



The relationship between differentiation of self and marriage expectations among students of Azad Science and Research University of Fars

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between marriage expectation and differentiation of self. This study has a correlational design. For this purpose, 426 students of Azad Science and Research University of Fars are selected and filled marriage expectation scale and differentiation of self inventory. The results of the study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between differentiation of self and marriage expectation. Also there is a significant difference between differentiation of self and marriage expectation between two genders. The results showed that differentiation can affect marriage expectation of people. Perhaps this impression can be explained by Bowen theory.

Keywords: marriage expectation, differentiation of self, students

INTRODUCTION

People usually have their notions and expectations of marriage before getting married that they are not fully aware of them. One of the problems with young couples is caused by their standards and subjective assumptions (Ebrahimi, 2008) therefore one of the variables that can affect the future of marriage is "marriage expectation". The expectation of marriage is satisfaction or dissatisfaction and the likelihood of divorce predicted by people for their marriage (Steinberg et al., 2006). The variable of marriage expectation can be affected by other factors. According to attachment theory presented by Bowlby, the initial experiences achieved through one's parents lead to the formation of internal working models that affect one's attitudes and expectations of the future relationships (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007).

Another important youth issue especially within the years of entering the university is differentiation of self or emotional independence. Differentiation which is the most important theories of family systems is presented by Bowen. The concept of differentiation of self is important because it represents the family influence on the thought, feeling and behavior of the family members. Also, according to this theory the intergenerational transmission process happens at various levels of attitudes, behaviors and values (Goldenberg, 2008). Shalman, Rosenheim and Nafo (1999) showed that parental expectations of marriage can explain the expectations of girls and boys of marriage.

As it is mentioned above, the concept of differentiation of self in terms of impact of beliefs, feelings and behaviors of parents toward the children can play an important role in the marriage expectation of children. But on the other

hand it is stated in Bowen theory that differentiated individuals who have a specified definition of themselves and their beliefs can choose the direction of their own lives and keep their control in highly emotional situations that lead to abnormal behavior and making unreasonable decisions in many cases and decide based on reason and logic. In contrast undifferentiated people who do not have independent individual identity, move along with the emotional atmosphere in tensions and problems and decide according to their feelings, and perhaps they adopt unreasonable decisions (Bowen, 1978). Therefore, it could be expected that more differentiated people have more realistic marriage expectations and less differentiated people have non-realistic marriage expectations (pessimistic or idealistic).

According to Bowen Theory differentiation of self is made up of four sections that include:

Emotional Reactivity: the desire to automatic emotional response to environmental stimuli that may be presented as apathy or extreme sensitivity.

I position: having a clear description of self, considering personal beliefs valuable and try to retain them even when faced with groups' pressure.

Emotional cut off: Feeling of being threatened in intimate relationships, fear of intimacy and extreme emotional vulnerability in intimate relationships that appears by emotional distancing from others.

Fusion with others: emotional involvement with the important people of life and extreme identification with them.

According to the mentioned studies and also given that research on the relationship between people's differentiation and their marriage expectation was not observed by the researcher, this study is an attempt to analyze the relationship between differentiation of people and their marriage expectations.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

The research plan of this study was descriptive and correlational according to the nature of the subject. The population of the study included all students of Azad Science and Research University of Fars in 2012-2013. The sample included 426 (minimum 377) male and female students from different disciplines selected by convenience sampling of Morgan table. All subjects filled marriage expectation scale and differentiation of self inventory. At the end the research data were analyzed by SPSS Statistical Package of Social Sciences.

Research Tools:

Marriage Expectation Scale (MES): This scale is designed to measure marriage expectation of single students without marriage experience. Its items measure expectations in relation to three areas of marriage i.e. intimacy, equality and compatibility. Marriage expectation scale analyzes the level of pessimistic, realistic and idealistic expectations of marriage (Jones, 1998).

Jones and Nelson (1996) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79- 0.80 for the total scale and Dillon (2005) reported a factor of 0.80. They also presented a significant positive relationship between the scale scores of Dean Romantic scale and Love Attitude Scale as an evidence of convergence validity.

Also in Nilforooshan et al (2011) the internal consistency of this scale using Cronbach's alpha was 0.88 and test-retest coefficient in 3 weeks was obtained as 0.91. The correlation of this scale with attitude to marriage scale was 0.43. Also the results of factor analysis showed that the marriage expectation scale (MES) is a multi dimensional tool with 3 distinct and related factors of realistic, idealistic and pessimistic expectations. In general marriage expectation scale is used as a valid and appropriate tool for evaluating the expectation of marriage.

Differentiation of self inventory: To assess the individuals' differentiation, differentiation of self inventory which is a 46 item tool was used. The questionnaire focuses on important life relationships and current relationships with the main family as well as the ability of individuals to differentiate themselves from their biological families at emotional and intellectual level. The inventory consists of the subscales of emotional reactivity, I position, emotional cut off and fusion with others (Skowron and Findler, 1998). Cronbach's alpha for the total scale of differentiation reported by Skowron was 0.88. In Oskian (2006) Cronbach's alpha was obtained as 0.81. Also in

Shakibaei (2006) this finding is reported as 0.81 which indicates the high reliability of this inventory (Sanaei et al., 2008). Also in the latest study by Yousefir et al (2010) the results indicated that there is no need to correct the items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the mentioned factors was (emotional reactivity 0.81, I position 0.89, emotional cut off 0.91 and fusion with others 0.86) which is sufficient for research purposes.

RESULTS

We first address the descriptive research findings. In order to analyze the descriptive specifications of the subjects the number, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum indicators are used.

Table 1: Distribution of subjects by age

Index Variable	Number	Mean	standard deviation	maximum score	minimum score
Age	426	22.04	3.187	37	18

According to the above table the minimum age for participating in the study is 18 and the maximum age is 37 with the mean of 22.04 and standard deviation of 3.187.

Table 2 presents the statistic indices related to the variables.

Table 2: The mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum students

Variable	Index	Number	Average	The standard deviation	maximum score	minimum score
Differentiation	Emotional reactivity	426	23.46	5.476	41	11
	I position	426	38.31	7.084	57	21
	Fusion with others	426	24.19	5.257	37	13
	Emotional cut off	426	25.31	5.737	55	12
Marriage expectation		426	426	154.32	20.308	192

According to Table 2 in terms of differentiation dimensions the mean and standard deviation of emotional reactivity, I position, fusion with others and emotional cut off are 23.46 and 5.476, 38.31 and 7.074, 24.19 and 5.257 and 25.31 and 5.737. Also in marriage expectation variable the mean and standard deviation are 154.32 and 20.308.

Based on the presented descriptive data, now the inferential findings of the study are analyzed.

Table 3: correlation coefficients between differentiation domains and marriage expectation

Variable Variable	Differentiation	Marriage expectation	Emotional cut off	Fusion with others	I position	Emotional reactivity
Differentiation of self	1	-0.284*	**0.805	**0.757	**0.372	**0.768
Marriage expectation		1	*-0.32	**0.224	*0.148	*-0.23
Emotional cut off	-	-	1	**0.524	0.022	**0.641
Fusion with others	-	-	-	1	0.003	**0.569
I position	-	-	-	-	1	*-0.106
Emotional reactivity	-	-	-	-	-	1

* Significant correlation at 0.05

** Significant correlation at 0.01

There is a significant negative relationship between differentiation and marriage expectation ($r=-0.284$). Of course differentiation subscales have different correlation with marriage expectation. As shown in the table marriage expectation has a negative significant correlation with emotional cut off ($r= -0.32$) positive significant correlation with fusion with others ($r= 0.224$) positive significant correlation with I position ($r= 0.148$) and negative significant correlation with emotional reactivity ($r= -0.23$).

Results of the independent T test for the marriage expectation and differentiation are presented in Table 4.

Table4: Distribution of T values of marriage expectation and differentiation based on gender

Variable	Index Gender	The mean	The standard deviation	t	Degrees of freedom	level of significance
Marriage expectation	Girl	154.84	1.576	-0.497	423.899	0.620
	Boy	153.87	21.731			
Differentiation	Girl	114.41	17.251	2.620	418.815	0.009
	Boy	118.87	17.871			

As the findings in Table 45 indicate, given that for marriage expectation variable the observed t with degree of freedom 423.899 at $p \leq 0.05$ is equal with -0.497 there is no significant difference between marriage expectation of girls and boys. Also given that for differentiation variable the observed t with degree of freedom 418.815 at $p \leq 0.05$ is equal with 2.620, there is a significant difference between differentiation of girls and boys.

CONCLUSION

The results show that there is a significant negative relationship between differentiation and marriage expectation ($r = -0.284$) which means that as the amount of differentiation is higher in people, they have more positive marriage expectation. Unfortunately no similar study has been conducted on the relationship between two variables of differentiation and marriage expectations inside the country. However, researches on the relationship between differentiation and marital satisfaction (Alayki and Nazari, 2008) and the relationship between differentiation and marital conflicts (Najaflooie, 2006) have been conducted that indicate that further differentiation is associated with marital satisfaction and less conflict and these studies are related to the view of people after marriage the marriage view prediction of premarital differentiation is addressed in this study and based on the obtained results it can be said that differentiation can be correlated with people's expectations of marriage or predict it. This may be partly explained through the Bowen theory especially given that marriage expectation has different correlations with different differentiation subscales. As explained in the introduction differentiation is made up of four parts: emotional reactivity, I position, fusion with others and emotional cut off. Based on Bowen theory people who have high differentiation have a highly independent behavior and show less emotional reactions in their relationships. They can maintain the boundaries of their identity while they have an intimate relationship with others and have a goal-directed behavior. These people can distinguish their thinking and feeling and use them based on the situation, control their anxiety and other emotions and have less trouble in their relationships (Bowen, 1978). They avoid fusion with others by emotional cut off as a regulation mechanism and can keep the "I" position and maintain their own beliefs. Low differentiation is associated with reduced autonomy and increased emotional response; people who have little differentiation of self can less control their emotions and have difficulties in close relationships (Bowen, 1978). Such individuals have tense relationships with others and their behavior is often dependent on environmental conditions and behaviors of others. When they face stressful conditions in their relationships they either tend to have fusion with others or suffer from emotional cut off and take distance from others physically cuts or emotionally which results in encountering more problems in relationships. All these issues can affect people's views about having intimate relationships.

On the other hand the results showed that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in marriage expectation variable while in case of differentiation it was determined that there is a significant difference between boys and girls. The results of the research are consistent with Merabizadeh Honarmand et al (2006), Gharraee (2005) and Saadati Shamir (2006). Also the results of Nilforooshan (2011) indicate that girls have more pessimistic expectations about marriage which is inconsistent with the results of the present study. This inconsistency can be due to various reasons such as lack of the same subjects or even the wrong implementation of the research. In the case of differentiation variable no similar study was observed by the researcher that indicates that there is a significant difference between both genders in terms of this variable.

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