

Research Reports

How Adult Attachment and Personality Traits are Related to Marital Quality

The Role of Relationship Attributions and Emotional Reactions

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of General Factor of Personality (GFP) and adult attachment dimensions in marital quality through relationship attributions and emotional reactions. The sample consisted of 261 couples who were married at least more than one year and had no major stressful events in their lives up to the time of the study. In this study, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire-Revised (ECR-R), the Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM), the Geneva Emotion Wheel (GEW), and the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) were used for collecting the data. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the data. The results suggest that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance and GFP directly and indirectly, through relationship attributions and emotional reactions, were related to marital quality. In addition, relationship attributions are antecedent to emotional reactions. Based on the findings, an intrapersonal-situational model of marital quality is suggested.

Keywords: general factor of personality (GFP), adult attachment styles, relationship attributions, emotional reactions, marital quality

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Introduction

Marital quality is related to individual characteristics for example, Karney and Bradbury (1995) and Holman (2001) developed models of marital quality. These models emphasize spouses' individual characteristics that could be explained from the five-factor model of personality and attachment theory. The Big-Five personality traits- Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness- explain interpersonal differences in personality (John & Srivastava, 1999). The relationship between personality traits and marital outcomes was suggested in the literature. For instance, research has shown that neuroticism has a main role in predicting marital quality (e.g., Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2005; Bouchard, 1999, 2003; Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engl, & Thurmaier, 2006). Holland and Roisman (2008) found that extraversion and agreeableness are positively associated with marital quality. Previous studies indicate weak relationships of conscientiousness and openness with marital quality (Bouchard, 1999; Holland & Roisman, 2008). Recently, researches (e.g., DeYoung, 2006; Musek, 2007; Rushton & Irwing, 2008, 2009) have supported the new hypothesis that the General Factor of Personality (GFP)

is at the top of the hierarchical structure of personality. It was revealed that the Big-Five factors are correlated with each other and they are not orthogonal factors (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2002; Digman, 1997). Musek (2007) showed that the personality structure is composed of three distinct higher-order levels: the level of the Big-Five, the level of the Big-Two (plasticity and stability), and the level of the Biggest One (GFP). Stability includes Emotional Stability, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Plasticity includes Extraversion and Openness to experience. Musek (2007) argued that GFP is a mixture of positively valued aspects of personality. In other words, GFP integrates positive aspects of stability and plasticity. Van der Linden, te Nijenhuis, and Bakker (2010) believed that, in some cases GFP, as a compound measure, is more useful. In addition, John and Srivastava (1999) argued that higher-level factors of personality are more useful for predicting general behavior models. In this present study, the highest level of the hierarchical structure of personality, i.e. GFP, was investigated.

On the other hand, adult attachment theory (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007) explains individual differences in close relationships. According to this theory, two dimensions are the basis of individual differences: attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety. Four attachment styles are defined based on these dimensions for adults (including secure, fearful avoidant, dismissing avoidant, and preoccupied). Based on attachment theory, less marital satisfaction is associated with attachment insecurity (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). Recent empirical evidence suggests that adult attachment styles are significantly related to marital quality (Ben-Ari & Lavee, 2005; Davila & Bradbury, 2001; Hollist & Miller, 2005; Nofle & Shaver, 2006)

Moreover, many studies have shown the association between adult attachment and the Big-Five traits (e.g., Nofle & Shaver, 2006), and the relationship between personality traits and marital outcomes (e.g., Rogge et al. 2006). Nofle and Shaver (2006) and Donnellan, Burt, Levendosky, and Klump (2008) emphasize for example the necessity of doing research on how adult attachment constructs and personality traits contribute to form social relationships, such as marital relationships. In general, adult attachment dimensions influence marital quality through the emotional dynamics (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). In reaction to a partner's negative behaviors, attachment avoidance is related to the combination of suppressed anger and high hostility (Mikulincer, 1998). In these situations, anxious attachment is related to uncontrollable anger (Mikulincer, 1998), hostility, and distress (Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996). Moreover, the experience and expression of emotions are related to personality traits. For example, negative affectivity, which is "stable tendency to experience and express negative emotions", is related to neuroticism (Davila, Bradbury, & Fincham, 1998). Besides, there is a direct relationship between agreeableness and automatic emotion regulation (Haas, Omura, Constable, & Canli, 2007).

From another perspective, many researchers are interested in studying the role of cognitive factors in the evolution and maintenance of marital quality (e.g., Bouchard, 2003; Fincham, Bradbury, & Beach, 1990; Pham & Taylor, 1999). Among these factors, research has shown that making positive attributions for a partner's behavior leads to an increase in marital quality (e.g., Cropley & Reid, 2008; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Karney, Bradbury, Fincham, & Sullivan, 1994; Miller & Rempel, 2004). Relationship attributions are conceptualized under two constructs: causal attributions ("the explanations a spouse makes for an event") and responsibility attributions ("accountability or answerability for an event") (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992, p. 457). More anxious and more avoidant attachment leads to more negative attributions to a partner's negative behavior (Collins, 1996; Mikulincer, 1998). Based on Gallo and Smith (2001) and Sümer and Cozzarelli (2004), adult attachment styles affect relationship satisfaction through relationship attributions. Moreover, Karney et al. (1994) suggested that personality traits determine the nature of relationship attributions.

Therefore, exploring and explaining the antecedents of marital quality are important both theoretically and empirically. It seems that it is necessary to formulate and examine theoretical models in which different theoretical approaches are considered. The main goal of this investigation was to explore a model which could give an account of the relationships between General Factor of Personality (GFP) and adult attachment dimensions (attachment anxiety and avoidance) with marital quality. This research explored a portion of the mechanisms through which personality and attachment dimensions contribute together to perceived marital quality. Since cognition and emotion are essential in studying marital quality (Gottman, 1994), the role of relationship attributions and emotional reactions in negative situations (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) were considered in the present study. Actually, the current research was exploratory in its nature; it related variables which have not been previously reunited within a working conceptual model. In this study, it was hypothesized that GFP and adult attachment dimensions are related to marital quality directly and indirectly, through relationship attributions and emotional reactions.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 261 married couples. The length of their marriage was at least one year or more. This was due to controlling for the “honeymoon effect” on marital quality, since marital quality tends to be high at the beginning of the marriage (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Johnson & Booth, 1998). According to family stress models (Greenberg, 2004; McGoldrick & Carter, 2003), stressful events (i.e. unemployment, bankruptcy, severe financial problems, infertility, children’s death, each spouse’s severe illness, infidelity, abusing each member of the family, emigration, unexpected events, and death or illness of each spouse’s parents) are related to marital quality. For controlling these variables, only couples who didn’t encounter these events during the last year, up to the time of the study, were selected. The mean length of the marriage was 10.44 ($SD = 8.82$) years and the mean number of children was 1.28 ($SD = 1.26$). Wives averaged 31.22 ($SD = 7.80$) years of age, and 14.5 ($SD = 3.5$) years of education. Corresponding figures for husbands were 35.89 ($SD = 8.47$) years of age, and 13.6 ($SD = 4.1$) years of education.

Materials and Procedure

The selection of participants was based on convenience sampling. The couples who met the requirements for participating in the research were selected and informed consent was obtained from all participants before the study began. In order to explain the research procedure to participants and collect the data, four examiners were used. The decision was up to the respondents to the package of instruments whether to write their names on the package or not. Questionnaires incompletely filled were omitted from the analysis.

Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire – Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) —

For assessing anxiety and avoidance in adult attachment, the Persian version of ECR-R was applied which includes 36 items (18 items for anxiety and 18 items for avoidance). Participants should answer based on their experience of current relationships. Respondents used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *disagree strongly* to 7 = *agree strongly*. The higher the scores, the higher anxiety and avoidance are. In the present study, the Cronbach’s α was .88 for attachment anxiety and .89 for attachment avoidance. The two dimensions were modestly correlated ($r = .26, p < .05$). The 3-weeks test-retest reliability was .91 for attachment anxiety and .93 for attachment avoidance in this research.

NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1992) — The five domains of personality traits (i.e. neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) were measured by the Persian version of NEO-FFI which has 60 items; each domain is measured using 12 items. Respondents indicated their agreement with each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale (0 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*). The 3-week test-retest stability was .83 for neuroticism, .84 for extraversion, .75 for openness, .72 for agreeableness, and .89 for conscientiousness. In the present study, the Cronbach's α was .83 for neuroticism, .84 for extraversion, .75 for openness, .72 for agreeableness, and .89 for conscientiousness respectively.

Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) — The Persian version of RAM was used for measuring marital attributions. This instrument consists of four hypothetical negative partner behaviors (e.g., "your spouse begins to spend less time with you"). RAM focuses on negative events rather than positive events, because attributions to negative events seem to be more predictive of marital quality (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992). For each partner's behavior, three statements measure causal attributions (locus, globality, and stability), and three statements measure responsibility attributions (intent, motivation, and blame). The respondents were asked to imagine each partner's behavior and rate their agreement with the statements on a 6-points scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). Statements about causal attributions measure locus (the extent to which the cause is attributed to the partner), stability (the extent to which the cause is likely to change), and globality (the extent to which the cause influences other realms of marriage). Statements about responsibility attributions determine the partner's intent (intentionally/unintentionally), motivation (selfish/unselfish), the extent to which a partner is to be blamed for his/her behavior. In the present study, the Cronbach's α was .73 for locus, .72 for stability, .83 for globality, .79 for intent, .88 for motivation, and .83 for blame respectively. 3-week test-retest stability was .88 for locus, .79 for stability, .89 for globality, .88 for intent, .96 for motivation, and .76 for blame.

Geneva Emotion Wheel (GEW; Scherer, 2005) — For measuring emotional reactions to partner's negative behavior (coordinated with negative events described in RAM), the Persian version of GEW was used. GEW measures four classes of emotions: achievement emotions (e.g., interest, happiness, pleasure), approach emotions (e.g., relief, surprise, longing), resignation emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, worry) and antagonistic emotions (e.g., anger, contempt, envy). This instrument assesses a total of 20 emotions. The emotions are organized along two appraisal dimensions, high vs. low control/power, and pleasant/unpleasant, in a circular form. Each emotion can be rated on five levels of intensity, on a scale from 1 (*lowest intensity*) to 5 (*strongest intensity*). Respondents were asked to imagine an event in which their partner acts negatively and indicate the intensity of experienced emotions in that situation. Since, in such events, the respondents didn't experience achievement emotions, this category of emotions was omitted from data analysis. In this research, the 3-week test-retest stability was .99 for approach emotions, .96 for antagonistic emotions, and .93 for resignation emotions respectively.

Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000) — The Persian version of PRQC was used to measure the marital quality. The PRQC has 18 items which measures six facets of relationship quality: satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. Each facet is measured by three items. The PRQC has a 7-point Likert-type scale format ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*. The respondents answered each item regarding the partner and the relationship. In the present study, the Cronbach's α was .97 for satisfaction, .79 for commitment, .96 for intimacy, .91 for trust, .93 for passion, and .94 for love. The 3-weeks test-retest stability was .95, .84, .91, .82, .92 for satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love respectively.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

CFA was used to examine the factor structure of the measures.

Fraley et al. (2000) and Sibley, Fischer, and Liu (2005) indicated a two-factor solution representing attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance for ECR-R. CFA, with AMOS 18, was used to examine this factor structure in which the items were considered as observed variables and attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance as latent variables (see Figure 1). The results showed that this measuring model fitted the observed data well (RMSEA = .05).

Based on the GFP hypothesis, a second-order confirmatory factor model was examined for the NEO-FFI. In this model, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness (as observed variables) were loaded on stability (as the first-order factor). Extraversion and openness (as observed variables) were loaded on plasticity (as another first-order factor). Stability and plasticity were loaded on GFP, as the second-order factor (see Figure 1). The results of CFA showed that there is an acceptable fit of the model to the data (RMSEA = .056).

In the factor structure of RAM, locus, globality, and stability were the observed variables which were loaded on the first-order factor i.e. causal attribution. Intent, motivation, and blame were the observed variables of another first-order factor i.e. responsibility attribution. These two first-order factors were loaded on one second-order factor i.e. relationship attribution (see Figure 1). The results of CFA showed this model provided a good fit to the data (RMSEA = .049).

Using GEW, three distinct emotional reactions (antagonistic, resignation and approach emotions) were measured as observed variables. For summarizing Figure 1 and 2, they are shown in a square.

CFA was used to examine the factor structure of the PRQC. In this model, satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love were considered as observed variables which were loaded on a single latent variable, i.e. marital quality (see Figure 1). The results showed that this measuring model fitted data acceptably (RMSEA = .06).

Overview of the Models

Firstly, it was predicted that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance and GFP (as exogenous latent variables) directly and indirectly, through relationship attributions and emotional reactions (including antagonistic, resignation, and approach emotions), are related to marital quality (as an endogenous latent variable). These relations are shown in Figure 1. SEM analysis (using Maximum Likelihood estimates) was conducted with Amos 18. The results indicated that this model fitted reasonably well to the observed data (CMIN/DF = 2.91, CFI = .90, PNFI = .73, RMSEA = .063, LO 90 = .059, HI 90 = .067).

As shown in Table 1, the direct relations of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance and GFP with marital quality were significant. Attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance increased negative relationship attributions and GFP decreased these attributions significantly. The relationships between anxiety, avoidance, GFP, and emotional reactions were not significant. In addition, relationship attributions decreased marital quality, whereas emotional reactions increased marital quality significantly. The effect of relationship attributions on emotional reactions was significant, whereas the reverse path was not significant.

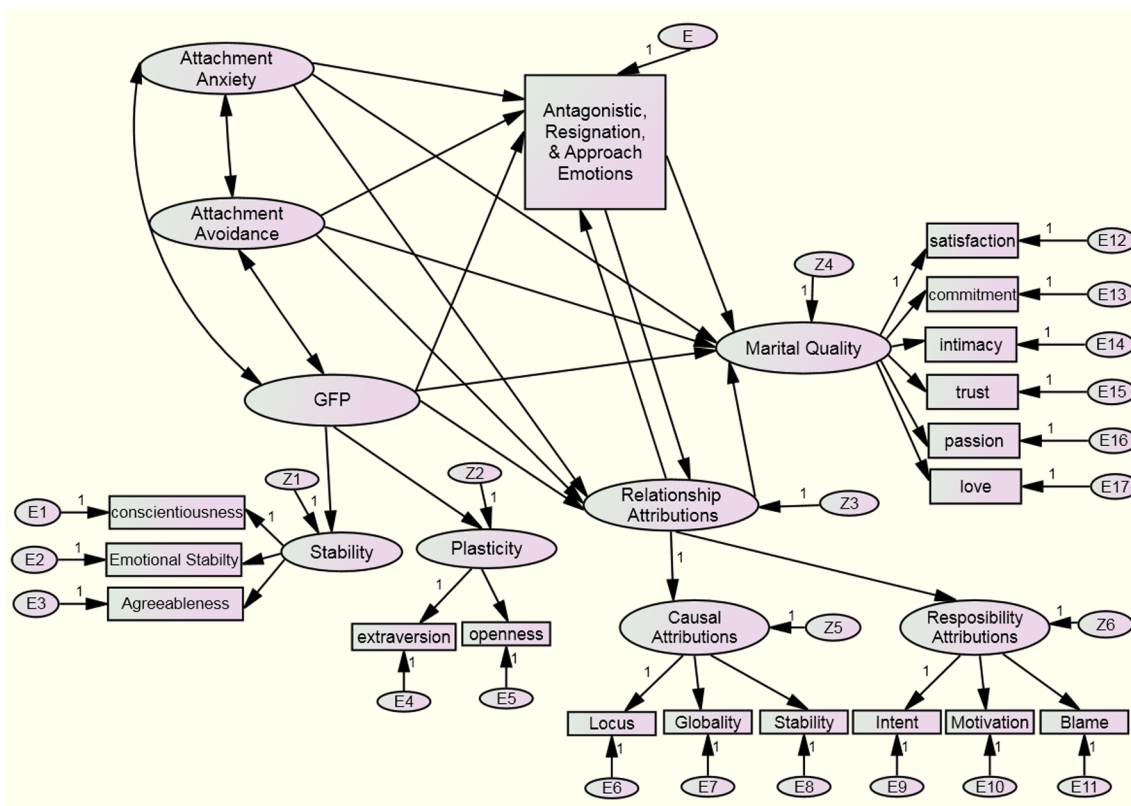


Figure 1. Direct and indirect relationships between attachment anxiety and avoidance, GFP, relationship attributions, emotional reactions, and marital quality.

Table 1

Standardized Estimates of Relationships Between Attachment Anxiety and Avoidance, GFP, Relationship Attributions, Emotional Reactions, and Marital Quality

Paths	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio
Attachment Anxiety → Antagonistic Emotions	-.06	-.048
Attachment Anxiety → Resignation Emotions	.002	.01
Attachment Anxiety → Approach Emotions	-.10	-1.81
Attachment Anxiety → Relationship Attributions	.41	6.99***
Attachment Avoidance → Antagonistic Emotions	-.003	-.03
Attachment Avoidance → Resignation Emotions	-.48	-1.72
Attachment Avoidance → Approach Emotions	-.11	-1.53
Attachment Avoidance → Relationship Attributions	.91	11.71***
GFP → Antagonistic Emotions	-.11	-1.38
GFP → Resignation Emotions	-.15	-1.83
GFP → Approach Emotions	.05	.59
GFP → Relationship Attributions	-.33	-4.55***
Relationship Attributions → Antagonistic Emotions	.55	2.13*
Relationship Attributions → Resignation Emotions	.42	1.98*
Relationship Attributions → Approach Emotions	.50	2.02*
Antagonistic Emotions → Relationship Attributions	.10	1.68
Resignation Emotions → Relationship Attributions	.08	1.29
Approach Emotions → Relationship Attributions	.09	1.42
Attachment Anxiety → Marital Quality	-.48	-5.50***
Attachment Avoidance → Marital Quality	-.82	-11.72***
GFP → Marital Quality	.44	4.38***
Relationship Attributions → Marital Quality	-.75	-7.19***
Antagonistic Emotions → Marital Quality	.22	3.16**
Resignation Emotions → Marital Quality	.31	3.97***
Approach Emotions → Marital Quality	.27	3.42**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

In the second model, it was hypothesized that GFP and attachment constructs are directly related to marital quality. Moreover, the GFP and attachment constructs, through relationship attributions, are indirectly related to emotional reactions. Furthermore, relationship attributions are, directly and indirectly, through emotional reactions, related to marital quality. This model is shown in [Figure 2](#). The results indicated that this model fitted well the observed data (CMIN/DF = 1.95, CFI = .91, PNFI = .64, RMSEA = .044, LO 90 = .043, HI 90 = .046).

As shown in [Table 2](#), the direct relationships between attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, GFP, and marital quality were significant. In addition, negative attributions increased the emotional reactions and decreased marital quality significantly. Emotional reactions increased marital quality significantly.

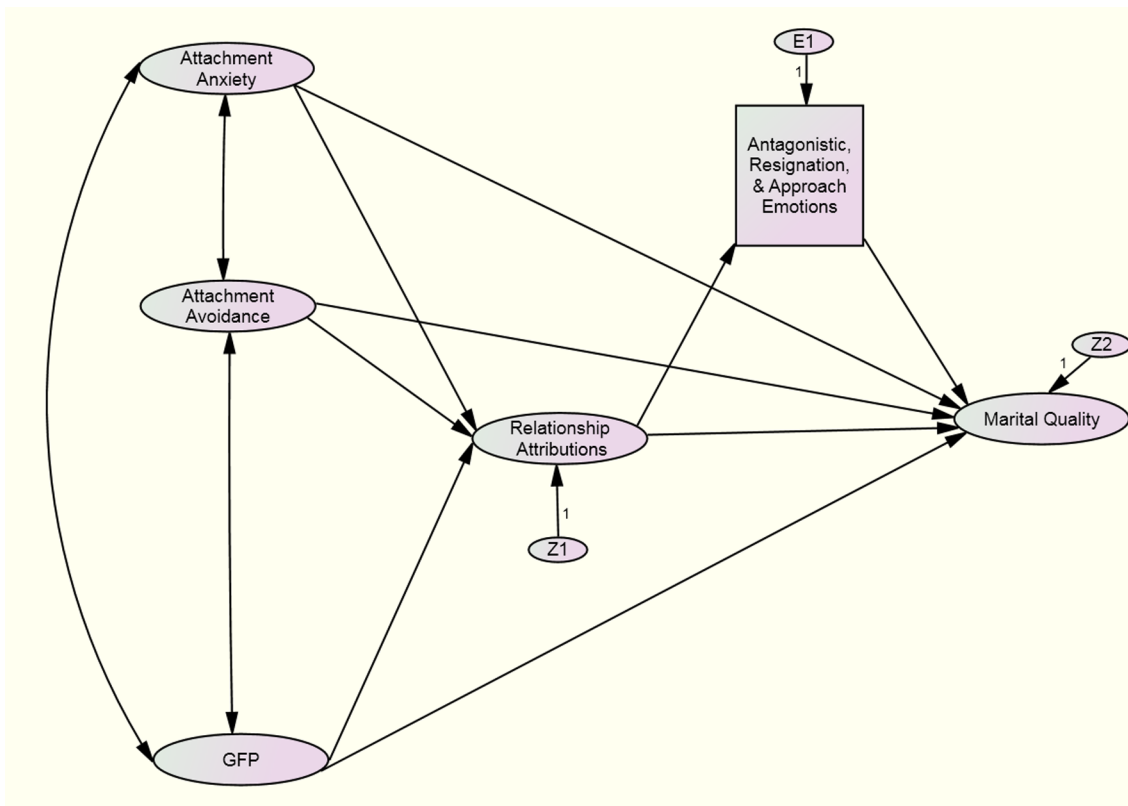


Figure 2. The hypothesized relationships between attachment dimensions, GFP, relationship attributions, emotional reactions, and marital quality.

Table 2

Standardized Estimates of the Paths for the Hypothesized Relationships Between Attachment Dimensions, GFP, Relationship Attributions, Emotional Reactions, and Marital Quality

Paths	Standardized Estimates	Critical Ratio
Attachment Anxiety → Relationship Attributions	.31	5.28***
Attachment Avoidance → Relationship Attributions	.65	7.11***
GFP → Relationship Attributions	-.12	-2.78
Relationship Attributions → Antagonistic Emotions	.22	4.49**
Relationship Attributions → Resignation Emotions	.15	2.96**
Relationship Attributions → Approach Emotions	.26	5.29***
Attachment Anxiety → Marital Quality	-.17	-3.51***
Attachment Avoidance → Marital Quality	-.53	-8.26***
GFP → Marital Quality	.21	3.28***
Relationship Attributions → Marital Quality	-.64	-7.17***
Antagonistic Emotions → Marital Quality	.23	3.62***
Resignation Emotions → Marital Quality	.06	2.16*
Approach Emotions → Marital Quality	.06	1.99*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

Reviews of existing literature pinpoint the fact that adults' personality and attachment can influence marital quality. Theoretical and empirical findings suggest that couples' relationship attributions and emotional reactions are related to marital quality. Therefore, this study aimed at studying the relationship between relatively constant intrapersonal factors (personality and attachment) and interpersonal situational factors (attributions and emotional reactions) with marital quality.

Based on the results of this study, the general factor of personality (GFP) and attachment dimensions (attachment anxiety and avoidance) directly and indirectly, through relationship attributions and emotional reactions, were related to marital quality. The results reported here about the relationship between attachment dimensions and attributions are in line with findings from researches done by [Collins \(1996\)](#), [Mikulincer \(1998\)](#) and [McNulty and Karney \(2004\)](#). The significant relationship between the GFP and attributions is in convergent with [Poropat's \(2002\)](#) findings. In addition, the significant direct and indirect effects of relationship attributions on marital quality are in line with findings reported by other studies (e.g. [Cropley & Reid, 2008](#); [Fincham & Bradbury, 1992](#); [Gallo & Smith, 2001](#); [Johnson, Rogge, Karney, & Bradbury, 2001](#); [Karney et al., 1994](#); [Miller & Rempel, 2004](#)).

Attachment insecurity, in which there is more access to negative working models ([Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006](#)), influences the interpretation of social experiences ([Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007](#)). This affects all the aspects of couples' relationship. Therefore, negative working models about one's spouse will make causal and responsibility attributions more pessimistic.

On the other hand, based on the model of attachment-system functioning and dynamics in adulthood ([Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007](#)), an increase in attachment anxiety, or anxious hyperactivation strategies, makes an individual biased towards the spouse's negative behavior and vigilant against signs of threat in spouse's behavior. This process increases pessimistic attributions. Also, with an increase in attachment avoidance, or avoidant deactivation strategies, an individual experiences unsuccessful relationship with attachment figures which causes prejudice and bias toward the partner's behavior. According to [Mikulincer & Shaver \(2007\)](#), attention is diverted away from a spouse's behaviors and their causes, the signs of a partner's support and love are disregarded, negative mental representations of the partner are strengthened, and pessimistic attributions of the partner's behavior increase. Avoidant individuals suppress their negative aspects ([Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007](#)), including their role in negative interactions, to save their self-worth and independency. As a result, their point of view toward their partner becomes more negative.

In general, results indicated that attachment dimensions and GFP indirectly, through relationship attributions, affect emotional reactions. This is in line with past and present cognitive theories. In these theories, the main premise is that cognitions are the antecedents to emotional reactions. According to flowchart models of emotion the process ([Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987](#)), one's appraisal of events in relation to his/her goals, wishes, and concerns results in emotional reactions. The component process model ([Scherer, 2005](#)) introduces evaluation and appraisal as cognitive components of emotion. Meanwhile, [Teasdale \(1997\)](#) pointed out that cognition can be seriously influenced by affective states and can be considered as the consequences of emotional state. It should be mentioned that, by emotional state, Teasdale means mood. [Scherer \(2005\)](#) distinguishes mood from emotion. Mood is an affective state with long-standing duration, low to medium intensity, and little focus on stimulant events. Nevertheless, emotion is a short time and fairly severe affective state which focuses heavily on the stim-

ulant events. Regarding the difference between mood and emotion, it is expected that the effect of emotional reactions on cognition is less than that of mood, and the effect of cognition on emotional reactions is more. Collins et al. (2006) suggested that the causal path between pessimistic attributions and emotional distress is significant. Fitness (2006) argued that relationship attributions, along with spouse's expectations from each other, lead to emotional reactions. The fact that which emotional reactions are experienced depends on how one assesses his/her control and power in that relational situation (Scherer, 2005).

A more interesting result of this research is that, although the increase in antagonistic and resignation emotions is the result of an increase in pessimistic relational attributions, expressing these two emotional reactions (antagonistic and resignation emotions) increases marital quality. This is in line with the results obtained by Gottman and Krokoff (1989) which suggests that anger exchange can improve marital functioning. Relationships with rare emotional reactions are found in couples who are passive towards each other. Although such couples are not satisfied, the relationship still continues. Tseng and McDermott (1979) named this pattern "disengaged marital dysfunction". Negative emotional reactions such as anger, depression, and anxiety can be applied as means of attracting the partner's attention, concern, support, and care, and as a result, perceived marital quality will improve. Even if they don't lead to a partner's behavioral reactions, emotional reactions are signs of a dynamic marital relationship which improve the situation. It can be stated that emotional reactions balance the negative effect of pessimistic attributions on the marital quality.

Limitations

In this study, self-report instruments were used in order to measure the variables. Using one single assessment method can be considered a limitation of the study. In the present research, only attributions related to the spouse were studied and self-relational attributions were not considered in order to avoid creating an overly complex model. Future studies can study and compare the role of self and spouse's relational attributions along with gender differences.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The intrapersonal-situational model of marital quality is illustrated in Figure 3. According to this model, personality and attachment are two important constructs in the formation of marital quality and they should be considered simultaneously in explaining marital outcomes. Because of the associations between these two constructs (e.g., Donnellan et al., 2008; Neyer & Voigt, 2004), Noffle and Shaver (2006) have emphasized that both attachment and personality affect relationship quality. Theoretically, by considering these two constructs, vast arenas about individual differences that affect marital quality are covered.

On the other hand, this model takes into account the role of both intrapersonal and situational factors. Based to this model, attachment dimensions and personality influence an individual's explanation of marital situations. Most likely, personality traits (such as neuroticism), anxious hyperactivation strategies, and avoidant deactivation strategies affect relationship attributions. This model emphasizes the study of both cognition and emotion in intimate relationships. According to our proposed, the intrapersonal-situational model of marital quality, couples' explanations of relational situations affect their appraisal of those situations, which represents the cognitive element of emotion and determines one's emotional reactions. In addition, relationship attributions are directly related to the appraisal of dimensions of marital quality.

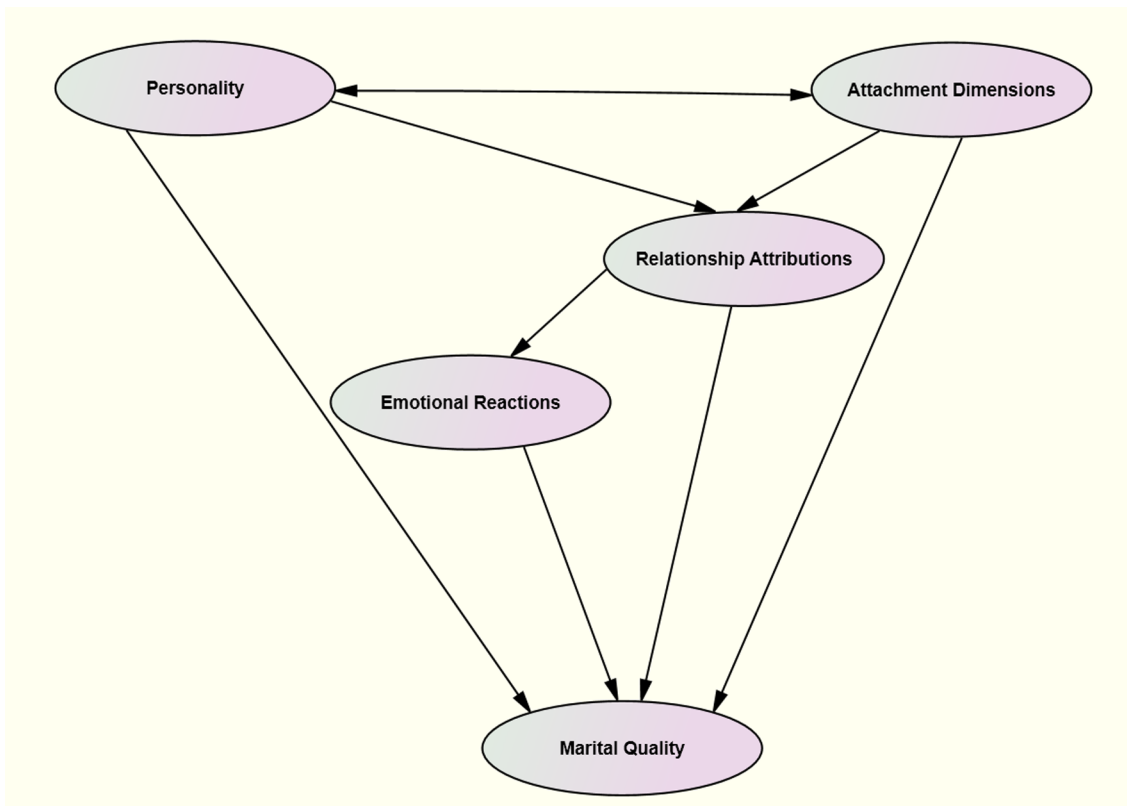


Figure 3. The intrapersonal-situational model of marital quality.

Based on this model, relationship attributions can be the aim of intervention. Seligman (2006) introduced learned optimism for avoiding depression. He considered attributions to be the basis of optimism and believed that the explanatory style can be modified. Therefore, relationship attributions can be the goal of prevention and treatment programs. The skills that Seligman listed can be used for changing causal and responsibility attributions. Emphasizing the proposed theoretical model and the roles of relationship attributions and emotional reactions, designing integrative couple therapy based on emotionally focused couple therapy (Johnson & Denton, 2002), and learned optimism (Seligman, 2006), can be considered achievable. It is suggested that further confirmatory studies should be done to test this proposed model.

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