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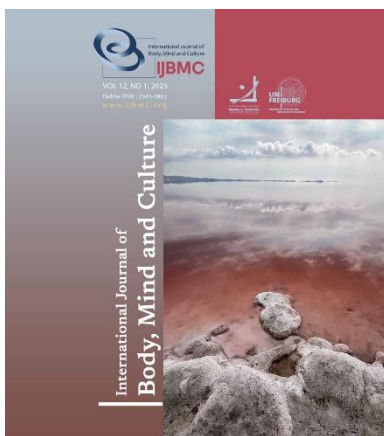
Predicting Couples' Communication Patterns based on the Health of the Original Family, Feelings of love, and Marriage Values

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Difficulties in relationships can be traumatic and disturbing, mainly because people are profoundly social beings. This research aimed to predict couples' communication patterns by examining the health of their original family , love, and values related to marriage.

Methods and Materials: The study methodology used descriptive-correlational. The research population involved all married individuals living in Mashhad during the first six months of 2022. One hundred 100 participants were chosen to use convenience sampling methods and completed standardized questionnaires on the Christensen-Sullaway couples' communication pattern questionnaire (Christensen & Shenk, 1991), the Original Family Health Assessment Questionnaire (Hovestadt et al., 1985),the Sternberg Love Questionnaire (Sternberg, 1997), and Marriage Values Survey (Delkhamoush, 2013). Statistical analysis was conducted multivariate regression and Pearson's correlation coefficient using SPSS.22.

Findings: The standard path coefficient (β) indicates that love has a significant predictive power of 0.74, 0.57, and 0.50 for withdrawal-expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance, respectively (P<0.001). This suggests that love plays a strong role in determining communication patterns. Furthermore, the standard path coefficient (β) for marriage values in predicting these communication patterns is 0.68, 0.58, and 0.53 for withdrawal-expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance, respectively, indicating a strong predictive power(P<0.001).

Conclusion: The findings suggest that couples' communication patterns can be predicted based on the health of their original family , love, and marriage values.

Keywords: Couple communication patterns, Original family, Health, Love level, Marriage values

Introduction

Many researchers believe that individuals carry the characteristics, whether healthy or unhealthy, acquired from their families into society, and therefore well-being of a society is reliant on the health of its families(Tavakoli, 2017). The family is considered the primary source of fulfilling the basic needs of its members and shapes their learning experiences, attitudes, and beliefs (Susan, 2019). Social institutions have a significant influence on families, as relationships and communication patterns are crucial for the stability and health of marriages (Manalel et al., 2017). The way a couple perceives their marital relationship and their partner's view of the relationship are vital factors in determining its success or failure (Abreu-Afonso et al., 2022).

A significant disparity between verbal and non-verbal communication actions between partners can lead to dissatisfaction in the relationship. Finding methods to bridge gaps in understanding between individuals is crucial for building satisfactory relationships(Khatibi, 2012). Familial communication involves various styles that either enhance or hinder relationships. Some communication methods show healthy conflict resolution, while others highlight a reluctance to address issues or even contribute to marital breakdown. For instance, couples who openly discuss their feelings and work together to find solutions tend to have stronger relationships (Gorgani, 2013). Studies demonstrate that positive communication styles lead to higher levels of satisfaction in relationships, whereas negative patterns like avoidance lead to dissatisfaction (Hassanpour, 2018).

According to Gutman (2007), the quality of emotions and feelings between spouses and how they express those emotions are strong predictors of the future stability of their relationships(Guttman & Yacouel, 2007). The exchange of emotions and understanding each other's feelings is crucial for their love and the strength of their marriage. Changes in society and lifestyle have made married life less exciting than before, highlighting the importance of research to enhance couples' relationships (Mohamadimehr & Karimi, 2017) . Mental health is a significant factor in the formation and maintenance of relationships, in the multigenerational theory, where individuals learn about interpersonal relationships from their family of origin (Amini & Naser Shariati, 2021). From this perspective, it can be argued that the family and relationship challenges faced by couples are rooted in the issues present in their original family dynamics (Saadatmand et al., 2019). Interpersonal problems within the primary family can lead individuals to seek comfort and support from those outside the family unit, even if they are physically distant. The behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes acquired within the family of origin can significantly impact one's self-esteem and communication style. Bandura's theory of learning suggests that observing the actions of others is a method of acquiring new behaviors and communication patterns. Therefore, it is likely that many negative communication patterns are learned from the original family setting (Hosseini et al., 2013).

The foundation of people's social behavior and relationships is often based on their experiences within their primary family, which can impact the quality of their future marriages (Brauner-Otto et al., 2020). Askari & Beigi (2024) found that an effective communication style and love are crucial for marital satisfaction, while negative communication patterns can lead to marital dissatisfaction (Askari, 2024). Exchanging emotions and understanding each other's feelings is crucial for the love and stability of a marriage. With the advancements in society and changes in lifestyle, the vitality and excitement in marriages have diminished. Therefore, research on factors that can enhance relationships between couples is crucial. This research aimed to predict couples' communication patterns by examining the health of their original family, love, and values related to marriage.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

The current study focuses on describing and identifying correlations. The research population involved all married individuals living in Mashhad during the first six months of 2022. Sampling was carried out using the convenience method. The questionnaire was formatted as a link and distributed through social groups on WhatsApp in Mashhad. Participants were instructed to fill out the questionnaire if they met the specified criteria. Inclusion criteria consisted of being female, having been married for at least one year, not experiencing major marital problems or drug addiction,

and not facing recent crises like death or financial issues, as well as not being pregnant or breastfeeding.

The sample size was determined using Tabaching and Fidel's method. This technique involves utilizing the subsequent equation: M8+50<N. M represents the number of predictive elements with six specific items in this research. The primary focus is on two aspects of family, one aspect on marital values and three on love. As a result, the sample size required for the study was determined to be 100 individuals.

Data Collection Tools

Christensen-Sullaway couples' communication pattern questionnaire: The aim of this survey is to assess the behavior of couples on a bilateral level and the connection between spouses using three scales: mutual constructive communication pattern, cross-avoidance communication pattern, and demand/withdraw communication pattern (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).This survey includes 35 items. In a study by Christensen, the reliability of the survey was measured with Cronbach's alpha coefficient for its subcategories ranging from 0.50 to 0.78 (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). In Iran, Ebadatpour standardized this survey and to verify it, the correlation between the scales of this survey and the enrich questionnaire was determined. The findings indicated that all scales of this survey were linked to the Enrich Marital Satisfaction Questionnaire. The correlation coefficients for the three scales of the survey were 0.58 for mutual constructive communication pattern, -0.58 for cross-avoidance communication pattern, and -0.35 for demand/withdraw communication pattern, respectively. All correlations were statistically significant at the alpha level of 0.01 (Ebadatpur, 2000). Each question in the survey was scored from 1 to 9 based on the Likert scale. To determine the frequency of couples' demand/withdraw communication pattern, the cut-off point for this pattern was first established by calculating half of the difference between the highest and lowest scores. Subsequently, a bivariate variable was created, assigning code 0 to scores below the cut-off point and code 1 to scores above it, and then the frequency of these bivariate variables was calculated.

The Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS): This scale was designed by Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine (1985) and consists of 40 questions. Each question is rated on a five-point scale from one to five (Hovestadt et al., 1985). The Family-of-Origin Scale consists of 40 items that are rated on a 1 to 5 Likert scale based on the respondent's agreement level with each statement (1=Strongly Disagree; 5= Strongly Agree). Each item is phrased in the past tense and respondents are asked to reflect on their experiences growing up in their family when responding. These 40 items are divided into two main dimensions, each containing five subscales. The Autonomy dimension covers Openness to Others, Clarity of Expression, Responsibility, Respect for Others, Acceptance of Separation and Loss, while the Intimacy dimension includes Mood and Tone, Range of Feelings, Conflict Resolution, Empathy for Others, and Trust subscales. Out of the 40 items, 20 are positive statements and 20 are negative statements. All negatively worded items are scored in a way that a rating of "5" indicates strong disagreement with the content. As mentioned in the previous review, the FOS has shown reliability and validity. In a study conducted Rostami & Qezelseflu (2020), the reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.81 using the test-retest method (Rostami & Qezelseflu, 2020).

The Sternberg Love Questionnaire (SLQ) developed in 1989, consists of 45 questions categorized into intimacy, lust, and commitment. Respondents rate each item on a 9-point scale. This scale was developed by Robert Sternberg in 1986 and it has 45 questions that measure three love styles: intimacy, passion, and commitment in the 9- degree Likert system (1: not at all to 9: extremely). Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 has been reported, and the cross-correlation analysis method has been used to calculate its validity. The results were reported as 0.73 for intimacy and 0.71 for commitment and passion (Sternberg, 1997). In an Iranian population, Askarpour and Mohammadipour reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 for intimacy subscale, 0.87 for passion, 0.91 for commitment, and 0.93 for the total scale (Askarpour & Mohammadipour, 2016). TIn Iran, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire were confirmed by Nikozadeh et al., with a reliability coefficient of 0.81.

Marriage Values Survey (MVS) was created by Delkhmosh in 2013 and includes 46 questions (Delkhamoush, 2013). This survey consists of 46 questions that require the respondent to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The respondent must rate their agreement on a six-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for

questions 1 to 41, and on a three-point scale for questions 42 to 46. The scale statements have been chosen based on the research's conceptual framework, focusing on values related to marriage and married life, selecting a spouse, being surrounded by others, intellectual self-awareness, emotional self-regulation, hierarchy, and egalitarianism. There are a total of 40 items covering these domains, with the remaining six items addressing overall feedback on marriage and feedback on similarity or dissimilarity with one's spouse. The initial study reported a reliability coefficient ranging between 0.62 and 0.81.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS-20 software package. Descriptive statistics methods, such as frequency distribution, percentage, average, and standard deviation, were utilized for data description.

then tested using multivariate regression and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Findings and Results

Demographic findings showed that the age of the participants in the study was 35.7 ± 8.1 years. The age group of 25 to 40 years encompassed the majority of individuals at 69%. Those above 40 years made up 25%, while those under 25 were only 6%. A significant number of participants, accounting for 53%, had completed a diploma-level education. 35% had attained a university degree. The majority of participants had been married for a duration ranging from two to ten years, totaling 78%. The distribution of variables was deemed normal based on the values of skewness and kurtosis falling within the range of zero to ±1.5. The correlation between predictor and criterion variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlation of predictor and criterion variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Amount of love	1						
Marriage values	0.46*	1					
The health of the original family	0.43*	0.44*	1				
Expectation withdrawal communication pattern	-0.74*	0.68*	-0.64*	1			
Mutual constructive communication pattern	0.57*	0.58*	0.47*	0.78*	1		
The communication pattern of mutual avoidance	-0.50*	-0.53*	-0.42*	-0.75*	0.56*	1	

*$P<0.01$

Upon examining various factors such as sample size, outlier data, linearity of predictor variables with criteria, multicollinearity, dispersion uniformity, and residual independence, the fundamental assumptions of regression analysis were found to be valid. Additionally,

the evaluation of collinearity indicated that the variance inflation factor (VIF) index and tolerance index fell within acceptable ranges, suggesting independence among predictor variables and the absence of multiple collinearity.

Table 2

Regression model of communication patterns based on family health

Criterion variable	R	R2	F	standard error	β	t	P
Expectation withdrawal communication pattern	0.64	0.40	69.10	0.3	-0.64	-*8.31	0.001
Mutual constructive communication pattern	0.47	0.21	28.05	0.03	0.47	*5.29	0.001
The communication pattern of mutual avoidance	0.38	0.13	16.81	0.05	-0.38	-*4.10	0.001

Based on the data in Table 2, the adjusted coefficient of determination reveals that withdrawal expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance are

associated with values of 0.40, 0.21, and 0.13, respectively. This demonstrates that the primary family health factor has a significant impact on these

communication patterns. While the original family health variable accounts for 0.40 of the variance in withdrawal expectation, it explains 0.21 and 0.13 percent in mutual constructiveness and mutual avoidance, respectively. The standard path coefficient (β) further confirms the influence of original family

health, with values of 0.64, 0.47, and 0.38 for withdrawal expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance. This suggests that the health status of the original family plays a crucial role in predicting communication patterns with a strong level of accuracy.

Table 3

Regression model of communication patterns based on the amount of love

Criterion variable	R	R2	F	β	t	P
Expectation withdrawal communication pattern	0.74	0.540	121.63	-0.74	-*11.02	0.001
Mutual constructive communication pattern	0.57	0.31	47.15	0.57	*6.86	0.001
The communication pattern of mutual avoidance	0.50	0.25	34.33	-0.50	*-5.86	0.001

The results indicate that analysis of variance for intra-group factor (time) is significant and significant between groups. These results mean that considering the group

effect, time alone is significant. The interaction between group and time is also meaningful. Bonferroni post hoc test was used for pairwise comparison.

Table 4

Regression model of communication patterns based on marriage

Criterion variable	R	R2	F	β	t	P-value
Expectation withdrawal communication pattern	0.68	0.46	88.35	-0.68	-*9.40	0.001
Mutual constructive communication pattern	0.58	0.34	51.98	0.58	*7.21	0.001
The communication pattern of mutual avoidance	0.53	0.27	38.21	-0.53	-*6.18	0.001

Based on the data presented in Table 4, it is evident that the adjusted coefficient of determination for withdrawal-expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance are 0.46, 0.34, and 0.27, respectively. These values suggest that the main marriage values variable accounts for 0.74 of the variance in communication patterns related to withdrawal-expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance. Furthermore, the standard path coefficient (β) for marriage values in predicting these communication patterns is 0.68, 0.58, and 0.53 for withdrawal-expectation, mutual constructiveness, and mutual avoidance, respectively, indicating a strong predictive power.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how communication patterns within couples are linked to the overall health

of the family, feelings of love, and perspectives on marriage. The findings from the regression analysis indicated a direct correlation between communication patterns and the health of the primary family. The health of the primary family was found to be a predictor of decreased withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance patterns while predicting increased mutually constructive communication patterns. This suggests that as the scores for the primary family health variable go up, the scores for withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance patterns go down, and conversely, they increase for mutually constructive communication patterns. Consistent with this study's results, previous research by Taheri Bakhsh et al. (2015) showed that the health of the primary family can predict marital compatibility (Taheri Bakhsh, 2015). Hosseini et al. (2013) also supported the notion that the health of the primary family can impact marital relationships

(Hosseini et al., 2013). Ghezelsefloo et al. (2016) found similar results in their studies as well (Ghezelsefloo et al., 2016).

The traditional psychodynamic perspective views marital issues as stemming from internal psychological problems within the spouses. It suggests that early childhood experiences, both conscious and unconscious, play a role in shaping an individual and their family dynamics in the future. To address these issues, it is significant to consider the individual within their context and developmental history (Ghezelsefloo et al., 2016). According to psychoanalytic theory, individuals entering marriage bring personal histories, unique personalities, and internalized aspects that influence their interactions with their spouses (Taheri Bakhsh, 2015). Marital problems often stem from unresolved issues and traumas from one's past, such as experiences related to parents or significant others. Faramo, a proponent of this theory, believes that family issues often have roots in the extended family system (Hosseini et al., 2013). Unresolved conflicts can influence the quality of marital relationships within the husband and wife's families of origin. Anna Freud proposed that certain emotions are so threatening that individuals develop defense mechanisms to avoid confronting them. For instance, someone may use avoidance, denial, or projection to cope with feelings of rejection, abandonment, hurt, and loss. When these defense mechanisms are used during communication with a spouse, they can lead to the deterioration of the relationship. This also applies to communication patterns; individuals who have a healthy balance of independence and intimacy in their family relationships are likely to exhibit more constructive communication styles (Taheri Bakhsh, 2015).

The research findings indicate a clear link between communication patterns and the level of love, demonstrating that love levels can predict both withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance patterns negatively while positively predicting mutually constructive communication patterns. This suggests that as scores in the primary love variable increase, scores in withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance patterns decrease, and conversely, scores in mutually constructive communication patterns increase. These results are consistent with a previous study by Sadeghi Kian et al. (2021), which found a connection between couples' values in marriage and relationship satisfaction

(Sadeghi Kian, 2021). Additionally, Talebi and Vaisi (2012) found that marriage values can predict the extent of love within a relationship (Abotorab & Veici, 2012).

Marriage values are seen as shared concepts and perceptions within society. These values encompass intellectual, emotional, and hierarchical aspects, often conflicting with the idea of equality. Individuals are encouraged to follow customs and guidelines while also paying attention to their personal qualities for being prudent. It is believed that having similar values in marriage can lead to higher satisfaction and intimacy, influencing financial outcomes. Couples with similar marital values are more likely to engage in constructive behaviors, whereas those with differing values, particularly those with higher self-worth, may resort to withdrawal and expectation (Sadeghi Kian, 2021).

The findings reveal a direct correlation between communication patterns and values, suggesting that marriage values can predict withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance in opposite directions while influencing mutually constructive communication positively. This implies that higher scores in marriage values lead to lower scores in withdrawal expectations and mutual avoidance but higher scores in mutually constructive communication. These results align with previous studies by Hassanpour et al who established a link between communication patterns and marital quality (Hassanpour, 2018). Another research study found that effective communication and psychological resources have a beneficial impact on the resilience and self-regulation (Saadatmand et al., 2019).Love plays a crucial role in marital satisfaction, with many considering it a fundamental element in successful marriages. Romantic love is often seen as the foundation of marriage, increasingly associated with self-expression. It involves intense focus, high regard, and longing to be united with someone without any coercion (Rezaei Kargar et al., 2014). The type of communication pattern present typically influences the level of love in a relationship. A mutual avoidant relationship tends to decrease love, while a mutually constructive relationship can enhance the level of love within the relationship (Gómez-López et al., 2019).

In the course of the recent research project, the researcher faced some limitations that may have influenced the overall quality of the study."One such limitation pertains to the fact that the research was

solely conducted within a single city. It is important to exercise care when attempting to apply the findings to different cultural backgrounds and geographic regions. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the study had a restricted sample size, which may have influenced the outcomes. The research predominantly adopted a quantitative approach. Because of various constraints, it was not feasible to employ random sampling techniques in this study. Moreover, the research specifically focused on adults between the ages of 20 and 50. Therefore, the results obtained may not be readily applicable to other age demographics.

The findings suggested that the main element affecting family well-being is related to communication styles such as withdrawal, mutual constructive behavior, and mutual avoidance. The presence of love was identified as a key factor in shaping communication patterns. The examination also revealed that the importance placed on marriage can have a significant impact on communication dynamics. The investigator faced certain constraints during the study, which may have influenced the research quality. Since the research was confined to a single city, it is advised to be cautious when generalizing these results to other cultures and regions. This investigation was conducted through online platforms, suggesting a need for future studies in diverse cultural and geographical contexts, ideally conducted face-to-face.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

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