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Developing a Marital Attachment Needs Scale

Siamak Samani[1]✉ | **Nadereh Shohrabi**[2] | **Mojtaba Moslehi**[3] | **Maziar Vesal Shirazi**[4]

1. Corresponding author, Department of Psychology, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: siamak.samani@iau.ac.ir
2. Department of Psychology, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran. E-mail: author2@gmail.com
3. MA Student, Department of Psychology, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: author3@gmail.com
4. MA Student, Department of Psychology, Shiraz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shiraz, Iran. E-mail: author4@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research was conducted to develop a marital attachment needs scale based on a mixed method research.

Methods: In the first phase, attachment interviews were conducted with 35 married people (18 male and 17 female). Based on this step, the first version of the Marital Attachment Needs Scale (MANS) was developed with 12 items. To develop the first version of the MANS, these 12 items are designed on a 5-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the second phase of the research, 140 married people (62 female and 78) male completed the initial form of the Marital Attachment Needs Scale. In addition to the marital attachment needs scale, to examine the convergent and divergent validity psychometric indexes, the marital conflicts scale (MCS) and the short form of the experienced close relationship scale (ECR-S) were used.

Results: Factor analysis showed a G-factor with an eigenvalue of 6.26 and a variance percentage of 52.19. The alpha coefficient and test-retest reliability coefficient for MANS were 0.90 and 0.92, respectively. Also, the results showed efficient convergent and divergent validity for the marital attachment needs scale. To check the G-factor hypothesis, confirmatory factor analysis (ML) was used. The results of the ML confirmatory factor analysis confirm the extracted G-factor in PC exploratory factor analysis for the MANS.

Conclusions: Overall, the results of this research indicated the adequacy of the psychometric properties of the marital attachment needs scale for clinical and research jobs.

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Introduction

According to Bowlby, attachment is a stable psychological bond between human beings" (Bowlby, 1973). This stable psychological bond is established from birth between the baby and the mother. This bond provides security and a feeling of peace in the baby against the threat of loneliness and abandonment. Any kind of lack of psychological presence of the mother can create a feeling of insecurity in the baby. Insecurity and anxiety are one of the first consequences of disruption in the mother-baby attachment relationship. The attachment bond provides the child's need for a sense of security and a sense of comfort. This need continues until adulthood and is often provided in the form of marital relationships.

According to Bowlby (1988), the quality of the child's relationship with his caregiver is effective in behavioral indicators in adulthood, such as empathy with others, work relationships, and marital relationships. Failure to meet the need for attachment in our childhood can cause us to feel insecure in establishing emotional relationships in adulthood. The feeling of anxiety in establishing an emotional relationship with others and the fear of being abandoned, avoiding establishing an emotional relationship due to the fear of communication damage, and feeling assertion in establishing interpersonal relationships are the results of the quality of child-parent attachment relationships in adulthood. Thakhtavani and Afsharinia (2018) in their study revealed a positive correlation between secure attachment style and marital adjustment. Some researchers have found a significant relationship between personality traits (the expression of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness/responsibility, neuroticism, and openness to experience) with attachment style (Cervera-Solís, Muñoz Suárez, Cortés Stores, et al, 2022). Also, Delia Vırga, Schaufeli, Taris, Beek, and Sule (2018) showed a positive relationship between anxiety attachment and job burnout.

Johnson (2019) has considered the concept of attachment in couple relationships in his therapy model called Emotion-Focused Therapy or EFT. According to Johnson (1999), failure to meet attachment needs in marital relationships is accompanied by marital conflict and dissatisfaction, which can be seen in the form of emotions such as anxiety, aggression, worry, fearfulness, and depression, which Johnson calls secondary emotions in his treatment model.

According to Johnson (1999, 2011, 2019), a lack of basic emotional support causes marital conflicts between couples. Insecurity in marital relationships in the form of feeling unloved, feeling unworthy, feeling not receiving attention and care causes conflict between couples. In other words, the feeling of value, being loved, attention, and care is the product of safe relationships between couples. The feeling of marital satisfaction will be the product of behaviors that provide these emotions.

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According to Samani and Sohrabi (2022), the feeling of security, being loved, value and priority, and the feeling of support and receiving care are among the attachment needs in marital relationships. Johnson calls these emotions basic emotions. Basic emotions are the basis of attachment in marital relationships. Perhaps these fundamental emotions in marital relationships can be called "***marital attachment needs***". Failure to meet these needs creates unpleasant feelings in people, which is the result of a vicious cycle of couple interaction.

Samani (2019) showed that a positive marital lifestyle can affect marital attachment needs. He developed a Marital Resilient Lifestyle Program (MRLP) to enhance marital relationships and reduce marital conflict. The MRLP is focused on designing private marital gatherings, marital fun activities, mutual marital appreciation, and expressing love to the spouse. Qualitative data in Samani's research has revealed that spouses who have received the MRLP, showed a high level of secure attachment with the feeling of importance and value, feeling security, having loved and feeling beloved, and having a supporter and protector. According to the research, marital lifestyle can respond to the attachment needs of couples.

According to the research, marital lifestyle as an intervention in couple therapy can respond to the attachment needs of couples. But what the marital attachment need based on the literature? According to Jonson (2003) a predictable emotional connection, a sense of felt security, emotional accessibility, responsiveness, and a sense of self-efficacy are some of these needs.

In this study, Attachment needs are a set of emotions that are obtained in interpersonal interactions and their fulfillment prevents the occurrence of intrapersonal insecurity. Failure to meet these needs can cause anxiety, fear, depression, aggression, stress, isolation, and rage in a person. Marital relationships as the interpersonal relationship should meet the attachment needs of the couple. *This means that attachment in marital relationships is safe if it provides a sense of security, a sense of support, a sense of care, value, importance, and sufficiency.*

Identifying and defining marital attachment needs is a chance to assess the quality of marital relationships and design the therapeutic plan to make an efficient marital attachment. The research aimed to identify marital attachment needs and develop a marital attachment scale.

Materials and Methods

The study was mixed-method research. It was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, 25 couples were interviewed based on focused emotional therapy. These couples have been referred

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by themselves for emotion-focused therapy to the Center for Relaxation Psychology, Shiraz, Iran. The process of interviewing the participants in this stage continued until the diagnosis of the basic emotions resulting from the quality of attachment experienced with the spouse. The interview with the participants continued until the saturation stage. This step was done to identify the sample of marital attachment needs for building the scale.

Based on the attachment interview with couples, six concepts related to attachment needs were extracted: feeling secure, feeling support and attention, feeling important, feeling love, and feeling efficiency. These concepts are designed in 12 items as follows in Table 1. To test the content validity of the items, five Emotional Focused therapists were asked to evaluate these items by storing items on a 3-rating scale as "essential", "useful but not necessary", and "not necessary" for computing Content Validity Ratio (Ayre, and Scally, 2014).

$CVR= (N_e - N/2)/(N/2)$

"in which the N is the total number of panelists and the N_e is the number of panelists indicating essential"

The sample of the second phase of this research consisted of 140 married people between 22 and 84 years old (62 female, 78 male) with mean and standard deviation ages 43.8 and 11.2 respectively. Twenty percent of the participants had experienced the bereavement of their parents. All participants in this phase filled out the first version of the Marital Attachment Needs Scale (MANS). The MANS includes 12 items with a 5-point scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). "*I don't feel valuable with my spouse", and "I feel safe with my spouse"* are two items samples of the MANS. Appendix 1 shows the first Persian version of the MANS.

In addition to the MANS, the Marital Conflict Scale (MCS) (Samani, 2008) and the scale of Experiences of Close Relationships - short form (ECR-S) (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, and Vogel, 2007) were used to check the convergent and divergent validity. The MCS consisted of 19 marital subjects for conflicts in two factors: family processes and content conflicts. the items scored on a 5-point scale (from always to never). The MCS was developed based on the Family Process and Content Model (Samani, 2010, 2011). The ECR-S included 12 items with a 7-point scale (strongly

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disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neutral, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree) with two subscales: anxiety and avoidance.

To check the convergent validity of MANS, a group of 30 people was asked to respond to the ECR-S in addition to the MANS. Also, to check the divergent validity of the attachment needs scale, another group of 30 people was asked to complete the MCS in addition to the MANS. And finally, to study the reliability of the scale of attachment needs, a test-retest was conducted with a group of 30 people with an interval of two weeks.

Criteria for include: In this research, the sample group included people who are married have at least one year of married life, and are not widows.

Criteria for exclude: Being a widow and having less than one year of married life were the criteria for not being included in the sample group

In order to participate in this research, people expressed their consent verbally to the researchers. Also, the participants were assured that the data of this study would be used only for research purposes.

Results

The analysis of the content of the interview with the participants in the first phase of the research indicated 5 attachment needs in marital relationships: "*Feeling safe", "feeling loved", "feeling not alone", "feeling valued and important", and "feeling supported*". The extracted items based on interviews consisted of 12 items (Table 1) to assess marital attachment needs.

Table 1. Items of marital attachment needs

Item	Marital attachment needs (English and Persian)
1	I feel safe with my spouse در کنار همسرم احساس امنیت می کنم
2	My spouse really loves me همسرم واقعا مرا دوست دارد
3	I feel that I am my spouse's priority احساس می کنم در اولویت همسرم هستم
4	I feel cared for and supported by my spouse احساس می کنم مورد توجه و حمایت همسرم هستم
5	Despite the presence of my spouse, I do not feel alone با وجود حضور همسرم احساس تنهایی می کنم
6	I feel the presence of my spouse comforts me احساس می کنم حضور همسرم به من آرامش می دهد
7	I feel that my spouse cannot be trusted

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	احساس می کنم نمی توانم به همسرم تکیه کنم
8	I feel that my spouse does not love me very much حس می کنم مرا خیلی دوست ندارد
9	I don't feel valuable with my spouse درکنار همسرم احساس ارزشمندی نمی کنم
10	I feel that my spouse does not take care of me enough احساس می کنم همسرم به اندازه کافی از من مراقبت نمی کند
11	I feel that my spouse is by my side in any situation احساس می کنم همسرم در هر شرایطی در کنار هست
12	I feel that my spouse supports me in any situation احساس می کنم در هر شرایطی همسرم پشتیبان من است

To check the content validity, the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) for each item was computed. Table 2 shows the CVR for each item.

Table 2. The CVR index for the MANS items

	Items											
N=5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
N_e	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4
CVR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.6	0.6

The CVR was acceptable for all items (CVR<0.6). Indeed, all therapists confirmed the item efficiency of the extracted items. To check the construct validity of the MANS, the Principal component factor analysis was run. The MKO index for this analysis was 0.87 and the Bartlett sphericity test coefficient was 1009.50 (df= 66, p‹0.00001). These two indexes showed the sampling adequacy and adequacy of the correlational matrix for factor analysis. To check the factor structure of the MANS, one, two, and three-factor solutions were run. Finally, based on the Scree Plot (diagram 1) and computed percent of the variance, the one-factor solution was accepted. The results of the principal component factor analysis showed a G-factor, named Marital Attachment Needs. Table 3 shows the item factor loads.

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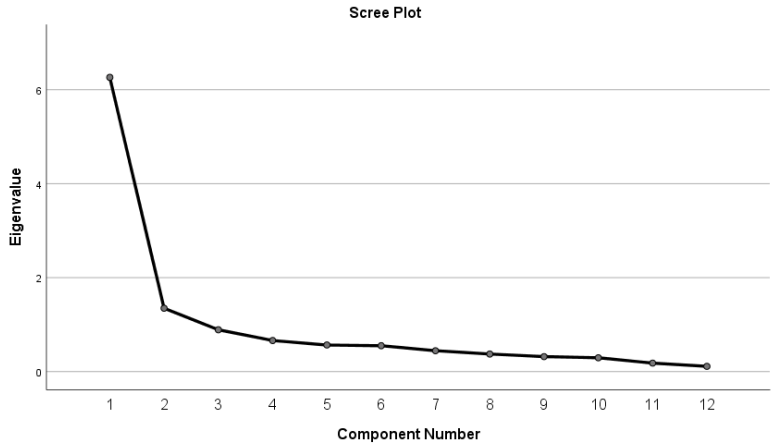

Diagram 1. Scree plot of the MANS factor structure

Table 3. Item factor loads of the marital attachment need scale

	Item	load		Item	Load
1	I feel safe with my spouse	0.71	7	I feel that my spouse cannot be trusted ®	0.60
2	My spouse loves me	0.71	8	I feel that my spouse does not love me very much ®	0.72
3	I feel that I am my spouse's priority	0.77	9	I don't feel valuable with my spouse ®	0.66
4	I feel cared for and supported by my spouse	0.84	10	I feel that my spouse does not take care of me enough ®	0.68
5	Despite the presence of my spouse, I do not feel alone ®	0.82	11	I feel that my spouse is by my side in any situation	0.66
6	I feel the presence of my spouse comforts me	0.80	12	I feel that my spouse supports me in any situation	0.68
	Eigenvalue = 6.26, % of variance = 52.192				

® Reversed items

Table 4 indicates the item-total correlation coefficient and Alpha item deleted coefficient. As table three has shown all items have a correlation coefficient greater than 0.30. The Alpha coefficient of the extracted G-factor was 0.90. According to Table 5, there is a positive correlation between the MANS score and the ECR-S score ($r=0.67$, $p<0.01$), and a negative correlation between the MANS score and the Marital Conflict Scale (MCS). These two indexes have shown convergent validity and divergent validity of the MANS respectively.

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Table 4. Item-total correlation of MANS & Alpha item deleted

	Items											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Total score	0.64	0.63	0.69	0.77	0.76	0.74	0.53	0.66	0.59	0.62	0.60	0.63
Alpha item deleted	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.89	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.90	0.91	0.90

Table 5. The correlation coefficient of the MANS, ECR-S, and MCS

	MCS (n=30) (Divergent validity)	ECR-S (n=30) (Convergent validity)
MANS	-0.74*	0.61*

*p‹0.01

Test-retest with two weeks intervals for the MANS was 0.92 (p‹0.001). the coefficient has shown a high-reliability coefficient for the marital attachment needs scale. To check the G-factor hypothesis, a Maximum Likelihood confirmatory factor analysis (on 60% of the sample) was run. The Chi-square index of goodness-of-fit test was significant (Chi-square=188.0.82, df=54, p<0.0001). The initial eigenvalue and the explained variance for the G-factor were 6.124, and 51.03% respectively. Table 6 showed the item's factor load for the maximum likelihood factor analysis of the marital attachment needs scale.

Table 6. MANS Items factor loads

	Items											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Factor load	0.68	0.69	0.76	0.83	0.80	0.77	0.55	0.67	0.61	0.63	0.61	0.63
Eigenvalue=6.124, Chi-square=188, df=54. P<0.0001												

The results of the maximum Likelihood factor analysis confirmed the g-factor structure for the Marital Attachment Needs Scale.

Discussion

The content structure extracted from the interview in the first phase of the research had significant compliance with the basic emotions in the Emotion-focused therapy. The need to feel safe, the need to feel valued, the need to feel loved, and the need to feel supported are all considered in

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emotion-focused therapy to be products of safe interaction with a partner. Thus, when interacting with a spouse indicates a secure attachment that provides emotional needs (security, being loved, feeling valuable, feeling supported, and feeling prioritized) in couples. Failure to meet these needs during the couple's interaction indicates an insecure attachment. with this introduction, the evaluation of this category of emotional needs in couples is a primary diagnostic guide for therapists and researchers. The content obtained from the clinical interview in the first phase of this study was the content provider for building an evaluation scale based on emotion-focused therapy of marital attachment needs.

The results of factor analysis on the initial version of the marital attachment needs scale showed the adequacy of the MAN's content sample. Also, the item-total correlation showed the internal consistency of the scale. The significant correlation between MANS and MCS and ECR-S was evidence for the convergent and divergent validity of MANS. These results showed that marital conflicts reduce the satisfaction of attachment needs and this scale is able to detect this effect. Also, the correlation coefficient of ECR-S with MANS shows that attachment needs are achieved during a close positive interpersonal interaction. Alpha coefficient and test-retest coefficient tests also showed that this scale has good internal consistency and reliability.

Overall, the results of the research showed that the MANS is a reliable and valid instrument for assessing marital attachment needs and is a useful scale for the initial assessment of couples. Due to the limited number of items (12 items), the use of this scale is especially recommended for emotional-focused therapists.

However, the evaluation of diagnostic psychometric indicators of this test needs to be studied further. Testing the factor structure of this scale in the form of a confirmatory factor analysis test can be useful to re-evaluate the validity of this scale

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

S.S, N.S, M.M and M.V contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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The original form of the Persian version of the Marital Attachment Needs Scale (MANS)

نسخه نهایی پارسی مقیاس نیازهای دلبستگی زناشویی

دستورالعمل: لطفا عبارتهای زیر را مطالعه نمایید و با انتخاب یک گزینه از میان گزینه ها، احساس خودتان را در مورد هر عبارت ها ابراز نمایید. این عبارتها به احساس شما در مورد رابطه شما با همسرتان است.

شماره		کاملا موافقم	موافقم	نظری ندارم	مخالفم	کاملا مخالفم
۱	در کنار همسرم احساس امنیت می کنم	O	O	O	O	O
۲	همسرم واقعا مرا دوست دارد	O	O	O	O	O
۳	احساس می کنم در اولویت همسرم هستم	O	O	O	O	O
۴	احساس می کنم مورد توجه و حمایت همسرم هستم	O	O	O	O	O
۵	با وجود حضور همسرم احساس تنهایی می کنم	O	O	O	O	O
۶	احساس می کنم حضور همسرم به من آرامش می دهد	O	O	O	O	O
۷	احساس می کنم نمی توانم به همسرم تکیه کنم	O	O	O	O	O
۸	حس می کنم مرا خیلی دوست ندارد	O	O	O	O	O
۹	درکنار همسرم احساس ارزشمندی نمی کنم	O	O	O	O	O
۱۰	احساس می کنم همسرم به اندازه کافی از من مراقبت نمی کند	O	O	O	O	O
	احساس می کنم همسرم در هر شرایطی در کنار هست	O	O	O	O	O
	احساس می کنم در هر شرایطی همسرم پشتیبان من است	O	O	O	O	O

- استفاده از مقیاس نیازهای دلبستگی زناشویی برای محققین رایگان است و نیازی به کسب مجوز از سازنده مقیاس نیست.
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