for avoidance scale. The reliability of this questionnaire in the present research, obtained applying Cronbach's  $\alpha$  method, was 0.90 for anxiety dimension, 0.93 for avoidance dimension and 0.91 for the whole test. Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) questionnaire was designed to measure the styles of conflict resolution. ROCI-II questionnaire is a mechanism to measure the five ways in which individuals respond to a conflict. Rahim and Bonoma<sup>13</sup> have widely applied this questionnaire and they know it as a valid tool in research areas of social sciences. This questionnaire has three versions among which, the 28-article version B was applied in this research. Haghighi<sup>24</sup> has investigated the parametrical structure of psychometric characteristics of Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory questionnaire among the Iranian couples. The reliability of the ROCI-II questionnaire in this research, obtained through Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , was in a range of 0.70 to 0.75 for its subscales. In this research, the reliability of the tool was also obtained 0.68 applying classification methods. Besides, the positive and negative correlation between the subscales of this tool obtained through CRQ questionnaire, showed a desirable convergent and divergent validity for ROCI-II questionnaire. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  obtained in the present research was 0.80.

### **RESULTS**

This study was performed on 285 married teachers in an age range of 17-56 (the average age of 36.74) and more than half of the samples (50.9%) were men. 52% of the sample size were employed in Middle schools, 47.4 were employed in high schools in 2011-2012 (1391-92). Individuals with 1 to 5 years of marital life had the biggest share of (28.8) the sample size and those with 26 to 30 years of marital life had the least share (7.7%) .

Table 1 indicates the descriptive findings including the average level and standard deviation for attachment dimensions and five conflict resolution styles for women, men and the total sample size. There is significant negative relation between attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and integrating and compromising conflict resolution styles, i.e. the higher level of anxiety and avoidance among individuals, the less possibility of using integrating and compromising styles to resolve the conflicts. There is a positive relation between attachment anxieties and obliging, dominating and avoiding styles, i.e. if the anxiety increases in individuals, they would have more tendencies to apply these styles to resolve the conflicts. As to the avoidance dimension, there is only one positive relationship with the avoiding style.

As it is observed in table 3 and chart 1, five regression models were performed through entering method in order to predict the resolution styles of marital conflict among the married teachers. In the first model, the integrating style is significantly ( $R^2= 0.21$ ,  $F= 39.32$  and  $p<0.001$ ) predicted by attachment dimensions. Among the dimensions, the avoidance dimension is significant considering the values of  $\beta$  (-0.44),  $t$  (-8.18) and  $p$  (<0.001) which is a negative predictor about the application of integrating style to resolve the conflict. In second model, attachment dimension predict the obliging style of conflict resolution significantly ( $R^2= 0.05$ ,  $\beta= 8.48$  and  $t=0.001$ ). The anxiety dimension is significant ( $\beta=0.24$  and  $t=4.11$ ) in level of  $p<0.001$ . Thus, the anxiety dimension is a positive predictor for obliging style of conflict resolution. As to the third model, the dominating conflict resolution style is significantly ( $R^2= 0.19$ ,  $F= 35.52$  and  $p<0.001$ ) predicted by attachment dimensions. The anxiety dimension ( $t=8.32$  &  $\beta=0.45$ ) and avoidance dimension ( $t=3.18$  &  $\beta=-0.17$ ) are significant in level of  $p<0.001$ . Therefore, the anxiety dimension is the positive predictor and avoidance dimension is the negative predictor of the dominating conflict resolution style. In the fourth model, attachment dimensions significantly ( $R^2= 0.23$ ,  $F= 45.62$  and  $p<0.001$ ) predict the avoiding style for the conflict resolution. The anxiety dimension ( $t=4.38$  &  $\beta=0.23$ ) and the avoidance dimension ( $t=7.28$  &  $\beta=0.38$ ) are significant ( $p<0.001$ ) positive predictors for avoiding style of conflict resolution. As observed in the fifth model, the compromising style of conflict resolution is significantly ( $R^2= 0.20$ ,  $F= 38.27$  and  $p<0.001$ ) predicted by attachment dimensions. The anxiety dimension ( $t=-2.97$  &  $\beta=-0.16$ ) and avoiding dimension ( $t=-7.34$  &  $\beta=-0.39$ ) are significant ( $p<0.001$ ) negative predictors for compromising style of conflict resolution. The conflict resolution styles are presented through attachment dimensions in the following conceptual model.

**Table 1.** average level and standard variation of styles of marital conflict resolution and dimensions of attachment in adults for each sex

Sex	statistic	anxiety	avoidance	compromising	obliging	avoiding	dominating	integrating
Male	Average	59.64	64.65	11.04	16.31	21.21	14.27	25.13
	SD	24.20	24.80	5.27	7.18	7.12	4.76	7.87

## The Relationship between Measures of Attachment in Adults and the Marital Conflicts...

<b>Female</b>	Average	63.10	62.74	12.45	19.64	21.53	14.48	27.61
	SD	25.87	29.26	5.11	6.54	6.53	4.99	6.70
<b>total</b>	Average	61.40	63.68	11.76	18.00	21.37	14.38	26.39
	SD	25.08	27.13	5.23	7.05	6.82	4.87	7.39

**Table 2.** simple correlation coefficients between attachment dimensions and marital conflict resolution styles

The resolution styles of marital conflicts among married teachers	Attachment anxiety		Attachment avoidance	
	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance	Correlation coefficient	Level of significance
<b>Compromising</b>	-0.25	0.001	-0.43	0.001
<b>obliging</b>	0.23	0.001	0.008	0.890
<b>avoiding</b>	0.32	0.001	0.42	0.001
<b>Dominating</b>	0.41	0.001	-0.07	0.226
<b>integrating</b>	-0.17	0.002	-0.46	0.001

**Table3.** A summary of the results of the simultaneous regression between dimensions of adult attachments and resolution styles of marital conflicts

Model	Evidence variable	Predictor variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig.	Regression coefficients	
							Attachment anxiety	Attachment avoidance
<b>1</b>	<b>Integrating style</b>	<b>Attachment dimensions</b>	0.46	0.21	39.32	0.001	$\beta=0.08$ $t=-1.47$ $p=0.14$	$\beta=-0.44$ $t=-8.18$ $p=0.001$
<b>2</b>	<b>Obliging style</b>	<b>Attachment dimensions</b>	0.23	0.05	8.48	0.001	$\beta=0.24$ $t=0.78$ $p=0.001$	$\beta=-0.04$ $t=4.11$ $p=0.432$
<b>3</b>	<b>Dominating style</b>	<b>Attachment dimensions</b>	0.44	0.19	35.52	0.001	$\beta=0.45$ $t=8.32$ $p=0.001$	$\beta=-0.17$ $t=3.18$ $p=0.001$
<b>4</b>	<b>Avoiding style</b>	<b>Attachment dimensions</b>	0.49	0.23	45.62	0.001	$\beta=0.23$ $t=4.38$ $p=0.001$	$\beta=0.38$ $t=7.28$ $p=0.001$
<b>5</b>	<b>Compromising style</b>	<b>Attachment dimensions</b>	0.46	0.20	38.27	0.001	$\beta=-0.16$ $t=-2.97$ $p=0.001$	$\beta=-0.39$ $t=-2.97$ $p=0.003$

## CONCLUSION

The present research proceeds to investigate the simple and multiple relationships between attachment dimensions and marital conflict resolution styles. The first objective of this research is to investigate the simple relationship between attachment dimensions and marital conflict resolution styles.

The results indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between attachment anxiety and avoidance integrating and compromising conflict resolution styles, and there is a significant positive relationship between



attachment anxiety and obliging, dimensions and avoiding conflict resolution styles. There is only one significant positive relationship between the avoidance dimensions of attachment and avoiding style of conflict resolution, i.e. the individuals with high level of attachment anxiety and avoidance are less likely to use operative styles and have more tendencies to apply destructive methods to resolve marital conflicts. This finding is in accordance with the results of Mikulincer et al.<sup>4</sup>; Levy, M., & Davis, K.<sup>18</sup>; Pistole, M.<sup>19</sup>; Corcoran<sup>15</sup>, Campbell<sup>25</sup> and Simpson<sup>20</sup>, because these researches have obtained a significant relationship between attachment anxiety and avoidance and the reactions and conflict management among the sample individuals.

## References

1. Bartholomew, K. & Horowitz, L.K. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: a test of a four – category model. *Journal of personality and social Psychology*, 61:226-244.
2. Karairmak, O. & Duran, N.O. (2008). Gender differences in attachment styles regarding conflict handling behaviors among Turkish late adolescents, original article, 220-234.
3. Fraley, R.C. & Shaver, P.R. (2000). Adult romantic attachment: Theoretical developments, emerging controversies, and unanswered questions. *Review of General Psychology*, 4: 132-154.
4. Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P.R. (2003). The attachment behavioral system in adulthood: Activation, psychodynamics, and interpersonal processes. In M. P. Zanna (Ed), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol.35). San Diego: Academic Press.
5. Ben-Ari, H.I. (2009). Attachment styles, conflict perception, and adolescents, strategies of coping with inter personal conflict, *Negotiation journal*, ABI/ Inform global, 59-82.
6. Nofle, E.E. & Shaver, P.R. (2006). Attachment dimensions and the big five personality trait: Associations and comparative ability to predict relationship quality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40: 179-208.
7. BabapoorKheyroldin, J. (2006). The Investigation of the Relationship between Conflict Resolution Methods and Psychological Health among the University Students, *Scientific Journal of Psychology*, University of Tabriz, First Year, Issue 4: 28-46.
8. Sibley, C.G. & Overall, N.C. (2008). The boundaries between attachment and personality: Localized versus generalized effects in daily social interaction. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42: 1394-1407.
9. Fairchild, A.J. & Finney, S.J. (2006). Investigating validity evidence for the experiences in close relationships-revised questionnaire. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66(1): 116-135.

## **The Relationship between Measures of Attachment in Adults and the Marital Conflicts...**

10. Wijngaards-de Meij, L., Stroebe, M., Schut, H., Stroebe, W., Bout, J., Heijden, P., & Dijkstra, I. (2007). Neuroticism and attachment insecurity as predictors of bereavement outcome. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41: 498-505.
11. Rahim, M.A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Academy of Management Journal* 26(2):368- 376.
12. Roberts, L. (2000). Fire and ice in marital communication: Hostile and distancing behaviors as predictors of marital distress. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62: 693-707.
13. Rahim, M.A. & T.V. Bonoma. (1979). Managing organizational conflict: A model for diagnosis and intervention. *Psychological Reports* 44 (4):1323-1344.
14. Goodwin, L. (2000). Resolving Auditor, Client conflict, Concerning Financial statement Issues, Department of commerce University of Queensland Australia, Available online at: <http://aaahq.org/audit/midyear /01midyear/papers /goodwin2001midyear.pdf>.
15. Corcoran, N.K. & Mallinckrodt, B. (2000). Adult attachment, self-efficacy, perspective taking and conflict resolution. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78: 473-48.
16. Creasey, G. & Hesson-McInnis, M. (2001). Affective responses, cognitive appraisals, and conflict tactics late adolescent romantic relationship: Association with attachment orientation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*.
17. Scharfe, E. & Bartholomew, K. (1995). Accommodation and attachment representations in young couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 9:51-64.
18. Levy, M. & Davis, K. (1998). Love style and attachment style compared: Their relation to each other and to various relationship characteristics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5: 439-471.
19. Pistole, M.C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 6: 505-510.
20. Simpson, J.A., Rholes, W.S. & Phillips, D. (1996). Conflict in close relationships: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71:899-914.
21. Fraley, R.C., Waller, N.G. & Brennan, K.A. (2000). An item response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(2): 350-365 .
22. Sibley, C.G., Fischer, R. & Liu, J.H. (2005). Reliability and validity of the revised Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR-R) self-report measure of adult romantic attachment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(11): 1524-1536.
23. Sibley, C.G. & Overall, N.C. (2008). The boundaries between attachment and personality: Localized versus generalized effects in daily social interaction. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42: 1394-1407.



24. Haghghi, H. (2010). The Comparison between Marital Conflict Resolution Styles among Satisfied, Opponent and Divorcing Couples in Bandar Abbas, Master Thesis of Family Consulting, University of Hormozgan .
25. Campbell, L., Simpson, J.A., Boldry, J.G. & Kashy, D. (2005). Perceptions of conflict and support in romantic relationships: The role of attachment anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88:510-531.