

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTACHMENT STYLES, EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS AND LOVE AMONG MARRIED STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITIES OF TEHRAN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study has been to examine the relationship between attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas and love among married students of universities of Tehran. The methodology of the study has been applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and data collection. Statistical population of the study included all the married students of universities of Tehran amounting to 320 person (160 couples), out of which a sample size of 305 persons was selected by using Morgan's table and through cluster multistage sampling. In order to collect data, three questionnaires of Hazen and Shaver's (1987, cited in Mazaheri, 2000) adult attachment style, Young's (1999) early maladaptive schemas and Sternberg's (1988) dimensions of love were used. In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was adopted; the obtained coefficients were 0.73, 0.93 and 0.96 for the first, second and third questionnaires respectively. Besides, in order to measure the validity, content-related validity was adopted; in this regard, the questionnaires were approved of by the related experts. Analysis of the data obtained from questionnaires was carried out by using SPSS software in two sections of descriptive (mean, variance, standard deviation, frequency distribution tables, percentage, etc.) and inferential (Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression) statistics. Research findings indicated that there is a negative and significant relationship between secure attachment style and disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a negative and significant relationship between secure attachment style and impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a positive and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style and disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a positive and significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style and impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a positive and significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a positive and significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas; there is a positive and significant relationship between avoidant attachment style and overvigilance/inhibition domain of early maladaptive schemas. On the other hand, there is no significant relationship between each one of attachment styles and dimensions of love; there is a negative and significant relationship between each one of the domains of early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love; and finally, the dimension of 'intimacy' can be predicted through the 'disconnection and rejection' domain of early maladaptive schemas.

KEYWORDS: attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, dimensions of love

INTRODUCTION

Love is an abstract concept, and without doubt, it is extremely difficult to define it by words; meanwhile, there is not even a commonly accepted theory about its nature and there has always been ambiguities and confusion about love (Pato, 2002). Love has been the driving force of the entire universe and it flows through all parts of the existence. It is a feeling that has been existing in all cultures and it is a power greatly affecting the history of mankind. Love is a psychological quality characteristic of the human soul and one of the most wonderful mental states of human being which is interpreted as alchemy, because love, like an elixir, has the ability to change and transform; this power forces all the inner and outer strengths of human being to surrender and it controls all the instincts. Love is the true enrichment of life, it is an extraordinary attempt to depart from yourself and jump at taking action, to give yourself up, and to forgo yourself without miserable calculations (Rizavy, 1996, cited in Nouri, 2009). Sternberg's triangular theory of love states that love is understandable through three dimensions which can be outlined as the sides of a triangle. These three dimensions are *intimacy*, *passion* and *commitment*. A brief definition of dimensions of love is as follows. 1. Intimacy: it encompasses feelings of closeness in a love relationship and has 10 clusters: (a) desire to promote the welfare of the loved one; (b) experienced happiness with the loved one; (c) high regard for the loved one; (d) being able to count on the loved one in times of need; (e) mutual understanding with the loved one; (f) sharing of one's self and one's

possessions with the loved one; (g) receipt of emotional support from the loved one; (h) giving of emotional support to the loved one; (i) intimate communication with the loved one; and (j) valuing of the loved one in one's life. 2) Passion: it refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships. 3) Commitment: it refers, in the short-term, to the decision that one loves a certain other, and in the long-term, to one's commitment to maintain that love (Sternberg, 1997).

From among many variables affecting love, it seems that attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas have an impact on the dimensions of love and as a result, on success or failure of marriage, because on one hand, attachment maintains the mutual closeness between two individuals at all stages of life (Khanjani, 2005); and the concept of attachment emphasizes that even though individual's attachment style forms in the early years of life, it continues throughout life and affects all aspects of individual's life including intimate relationships, love and marriage, and even marital congruence (Hazan and Shaver, 1987).

The essence of attachment theory is closeness to people who we love, calms our nervous system, fosters the feeling of being good and acts as an antidote to our stresses (Johnson and Whiffen, 2000). In other words, early attachment bonds lead to the formation of attachment styles or a series of expectations about the expressions of attachment, which act as guide for intimate relationships throughout life (Berk, 2001). Attachment styles are divided into three dimensions as follows: children and adults with secure attachment style are individuals who have found out that they can easily trust others, they are emotionally open and are bound to close long-term intimate relationships. Individuals with ambivalent attachment style are not assured that they are loved by others, are worth being loved and are probably supported by others. This situation, accompanied by doubt and fear, leads to vigilance and suspicion, seeking reassurance, outrageous repeated protests and jealousy in these individuals. Individuals with avoidant attachment style have learned that in order to have a sense of relative security, they should be heavily dependent on themselves and do not overtly and directly seek support from the other one even when it is essential for their survival and ideal growth to be supported (Johnson and Whiffen, 2000).

Another variables affecting love are the early maladaptive schemas which encompass patterns or deep and overarching themes which are formed during childhood or adolescence and last during adulthood, are related to the relationships of the individual with him/herself or others and are highly inefficient. These schemas are categorized into five domains.

1. Disconnection and rejection: The essence of this schema domain is about a general expectation that your basic needs will be met by others in an unpredictable or inconsistent way. Many people who identify with schemas within this domain come from families perceived as cold, detached, explosive, lonely, abusive, or rejecting. 2. Impaired autonomy and performance: This schema domain is typified by expectations about yourself and your personal environment interfering with your belief in your ability to survive, function on your own, or demonstrate success. Typical early family dynamics associated with these schemas are enmeshment, overprotection, or a failure to reinforce your ability (as a child) to show independent competence (perhaps by doing things for you rather than teaching you how to do things for yourself). 3. Impaired limits: This domain is related to a general lack of responsibility to others, internal limits, and/or future goals. This schema domain may come from families characterized by a permissive parenting style, overindulgence, lack of guidance/direction, or a sense of superiority, accompanied by parental failure to set limits related to taking responsibility or healthy confrontation. 4. Other directedness: This domain tends to present itself with an excessive focus on the wants, needs, desires, and reactions of others (at the cost of your own needs). Many children who develop this domain of early maladaptive schemas come from families who show conditional acceptance, which can result in denying or over-representing, parts of yourself in hopes of gaining love/acceptance. 5. Overvigilance/inhibition: This domain includes schemas that share common themes of suppressing spontaneous emotions/decisions/impulses. These schemas may develop within families who are punitive, hide/avoid emotions, require perfection/high achievement. Usually there are perfectionism, a preoccupation with efficiency, rigidity toward rules/standards, inhibition of emotions, avoidance of mistakes accompanied by happiness, enjoyment and relaxation, and a tendency to worry excessively or complain in these individuals (Young, 1999). Some of the studies conducted inside and outside Iran on the attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas and love are as follows. Kazemi and Motahari (2013), in a study titled "the Relationship between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Metacognitive States in Girl and Boy Students", found that failure schema in girls and emotional inhibition in boys have a significant correlation with the total score of metacognition. Based on the above findings, it seems that girl students who have developed the failure schema leading to the sense that you have failed, will fail, or are fundamentally inadequate in

areas of achievement and boys who have developed the emotional inhibition schema leading to suppressing forms of spontaneous emotional expression, action, or communication out of fear that these expressions of emotion will result in shame, disapproval, rejection will face more defects in metacognitive processes. Sharifi *et al.* (2012) found that there is a relationship between love schemas and justification of extramarital relationships; besides, there is a significant difference between types of love schemas in terms of the degree of justification of marital relationships. Altogether, women with secure love schemas, reported the lowest amount of confirmation in all the dimensions of justification of extramarital relationships.

Bahari *et al.* (2011) found that there is a significant difference between the mean for the scores of post-test of couples in intervention group and couples in control group. Zolfaghari *et al.* (2008), in a study titled “a Study of the Relationship between Early Maladaptive Schema and Dimensions of Marital Intimacy in Ordinary Couples in Isfahan”, found that there is a negative and significant relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of marital intimacy. Besides, impaired limits domain is the best predictor of lack of marital intimacy. Hamidi (2007) found that married students with secure attachment style have higher marital satisfaction; in contrast, students with insecure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles have significantly lower marital satisfaction. Shekarkan *et al.* (2006), in a study titled “Studying Personality Characteristics, Social Skills, Attachment Styles and Demographic Properties as the Predictors of Success and Failure of Marital Relationship in Ordinary Couples Those Seeking Divorce in Ahwaz”, found that success and failure in marriage can be predicted by personality traits, social skills, attachment styles and demographic properties. Ghahremani and Tabatabaee (2006), in a study “a Study of the Romantic Relationship of Iranian Couples and Its Correlation with Marital Satisfaction and Demographic Variables”, found that there is large difference between young and middle-aged couples in the degree of the commitment and passion; however, this difference does not exist regarding intimacy. Besides, level of education, job and marriage duration and not age, number of family members predicted romantic relationships. In addition, the results indicated that romantic relationships are a good predictor of marital satisfaction in the following cases: communication and conversation, sexual relations and personality issues. Besharat (2003) found that couples with secure attachment style have more marital satisfaction, commitment, trust and dependence, and couples with ambivalent and avoidant attachment styles have more problems in marital relationships. Rezazadeh (2002) found that there is consistency between couples’ attachment styles and there has been a significant difference between secure and insecure couples in three out of twelve measures of marital adjustment test. Ortinkal and Wenstiugen (2006) found that individuals with higher levels of religiosity have higher marital stability and are more satisfied with their marriage than individuals with lower level of religiosity. Bradbury *et al.* (2008) found that cognitive mediators including negative schemas such as inferiority complex in adaptive and maladaptive interactions of the couples play a major role. Muris (2006) found that parental rearing behaviors have a relationship with early maladaptive schemas. Stiles (2004) found that emotional deprivation of early maladaptive schema is the predictor of lower intimate and romantic relationships in couples. Collins and Feeney (2002), cited in Johnson and Whiffen, 2000) found that there is a relationship between avoidant attachment style and couples’ inefficient support as well as between ambivalent attachment style and insufficient support. Jarvis (2001, cited in Nouri, 2009) found that Eros love has a positive relationship with secure attachment. On one hand, Eros love exhibits the higher love tendency in comparison to the means for subscales of attitudes towards love. Shaver (1998, cited in Nouri, 2009) found that individuals with insecure attachment style look for extramarital relationships. Roberts and Noler (1998, cited in Johnson and Whiffen, 2000) found that physical violence is predictable through the interaction between anxiety of the aggressive couple and avoidance of the spouse. Feeney (1994, cited in Shekarkan *et al.*, 2006) found that secure attachment has a positive correlation with couples’ marital satisfaction. Beach *et al.* (1987, cited in Yousefi *et al.*, 2010) found that maladaptive schemas such as over-control in couples’ relationships lead to family breakdown.

Iran is ranked fourth in the world in terms of divorce rate (Keyhannia, 1996); as it seems, the importance of this matter is so high that it can alone persuade researchers and students to study the variables predicting divorce. Studies conducted inside and outside Iran have proposed many predictor variables, among which we can point out attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas; however, these studies ignored the way these two variable affect love and how its dimensions change in a relationship before reaching the stage of divorce, so it seems useful to find out whether attachment style or certain maladaptive schemas are effective in change of dimensions of Sternberg’s triangle of love; it is because if this becomes clear, premarital counselling can be carried out by administering two tests of attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas in order to predict the quality of future romantic relationships and prevent

inappropriate marriages, and to recommend receiving attachment-based treatments and schema therapy for improving the quality of relationship in case of inappropriateness of marriage and insistence of both sides. Although different studies have addressed the relationship of various psychological variables aiming at marital conflicts and incompatibilities, studying the positive dimensions reinforcing the emotional and healthy marital relationship is ignored; thus in this study, it is attempted to answer whether there is a significant relationship between attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas and love among married students of universities in Tehran.

According to the above questions and by using previously conducted studies, following hypotheses are formulated:

1. There is a relationship between attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas.
2. There is a relationship between attachment styles and dimensions of love.
3. There is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology of the study has been applied and descriptive-correlational in terms of purpose and data collection. Statistical population of the study included all the married students of universities of Tehran amounting to 320 persons (160 couples), out of which a sample size of 305 persons was selected by using Morgan's table and through cluster multistage sampling. In order to collect data, three questionnaires of Hazen and Shaver's (1987, cited in Mazaheri, 2000) adult attachment style, Young's (1999) early maladaptive schemas and Sternberg's (1988) dimensions of love were used, and the related indices are presented in table 1. In order to measure the validity, content-related validity was adopted; in this regard, the questionnaires were approved of by the related experts. Besides, In order to measure the reliability of the questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha was adopted; the obtained coefficients were 0.73, 0.93 and 0.96 for the first, second and third questionnaires respectively, which indicates acceptable reliability of research instrument. Above questionnaires were distributed in married students' dormitories among couples, then the collected data from questionnaires was analyzed through descriptive (mean, variance, standard deviation, frequency distribution tables, etc.) and inferential (Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression).

Table 1. Results related to Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the research questionnaire

| Total coefficient | Cronbach's alpha coefficient | Dimensions | Questionnaire indices |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0.73 | 0.80 | Secure | Attachment styles |
| | 0.78 | Avoidant | |
| | 0.85 | Ambivalent | |
| 0.93 | 0.87 | Disconnection and rejection | Early maladaptive schemas |
| | 0.86 | Impaired autonomy and performance | |
| | 0.81 | Impaired limits | |
| | 0.81 | Other directedness | |
| | 0.79 | Overvigilance/inhibition | |
| 0.96 | 0.91 | Intimacy | Dimensions of love |
| | 0.90 | Passion | |
| | 0.93 | Commitment | |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, for the purpose of analyzing the data and investigating research hypotheses, Pearson’s correlation coefficient (for the relationship between variables of attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love) and multiple regression (for predicting love through attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas) were used. *Testing hypotheses*

In this section, research hypotheses have been measured through Pearson’s correlation test.

Hypothesis one: there is relationship between attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas.

In this regard, results related to significance test of Pearson’s correlation coefficient are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Pearson’s correlation test for the relationship between attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas

| Impaired limits | Overvigilance/inhibition | Other directedness | Disconnection and rejection | Impaired autonomy and performance | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 0.071 | **0.152 | -0.064 | **0.318 | **0.236 | Avoidant |
| 0.081 | 0.057 | 0.091 | **0.382 | *0.127 | Ambivalent |
| -0.044 | -0.011 | -0.013 | **-.0237 | **-.0174 | Secure |

* Significant correlation at 0.01

** Significant correlation at 0.05

According to the above table, it can be concluded that coefficient of correlation between disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas and secure attachment style is -0.237 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a negative significant relationship between these two variables. In other words, if one variable increases, the other decreases and vice versa; the coefficient of correlation between impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas and secure attachment style is -0.174 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a negative significant relationship between these two variables; the coefficient of correlation between disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas and ambivalent attachment style is 0.382 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a positive significant relationship between these two variables. In other words, if one variable increases, the other variable increases as well, and if one variable decreases, the other one decreases as well; the coefficient of correlation between impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas and ambivalent attachment style is 0.127 which is significant at the level of 0.05, so it can be said with 95% confidence that there is a positive significant relationship between these two variables; the coefficient of correlation between disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas and avoidant attachment style is 0.318 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a positive significant relationship between these two variables; the coefficient of correlation between impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas and avoidant attachment style is 0.263 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a positive significant relationship between these two variables; the coefficient of correlation between overvigilance/inhibition domain of early maladaptive schemas and avoidant attachment style is 0.152 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a positive significant relationship between these two variables.

Hypothesis two: there is a relationship between attachment styles and dimensions of love.

In this regard, results related to significance test of Pearson’s correlation coefficient are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Pearson’s correlation test for the relationship between attachment styles and dimensions of love

| Commitment | Passion | Intimacy | |
|------------|---------|----------|------------------------------|
| -0.016 | 0.010 | -0.059 | Avoidant attachment |
| -0.014 | -0.067 | -0.105 | Ambivalent attachment |
| 0.008 | 0.038 | 0.054 | Secure attachment |

According to the above table, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between each one of attachment styles and dimensions of love.

Hypothesis three: there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love.

In this regard, results related to significance test of Pearson's correlation coefficient are presented in table 4.

Table 4. Pearson's correlation test for the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love

| Commitment | Passion | Intimacy | |
|------------|---------|-----------|--|
| -0.049 | -0.034 | *-0.122 | Impaired autonomy and performance |
| -0.065 | -0.017 | **-.0.170 | Disconnection and rejection |
| -0.026 | -0.019 | -0.075 | Other directedness |
| 0.004 | -0.005 | -0.052 | Overvigilance/inhibition |
| -0.040 | 0.021 | -0.054 | Impaired limits |

* Significant correlation at 0.01

** Significant correlation at 0.05

According to the above table, it can be concluded that coefficient of correlation between disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas and intimacy dimension of love is -0.170 which is significant at the level of 0.01, so it can be said with 99% confidence that there is a negative significant relationship between these two variables; the coefficient of correlation between impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas and intimacy dimension of love is -0.122 which is significant at the level of 0.05, so it can be said with 95% confidence that there is a negative significant relationship between these two variables.

In order to answer research questions whether attachment styles predict dimensions of love, and whether early maladaptive schemas predict dimensions of love, regression analysis has been adopted; however, since there is only a negative significant relationship between disconnection and rejection domain of early adaptive schemas and dimension of intimacy, other variables have not been inserted in the regression in the table; and according to the following tables, the only variable which is able to predict love (intimacy dimension) is disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas.

Table 5. Review of prediction of dimension of love through disconnection and rejection domain

| Significance level | F | Mean square | df | Sum of squares | Source of changes |
|--------------------|-------|-------------|-----|----------------|-------------------|
| 0.003 | 8.857 | 2368.595 | 1 | 2368.595 | Regression |
| | | 267.435 | 300 | 80230.495 | Remainder |
| | | | 301 | 82599.089 | Total |

According to the above table and with emphasis on the value of F at the significance level of 0.05, it can be concluded that the dimension of intimacy can be predicted through the disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas.

Table 6. Regression coefficients related to table 5

| Significance level | t | Beta | Standard error | B | Predictor variable | Criterion variable |
|--------------------|--------|--------|----------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 0.003 | -2.976 | -0.169 | 0.063 | -0.189 | Disconnection and rejection | Intimacy |

According to the obtained beta coefficient in the above table, it can be concluded that if disconnection and rejection schema changes as much as one standard deviation, intimacy dimension of love reversely changes as much as 0.169.

CONCLUSION

Marriage has always been approved of as the most important and most exalted social tradition for satisfying individual emotional needs. Marriage is a complex, human, delicate and dynamic relationship possessing special properties. The main reasons for marriage are mainly love and affection, having a partner in life, satisfaction of emotional-psychological needs and increasing happiness (Bornestein and Bornestein, 1986). Clinical studies and experiences indicate that in contemporary society, couples experience serious and pervasive problems for establishing and maintaining intimate relationships and satisfying each other's needs (Bagarozzi, 2001, cited in Shekarkan *et al.*, 2006). Hence this study, given the importance of this subject, have studied the relationship between attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love among married students of universities of Tehran; and based on the existing hypotheses, we proceed to discussion and conclusion.

Research findings suggested that there is a relationship between attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas; in such a way that there has been a negative significant relationship between secure attachment style and disconnection and rejection as well as impaired autonomy and performance domains of early maladaptive schemas, and there has been a positive significant relationship between ambivalent attachment style and disconnection and rejection as well as impaired autonomy and performance domains as well as between avoidant attachment style and disconnection and rejection as well as impaired autonomy and performance and overvigilance/inhibition domains of early maladaptive schemas.

On the other hand, there has been no relationship between each one of attachment styles and dimensions of love; there has been a negative significant relationship between each one of the domains of early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of love, and eventually, it can be stated that the dimension of intimacy can be predicted through the disconnection and rejection domain of early maladaptive schemas. These findings are also confirmed by the other studies; for example, Kouhi *et al.* (2014) found that there is a positive and significant relationship marriage frustration and mental health and personality traits in dimensions of extroversion and adaptability; there is a positive and significant relationship between marriage frustration and mental health in the factor of anxiety; there is a positive and significant relationship between marriage frustration and contextual factors in variables of marriage duration and economic status. Hoseini Zand *et al.* (2011), in a study titled "Effectiveness of Couples Therapy Based on Islamic Teachings in Sexual Intimacy of Couples Admitted to the Nikan Clinic in Tehran", found that couples therapy training based on Islamic teachings has increased the sexual intimacy of couples and this increase continued until follow-up. Yousefi *et al.* (2010), in a study titled "Comparing Early Maladaptive Schemas in Ordinary and Divorced Couple as the Predictor of Divorce in Isfahan", found that divorce can be predicted based on the early maladaptive schemas; mistrust/abuse, unrelenting standards and emotional inhibition have the highest ability to predict divorce. Rajabi (2008), in a study titled "a Study of the Relationship between Personality Traits and Love, and Marital Satisfaction among Government Employees in Ahwaz", found that there is a negative significant relationship between neuroticism and marital satisfaction, but there is a positive significant relationship between extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and desirability, and marital satisfaction; besides, there is a positive correlation between love and marital satisfaction. Hefazi Torghabeh *et al.* (2006), in a study titled "a Study of the Relationship between Love Styles and Marital Satisfaction", found that Persian version of Sternberg's triangular love scale is a reliable scale and three dimensions of love are significantly related to scores of marital satisfaction and intimacy has been the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction. D'Andrea and Racine (2005, cited in Yousefi *et al.*, 2010) found that early maladaptive schemas have a negative relationship with positive impulses, self-confidence and mutual adaptation in couples. Cecero *et al.* (2004, cited in Yousefi *et al.*, 2010) found that schemas of emotional inhibition, abandonment and emotional deprivation in adults jeopardize secure attachment. Ingle *et al.* (2002, cited in Farahbakhsh and Shafi Abadi, 2006) found that there is correlation between extroversion in men and intimacy. Besides, there is a positive and significant correlation between self-awareness, passion and commitment in men; while these correlations do not exist among women. McCullough *et al.* (2001) found that individuals who excessively adopt early maladaptive schemas are more affected by negative events. Hendrick and Bartly (1986, cited in Brown and Amatea, 2000) found that men are more romantic than women and women are more pragmatic than men, and they considerably relate these issues to sexual roles. Women are more flexible than men and have a more practical attitude towards love, while men keep their more traditional attitudes. Vaillant and Vaillant (1999, cited in Nouri, 2009) found that the curve for marital life is U-shaped; in other words, the general trend of love is high at the beginning of marriage, then it falls and again it raises a bit in the following years; these trends are different in men and women.

Based on the research findings, following suggestions are proposed.

- 1) Application of schema therapy and attachment-based treatments such as emotional freedom technique (EFT) for solving marital problems and problems related to non-marital interpersonal relationships.
- 2) Devising educational programs for boosting and promoting dimensions of love in couples who have married a long time ago and are middle-aged.
- 3) It is suggested to consider the impact of clichés, which are based on differences between men and women especially in the dimension of love, in society at the time of treatment or training.
- 4) Conducting similar studies to better understand student communities and their needs, based on which a number of programs can be devised, is suggested.
- 5) Conducting similar studies on non-student communities with lower education and awareness is suggested.

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