The Moderating Role of Stress Coping Styles on the Relationship between Fear of Intimacy and Marital Problems

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Abstract : The current research was performed with the purpose of examining the adjusting role of the methods of dealing with stress in relation with fear of intimacy and problems of marital. 150 triables from married students (76 woman, 74 man) at two levels of Bachelor's and Master's degree participated in this research. It was asked from the participants to complete the scales of marital problems of Gloomberg-Rust (GRIM), fear from intimacy (FIS), styles of coping with stress (TCSS). The data was analyzed using the step by step multiple regression analysis method. The results of the research showed that the problem-focused coping style in the relation of fear of intimacy and marriage problems has a moderator role. Between the positive emotion focused style with fear of intimacy and marital problems no relations existed. According to the results of this research we can conclude with increase in the problem focused-coping style and decrease in the negative emotion-focused style, fear of intimacy and marriage problems decrease.

Keywords: coping styles with stress, fear of intimacy, marital

Introduction

One of the theoretical assumptions is that if people live in families that unite through marital, in terms of psychological health and welfare they will be in a better position (Kamp Dush et al, 2008). Many studies have confirmed this assumption for the adult couples and their children (Amato, 2000; Proulx et al, 2007; Halford and Snyder, 2012). They have presented family as social institution or establishment which is the result of the marital link of man and woman. Among the manifestations of the social life of the human, is existence of healthy and constructive interactions among humans and establishment of love to fellowman and expression of closeness and sympathy to each other. Family is the place of satisfaction of different physical, mental and emotional needs and having knowledge of biological and psychological needs and the recognition of how to satisfy them and to be equipped with the techniques of recognition of essential biological and psychological tendencies is inevitable. Satisfaction of an individual from the married life means his/her satisfaction of family and satisfaction of family means satisfaction of life and as a result ease in the matter of growth and ascendency and material and spiritual improvement of the society (Edalati, Redzuan, 2010).

With the passing of time the life of some of the couples is lead to separation, but majority continue with their shared life with a monotonous tone and bored and to bear this life they turn to alcoholic drinks, overeating, use of drugs or infidelity. The most important motivation of married woman or man which turn to infidelity, is the repeated experience of sexual and individual intimacy (Landucci, Foley, 2014). Satisfaction of marital is a general assessment of the status of the marital relation or the individual's current love affair. Satisfaction of marital can be a reflection of the amount of happiness of people from the marital relation or a composition of being happy for many of the factors specific to the marital relation. We can consider the satisfaction of marriage as a psychological position which does not happen by itself, but needs the effort of both couples. Specially in the initial years, the satisfaction of marital is without stability and the relations are more at danger (Ahmadi et al, 2010). The couples should sometimes make decisions, seperations and oppositions which occur when coping with the rough world, which result in conflicts. The couples that are dependent on each other, have more potential for these conflicts. Some conflicts are inevitable which does not mean that all of these conflicts are useful and under attention (Besharat,
Differences can destroy love and even ruin a good marital; on the other hand, it can eliminate stress and bring two people closer to each other than before (Mark et al, 2015).

Findings indicate that the motivation dependent on intimacy in behavioral and emotional relations among humans has a clear and bold role (Bush, Hoffer, 2011). The most common problem which is discussed by unsatisfied couples is their lack of success in establishing a relation (Sepahvand et al, 2014). We can relate the root of all problems of helpless and incompatible couples to their lack of identification of themselves and their lack of knowledge of mental, emotional, way of thinking and traits and characteristic states of themselves. On the other hand, we have hope so that using methods in them that can cause the right knowledge and judgement relative to themselves, teach them the effective relational skills and solve their problems and incompatibilities (Arnold, Min, 2004).

The design of intimacy between people, related to Reiss and Shower (1988), explains that the development of intimacy starts when people express their personal feelings or knowledge to others. The bold and clear expression of thoughts and feelings lead to increase in the sense of social security (Kennedy-Moore and Watson, 2001; Sparoon and Rapay, 2009). Destroying and exploiting the clear expression of thoughts and emotions, has negative consequences on the relations. Butler and coworkers (2003) showed that destroying emotions either of the negative or positive type during intercourse with others, causes decrease in the development of close relations because the development of intimacy is a two-sided and common matter (Campbell, 2009).

Intimacy as the ability to have a relationship with others, is defined with protecting individuality. In fact, the individual should reach a degree of personal growth in order to establish an intimate relation with others. Common definition of intimacy is, level of closeness to spouse, sharing values and ideas, common activities, sexual relationship, recognition of each other and emotional behaviors such as coddling (Lewis et al, 2006).

Marital satisfaction can be more in couples that have a higher rate of intimacy. In other words, couples who have higher intimacy may have more ability in coping with problems and changes related to their relation and experience higher marital satisfaction (Patrick et al, 2007). Eventhough coping styles whether in an active or passive way, include the total efforts that people do for avoiding health threatening factors, but always using any coping style does not go along with decrease in stress, also efficiency of coping styles in various positions is different and sometimes they are not only inefficient but also have negative effect (Lazarus, 1988). Inefficient coping styles has direct relation with between individual problems (Alipour, 2010). With respect to the above articles the researcher in the current research is trying to answer the question that whether coping styles for stress adjust the relation between fear of intimacy and marital problems or not?

**Method**

Statistical society, sample and method of performance of research: The society under examination in this research, are the married students of the city of Karaj Islamic Azad University in the academic year of 1392. The sample under examination was a number of 150 person of married students (76 woman, 74 man) which according to the criteria predicted for choosing the sample like being married, being student of Karaj Azad University at two levels of Bachelor's and Master's degree participated in the research. The students were asked to complete scales of Gloomborg-Rust marital problems and fear of intimacy and stress coping styles. The average and standard deviation of the age of research sample was 33/7 and 7/18 and the range of the age of triables were from 33 to 50 years. The average and standard deviation of the time interval of their marital was 9/04 and 7/09. In terms of composition and analysis of the research data also from the indices and methods of statistics including average, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis were used.

**Instruments**

The scale of marital problems: The questionnaire of the position of marital of Gloomborg-Rust: questionnaire of the position of marital of GRIM (Rust et al, 1988) is a scale of 28 questions. The questions in the four degree Likert scale (completely agree=0, completely disagree=3) evaluates the problems existing in the couples relations from zero to number 3 in the area amount of sensitivity and attention of the couples relative to the needs of each other, commitment, loyalty, sharing, sympathy, expression of love, trust, intimacy and empathy of the couple. The least score of the triable in this scale is zero and the most score is 84. The balanced score of the triables is calculated in 9 degrees according to severity and weakness of marital problems. In the persian form of this questionnaire the scale total score was
calculated with Cronbach's alpha 0/92 for a sample of women and 0/94 for men which is indicative of a high internal consistency of the questionnaire (Besharat, 2001). Correlation coefficients between the triables' scores in two terms with the distance of two weeks for the total triables is r=0/94, woman's triables r=0/93 and man's triables r= 0/95 showing the good test-retest reliability of the questionnaire.

The scale of fear of intimacy: Is a 35 question test which evaluates the fear of intimacy in romantic and close relations (Fathi, 2013). The matters of scale evaluate fear of intimacy triable in Likert's five degree scale from the score 35 (least score) to score 175 (most score) (Jenda, Lewiss, 2009). In initial validation of the farsi form of this scale regarding a student sample the questions Cronbach's alpha was 0/91 which indicates the high internal consistency of this tool (Besharat, 2004). Correlation coefficients between the triables scores in two terms with a distance of four weeks was r=0/87 which indicates a high test-retest reliability of the farsi form of the scale. The psychometric properties of the scale of fear of intimacy has been confirmed in foreign researches. People who in this questionnaire obtain a high score, have several problems in the area of intimacy. In comparison with individuals who obtained a low score they confirm that others have problem in their recognition, their relation does not last more than few months (Descantz, Tellen, 1991). In the research done by Fereidoony and Tabrizi (2011) results showed that this scale has an acceptable validity and reliability for the evaluation of individuals' anxiety about close and intimate relation also in this article it was shown that the scale of fear of intimacy has a high internal consistency, high test-retest reliability and structures validity is acceptable which has been obtained from factor analysis and comparison with other tools.

The scale of coping styles of stress: The triables coping styles in this research was evaluated using coping styles scale (Carver, 1989). This scale is a 60 question test that evaluates 15 factors in the format of three subscales of problem-focused coping, positive emotional-focused coping and negative emotional-focused coping according to the 4 degree scale of Likert. The coefficients of test-retest reliability was confirmed for different scales. Convergent and discriminant validity of the coping styles scale in terms of consistency between subscales of this test and several other scales including Optimism, self-esteem, hard-working, type A and anxiety was evaluated and confirmed (Carver, 1989). Carver, Shyer and Vintrob (1989) examined the reliability and validity of this scale in three studies. The coefficients of test-retest reliability was confirmed from r=0/42 to r=0/67 for various scales.

Results

Average and standard deviation of the research variables are shown in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>average</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Most amount</th>
<th>Least amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage problems</td>
<td>22,51</td>
<td>14.82</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of intimacy</td>
<td>71,67</td>
<td>20.07</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem focused-style</td>
<td>63,44</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotion-focused style</td>
<td>54,18</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion-focused style</td>
<td>39,96</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of the average and standard deviation of the major variables of the research in table 1 shows that between coping styles of stress, problem-focused style have the highest average (M=63.44) compared to positive emotion-focused styles (M=54,18) and negative (M=39,96). Average of fear of intimacy is equal to 71.67 and the average of marital problems is equal to 22.51.
Table 2: Pearson's correlation coefficient between fear of intimacy and marriage problems, coping styles of coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient amount</th>
<th>Level of meaning- fullness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of intimacy and marital problems</td>
<td>0/687</td>
<td>0/001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-focused coping style and marriage problems</td>
<td>-0/279</td>
<td>0/01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotion-focused coping style and marital problems</td>
<td>0/077</td>
<td>0/367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion-focused coping style and marital problems</td>
<td>0/272</td>
<td>0/01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-focused coping style and fear of intimacy</td>
<td>-0/362</td>
<td>0/001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotion-focused coping style and fear of intimacy</td>
<td>-0/111</td>
<td>0/193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion-focused coping style and fear of intimacy</td>
<td>0/331</td>
<td>0/001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of table 2 show the relation between the research variables in order which between the problem-focused coping style and fear of intimacy in the level of certainty there is a 99 percent meaningful relation (P<0/001). Intensity of relation obtained is equal to -0/279, for the negative relation and it shows that with the increase in problem-focused coping style, fear of intimacy decreases and the reverse is true such that with decrease in the problem-focused coping style, fear of intimacy decreases. Between the positive emotion-focused coping style and fear of intimacy there is no relation and from statistical aspect the relation between the two variables is rejected. The level of meaningfulness obtained is more than the assumed amount (P<0/05) and means that the relation between the two variables is rejected from the statistical aspect. Between the two variables negative emotion-focused coping style and fear of intimacy in the level of certainty of 99 percent there is a relation (P<0/01).

The intensity of relation between the two variables is 0/331 and the direction of the relation is positive or direct and means that with an increase in the amount of negative emotion-focused coping style, marital problems increase and with a decrease in the amount of negative emotion-focused coping style fear of intimacy also decreases. Between the problem-focused coping style and marital problems there is a relation and at the certainty level of 99 percent a relation between problem-focused coping style and marital problems is confirmed. The intensity of correlation obtained is equal to -0/279 and the direction of the relation is negative. Between the positive emotion-focused coping style and marital problems there is no relation and from the statistical aspect existence of a relation between the two variables is rejected. The level of meaningfulness obtained is more than the assumed amount (P<0/05) and is equal to 0/376 and means that the relation between the two variables from the statistical aspect is rejected. Between the two variables of negative emotion-focused coping style and marital problems in the level of certainty of 99 percent there is a relation (P<0/01).

The intensity of relation between the two variables is 0/272 and the direction of the relation is positive or direct and means that with an increase in the amount of negative emotion-focused coping style, marital problems increase and with a decrease in the amount of negative emotion-focused coping style, the marital problems also decrease. Between fear of intimacy and marital problems in the level of certainty of 99 percent there is meaningful relation (P<0/001). The intensity of the relation obtained is equal to 0/687 and the direction of the relation is positive which shows that with increase in fear of intimacy, marital problems increase and in reverse with decrease in the fear of intimacy, marital problems also decrease.
Table 3: Multiple regression test of the effect of predictable variables on the variable of the criterion of marriage problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Regression coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>marital problems</td>
<td>0/66</td>
<td>0/44</td>
<td>36,5</td>
<td>B=0/836 β=-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t=0/627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VIF= -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of intimacy</td>
<td>0/37</td>
<td>0/17</td>
<td>15,40</td>
<td>B=96/68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>t=**5,14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VIF = -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained in table 3 show that from between predictable variables (problem-focused coping style, negative emotion-focused and fear of intimacy), only the variable of fear of intimacy is able to predict the changes in the marriage problems and has a meaningful effect on the marriage problems (P<=0.001). The variables of problem-focused coping style and negative emotion-focused in the format of the regression model have no meaningful effect on marital problems. The amount of effect of fear of intimacy on marital problems is equal to 0/642 and the direction of the relation obtained is positive and shows that increase in the fear of intimacy leads to an increase in marital problems and vice versa. The coefficient of determination (R²) is equal to 0/44 and shows that the predictable variables of the model have been able to explain 44 percent of the changes of the variable of marital problems criterion.

The results obtained show that both predictable variables of problem-focused coping style and negative emotion-focused coping style have a meaningful effect on fear of intimacy and can predict the changes in it. The standardized coefficient of the effect of problem-focused coping style on the fear of intimacy is equal to -0/298 and the effect of the negative emotion-focused coping style is equal to 0/236. The effect of the problem-focused coping style on fear of intimacy, is negative and the negative emotion-focused coping style on fear of intimacy is positive. The coefficient of determination (R²) is equal to 0/17 and shows that the predictable variables model have been able to explain 17 percent of the variable changes of the criterion of fear of intimacy.

Discussion

The researches show that even though relational turmoil is effective on the psychological-physical health of men and women but the relation between relational turmoil and health is more in women than in men; in fact women under the influence of relational turmoil suffer more from psychological disorder, chronic pain, heart problems, cancer and … . Therefore it seems improvement of relational models can decrease women's affliction to the psychological and physical diseases. On the other hand women when they have more discussion with their husbands have more closeness feelings, but men consider having closeness feelings when they have common activities with their wives. Therefore increase in the use of constructive relational model in women leads to an increase in the feeling of intimacy in their husbands.28 Findings showed that between fear of intimacy and marital problems there is a relation and the direction of this relation is positive meaning that with increase in the fear of intimacy, marital problems increase and vice versa, with decrease in fear of intimacy, marital problems also decrease.

In explaining this finding we can say that marital problems and intimacy is a result of inefficient skills of the spouses in establishment of relation, inability in the effective solving of problems and

Halford, 2001 28
conflicts and unreasonable expectations and beliefs and with the better facilitation of thoughts, ideas, orientations and emotions in the marriage relations, intimacy will also increase. In forming and maintaining of a romantic relation and the ability to understand, emotions and excitations, expansion of intimate relations and the ability of the couples perception of emotions can increase the marriage satisfaction and the couple's compatibility. The findings showed that between problem-focused coping style and marriage problems there is a meaningful relation and the direction of the correlation intensity is negative meaning that with increase in the problem-focused coping style, the marital problems decrease and vice versa with decrease in the problem-focused coping style the marital problems increase. In explaining this finding we can say training of social, cognitive, relational and coping skills causes marriage compatibility in women and improves their performance in the family environment and increases the amount of marriage satisfaction in them. The findings showed that between positive emotion-focused coping style and marital problems no relation exists. In explaining this finding we can say because the emotion-focused method which consists of thoughts, disregarding the problem, emotional support attraction and thought and practical relief of self from stress, the individual can not have an appropriate control on the stress causing position such as the marriage problems and as a result it is not an appropriate coping for solving the problem and difficulty.

Positive emotion-focused style is of the inefficient coping methods and according to the researches done it is related to a decrease in marriage satisfaction hence it is not an appropriate coping method for dealing with stress and does not have a relation with marital problems (Patrick et al, 2012). The findings showed that between the two variables of negative emotion-focused coping and marriage problems there is a meaningful relation and the direction of the relation is positive and direct meaning that with increase in the amount of negative emotion-focused coping style marital problems increase and vice versa with a decrease in the negative emotion-focused coping, marital problems also decrease. In explaining this finding we can say that the negative emotion-focused style is a destructive and inappropriate method and does not help the individual in solving the problem and can not be an appropriate coping strategy for the couple in solving their problem. Therefore the more decrease in amount of anxiety and negative emotion-focused style the marriage problems also decrease and vice versa with increase in the weight of the negative emotion the marital problems also increase. According to the findings obtained, between the problem-focused coping style and fear of intimacy there is a meaningful relation. In this terms with increase in problem-focused coping style, fear of intimacy decreases and vice versa with decrease in problem-focused coping style, fear of intimacy increases and as a result the research assumption is confirmed (Bowling et al, 2005).

In explaining this finding we can say that in the problem-focused coping style, the individual directly focuses on the stressful event to change it or to control it. The method of problem-focus, in fact consists of techniques like gathering of information, problem solving, training of social and relational skills, programming and obtaining guidance from others. The problem-focused coping since it emphasizes the solving of the problem and solves the problem in a basic and fundamental way therefore it can have a relation with fear of intimacy and can effect it in the way that with increase in the problem-focused style, fear of intimacy decreases more and with the decrease in problem-focused coping style, fear of intimacy increases. The findings showed that between the positive emotion-focused coping style and fear of intimacy there is a meaningful relation. In explaining this finding we can say that in the emotion-focused coping strategy, individual has no control on the position or has little control and fundamentally focuses on the emotional dimension of the position. Hence the emotion-focused coping style because it is an emotion coping method and is transient and temporary, decreases the anxiety of the individual in a temporary and transient way but does not solve the principle problem and can not effect the fear of intimacy and in this terms does not have a relation with it.

The findings showed that between the two variables negative emotion-focused and fear of intimacy there is a meaningful relation and the direction of this relation is positive and direct. This means that with increase in negative emotion-focused coping style, fear of intimacy increases and with its decrease, fear of intimacy decreases. In explaining this finding we can say that the negative emotion-focused style because it is an inappropriate method, instead of helping people in solving the problem, it intensifies it and not only it does not solve any problem but also it causes a more acute position in the individual. In this way decrease in the negative emotion-focused coping style decreases fear of intimacy. In total we can say that these findings are compatible with the results of the other previous researches like the researches of Jacobsky and Miller, 2004; Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 2000; Zynmsky and Sung, 2010; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Kennedy and
coworkers, 2001; Pourmohseni Kalvari, 2011; Asadpour and coworkers, 2012; Besharat and coworkers, 2007; Sedaghat, Pourlotfolahi, 2009.

The current research like other human studies went along with limitations from which we can refer to the following items: 1) lack of or no scientific sources accessible 2) despite lots of effort, the researcher was not successful in finding a research that directly involved the subject 3) the small size of the sample, prevents the extension of its result to a larger society.

In continue we mention several suggestions to enforce in studies to come here after: 1) It is suggested that in the next researches the range of sample be wider such that the research results can be more extended. 2) It is suggested that differences in between gender, also be examined. 3) It is suggested necessary conditions in order to have access to the marital problems and intimacy problems workshops and also training of sexual issues and the sex education of children and child bearing and training of life skills and more important of all solving the problem and stress coping styles be available such that a large step is taken in the direction of protection and strength of induration of the family and therefore maintenance of the health of the society.

**Conflict of interest**

The researcher in the duration of the process of study has not reported any conflict of interest.

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**References**


