

Original Article

The relationship between the emotional nature, adult attachment and aggression in depressed patients

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Abstract

In this study, the relationship between emotional nature and adult attachment and aggression in depressed patients was investigated. The present study was a descriptive correlational study. The statistical population of this study includes all depressed patients aged 18-40 years in Ardabil in 2015. The sample of this study included 75 depressed patients who were selected by available methods. The Emotional Nature Scale, the Collins-Reid Attachment Scale, and the Williams Aggression Questionnaire were used to collect data. Pearson correlation method and multivariate regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Data analysis indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional nature with adult attachment and aggression in depressed patients ($p < 0.01$). Based on the results of multivariate regression, the dimensions of emotional nature were able to predict with adult attachment and aggression in depressed patients ($p < 0.01$). This result has important implications for promoting mental health in patients with depression.

Keywords

Emotional nature
Attachment
Aggression
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Introduction

The major depression is one of the most common psychiatric disorders (Serrano & et al., 2010). Depression is remains a major public health problem. Antidepressants are a mainstay of treatment for major depression, but are associated with clinically relevant risks of severe adverse events during both use and withdrawal (Henssler et al., 2019). To increase the efficacy of treatment, inpatients could potentially benefit from comprehensive, non-pharmacological elements of therapy (Zaprutko et al., 2020). The estimations of epidemiology have shown that the prevalence of this disorder is between 13% and 19% (Hasin & et al, 2005). Such that the prevalence of this disorder in women is 2.7 times higher than that of men (Gabilondo & et al, 2010). The recent data from Parker et al., (2001; quoted by Lembert, 2006) also indicate that close to 121 million people in the world are depressed. Also, the significant emotional, social and economic load of major depression disorder for patients, family and the community on the one hand and the estimated annual prevalence of 2.9 to 12.6% in the general population with a view to having a

life-threatening risk which is about 19-17 percent (Kessler & Merikangas, 2003) have kept depression as one of the major axes of research. In line with the relationship between the dimensions of personality and mental disorders, several models and theories such as Eisenck's three-factor theory, the sensitivity to reinforcement theory, the Cloninger's bio-psychological theory, the Clarke-Watson three-part model, the personality five-factor theory of McCraeier and Costa's and have been raised. The research based on these theories has shown that the personality traits can predict the presence of specific symptoms of depression. For example, the studies indicate that the overactive Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) and the low activity of Behavioral Activation System (Pourmohammad Rezaei & Mir Zamani, 2007) from Gary's view, the harm avoidance caused by the Cloninger's view (Mochovitch, Nardi & Cardoso, 2012; Balsamo, 2013) an neuroticism from view of Costa and McCreey (Karsten & et al, 2012; Kurvar Kumijez & Washarko, 2013) and positive affect of Clarke and Watson's three-part view is associated with depression symptoms (Vasey & et al, 2013).

Following the models and theories, [Lara & Ottoni \(2012\)](#) have proposed a model called AFFECT. The AFFECT model includes many of the concepts posed by Eisench, Gary, Cloninger, Watson and Costa McCrey. In this model, the emotional nature is considered as a system with independent function which provides interaction between the components of activation, inhibition, control, sensitivity and coping. In this model, the dimensions of volition and anger combined with individual tendencies are integrated into the "activation dimension". The nature inhibition is achieved of the combination of fear (worry, shyness and fear) and precaution (accuracy, avoidance of danger and being mindful). The nature of emotional sensitivity is due to vulnerability to the interpersonal withdrawal (criticism or rejection) and life events (pressure, frustration and shock). The nature of coping indicating how to deal with and solve the personal problems which ultimately leads to individual evolution. The nature of control is also the ability to monitor the environment, organizing and adapting and in other words the ability of executive performance ([Fuscaldo, Bisol & Lara, 2013](#)). The emotional nature model is a new model based on the biological foundations of personality that can explain many psychiatric disorders including depression spectrum disorders ([Foscaldo et al. 2013](#)). [Lara, Pinto and Akiskal \(2006\)](#) acknowledged in their studies that there was a relationship between low anger and high fear with the depression. In the following, another study indicated that the depression is correlated with activation, coping, low control and inhibition and high sensitivity. There is also evidences that family environments and attachment styles contribute to the development and persistence of depression signs among children ([Rutter, 1990](#)). The attachment issue provides a safe haven for the child to return to her child during stress and helplessness and is the safety basis for exploring the child in the environment especially when there is no attachment issue. An attachment system is an organized structure that describes the complex set of emotions, behaviors and cognition that shapes the child's effort for maintaining the comfort and safety ([Esrof & Waterz, 1997](#)). According to [Insors \(1982, quoted by Hazan & Zifman, 1999\)](#) in adolescence, parental attachment becomes diminished and peers get more important, it seems that the person is seeking safety which has already gained from parents. This process begins in early adolescence and is under effect by the social development, gender, recognition of parental constraints, increasing the self-confidence and a desire for independence. [Hazan and Shiour \(1987\)](#) by examining the attachment theory in adulthood showed that the attachment styles continue via their lives and attachment topic beyond mother involves the adult, spouse and friend. Therefore, the existence of different attachment styles in adulthood is similar to the individual differences in attachment styles of childhood and the attachment continues from cradle to grave. [Shiver and Hazan \(1988\)](#) believe that adult relationships takes shape based on the mother-child attachment style in terms of cognitive-emotional and behavioral dimensions and love for

adulthood can be considered as a phase of attachment. The avoidable adults feel less commitment to others than others but they consider themselves to be unreliable but consider themselves well against others ([Kalinz & Rid, 1990](#)). A significant number of researches on the relationship between attachment styles and mood disorders have examined attachment characteristics of depressed people. The presence of unsafe attachment styles has been confirmed repeatedly in patients having this disorder ([Feres, 2010](#)). These styles have a positive correlation with the symptoms of self-criticism in depressed people such as feelings of guilty, worthlessness and humiliation and negative correlation with weakness and hopelessness ([Hill, 2008](#)). The anxiety of attachment due to social self-efficacy and emotional reactivity and avoiding attachment is related through self-disclosure and emotional de-activation with depression ([Tasca et al. 2009](#)). People with an avoidance attachment style make up the vulnerability class of people with depression especially recurring depression. They experience more courses of previous depression remaining symptoms longer use of antidepressants and poorer social function than depressed persons with a safe attachment style ([Conradi & Jang, 2009](#)). [Meredith, Strong and Finney \(2007\)](#) also indicated that avoidance of the attachment is a unique predictor of depression in the patients with chronic-pain before and after the applying treatment. Also, [Dolenc et al. \(2015\)](#) indicated that there is observed a significant relationship between the emotional and aggressive nature of bipolar-patients and major depression disorders. One of the variables that can be related to the emotional nature in the depressed patients is aggression.

The aggression cannot be specifically associated to an age or course. The aggression and violence have existed from an early age and persisted over time and continue in adolescence and adulthood ([Samim & Ghasemi, 2010](#)). The aggressive behavior can be a predictor of delinquency, drug abuse and depression; there is also an observed evidence that anti-social behavior is related to the adult disabilities ([Vahedi & Fathi Azar, 2006](#)). The aggression disorders are considered as the root of many psychological and behavioral and emotional problems that their lack of inhibition, in addition to causing interpersonal and crime problems, victimization, and the rape of the rights of others, It can be internalized and cause a variety of physical and psychological issues such as migraine headaches and depression ([Sadeghi, Ahmadi & Abedi, 2002](#)). According to Bandura's theory of learning, aggression is a form of social behavior that is learned and its occurrence in each situation has factors such as aggressive experiences, current aggression and many other social and cognitive factors ([Hajati Akbarzadeh & Khosravi 2008](#)). Accordingly, what caused the researchers' attention turned toward the aggression is the consequences of such behaviors on individuals such as the negative image of peers, depression and emotional state of affairs ([Ashouri, Turkman & Fadaie, 2009](#)). Unfortunately, the spread of violence and aggression in Iranian society and especially

in recent years is considered as one of the most serious social damage (Tavassoli & Fazel, 2002) and studies in our country have reported aggression among adolescents and young people between 30- 50% (Ahmadi and Ismaili, 2007).

Therefore, according to the aforementioned articles this research seeks to answer this question whether there is a relationship between the emotional nature and adult attachment and aggression in the depressed patients?

Method

Participants

The design of this research is a cross-sectional descriptive design of correlation type. The population of this study includes all depressed patients aged 18-40 years old in Ardabil 2016. The sample consisted of 75 depressed patients who were selected by accessible method.

Instrument

Collins and Read's Attachment Scale (1990 quoted by Pakdaman 2001):

This scale involves self-assessment of skills for relationship building and self-report of approaches to form the attachment relationships to the close attachment faces and consists of 18 data which is measured, by marking a 5-degree scale (Likert type), from "Not at all compatible with my specifications" (1) to "Perfectly matches my specifications" (5). The results of the factor analysis for investigating the validity of this test indicated that this test is based on three subscales (the safe, avoidable and ambivalent attachment). Kalinz and Rid (quoted by Pakdaman, 2001) reported Cronbach's alpha value for safe, avoidable and anxiety subscales to be about 0.81 0.88 and 0.85, respectively. In the Pakdaman research (2001), the test-retest reliability of this scale was reported to be 0.95.

Aggression Questionnaire:

It was taken by Williams et al. (1996) from the Bass and Perry (1992) questionnaire for aggression. This questionnaire has 26 items that each subject should choose one of the options (1) never (2) Rarely (3) sometimes (4) often (5) always. The test-retest reliability coefficient (after nine weeks) of the aggression questionnaire and its components were reported to be between 0.72 and 0.80. The correlation coefficient of aggression questionnaire with Noukha's anger scale (1994) was reported as 0.79 ($p < 0.01$). The correlation coefficient of physical aggression/anger and components of verbal aggression/hostility components with anger scale was 0.73 and 0.74 respectively ($p < 0.01$) (Akhtari, 2013).

Emotional Scale:

This questionnaire was developed by Catherine et al. (2005). The questionnaire of emotional nature is derived from Akishal and Malaya criteria and is considered as one of the self-evaluation tools.

To prepare this self-report questionnaire, the unpleasant features were minimized, for example, extreme criteria of excitement, completion of designs, precautions and extreme movements along with restlessness momentums, were again evaluated as complementary and unfavorable schemes. This questionnaire has 17 items. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the periodic scale and other scales is calculated as 0.86. Also, the analysis indicates that the irritability and dysthymic components have a high internal correlation. The subscales of emotional nature are as follows: depression, anxiety, indifference, periodicity, restlessness and boredom, variability, obsession, happiness, excitement. irritability, debarment and euphoria.

Results

As Table 1. indicates, in the total mean (and standard deviation) of emotional scores are 152.20 (23.87), the aggression is 67.99 (29.61) and adult attachment 41.61 (14.26).

Table 1. The mean and standard deviations of subjects in the variables of case study

Variable	Average	SD	
Emotional nature	Depression	20.29	
	Anxiety	18.16	
	Incuriosity	9.66	
	Periodicity	22.12	
	Restlessness	10.33	
	Variability	6.45	
	Obsession	11.81	
	Euphoria	11.36	
	Excitement	5.92	
	Irritability	13.76	
	Debarment	9.75	
	Euphoria	12.59	
Total	152.20	23.87	
Aggression	Physical	30.86	14.85
	Verbal	37.04	15.47
	Total	67.90	29.61
Adult attachment	Safe	3.91	1.95
	Avoidable	9.99	5.48
	Anxiety	12.51	6.96
	Total	26.41	14.26

Table 2. The correlation coefficient between variables

Variable	Aggression			Adult attachment	
	Physical	Verbal	Safe	Avoidable	Anxiety
Depression	**0.77	**0.88	**-.079	**0.82	**0.84
Anxiety	*0.195	*0.23	*-0.29	*0.21	**0.28
Incuriosity	*0.21	*0.29	*-0.20	*0.19	*0.22
Periodicity	*0.22	*0.24	*-0.19	*0.23	*0.24
Restlessness	*0.20	*0.22	*-0.19	*0.20	*0.21
Variability	*0.22	*0.19	*-0.21	*0.22	*0.21
Obsession	*0.24	*0.23	*-0.24	*0.19	*0.21
Happiness	*0.22	*0.21	0.14	*0.23	*0.25
Excitement	*0.21	*0.23	*-0.24	*0.26	*0.23
Irritability	**0.56	**0.55	**-.046	**0.46	**0.48
Debarment	**0.38	**0.38	*-0.28	**0.31	**0.33
Euphoria	*0.24	*0.23	*-0.27	*0.28	*0.26

* P< 0.05 ** P< 0.01 *** P<0.001

Table 3. Regression analysis of dimensions of emotional nature in relation to aggression

Variable	Beta	T	Sig	R	R ₂
Depression	0.19	4.65	0.001	0.866	0.54
Anxiety	0.15	3.81	0.01		
Indifference	0.13	3.71	0.001		
Periodicity	0.11	2.95	0.04		
Restlessness	0.08	1.20	0.03		
Variability	0.14	4.75	0.01		
Obsession	0.06	1.30	0.12		
Happiness	-0.04	1.28	0.08		
Excitement	0.16	3.40	0.001		
Irritability	-0.04	0.12	0.09		
Debarment	0.18	0.78	0.001		
Euphoria	-0.03	0.79	0.18		

The results of regression analysis in Table 3 indicates that the dimensions of depression, anxiety, Incuriosity, periodicity nature, blame, variability, excitement and debarment in general with a correlation coefficient of

0.86 explain and predict about 54% of variance related to aggression. The values for beta coefficients indicate that the emotional nature dimensions, predict positively the aggression.

Table 4. The regression analysis of dimensions of emotional nature in relation to adult attachment

Variable	Beta	T	Sig	R	R ₂
Depression	0.83	0.16	0/001		
Anxiety	0.43	0.18	0.01		
Indifference	0.38	0.21	0.001		
Periodicity	0.42	0.22	0.04		
Restlessness	0.44	0.21	0.03		
Variability	0.19	0.32	0.01		
Obsession	0.24	0.28	0.12		
Happiness	0.21	0.24	0.08	0.854	0.49
Excitement	0.22	0.27	0.001		
Irritability	0.41	0.33	0.09		
Debarment	0.45	0.14	0.001		
Euphoria	0.20	0.19	0.18		

The results of regression analysis show that the dimensions of depression, anxiety, indifference, periodicity, blame, variability, obsession, excitement, happiness, irritability, debarment and euphoria totally with a correlation coefficient of 0.85, approximately 49% of the variance associated to the large attachment is explained and predicted. The values of beta coefficients shows that the emotional nature dimensions predict an adult's attachment positively.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to determine the power of dimensions of emotional nature in anticipation of adult aggression and attachment. The results of this study indicated that there is a positive and significant relationship between dimensions of emotional nature and aggression.

Also, the results of regression analysis indicated that the dimensions of emotional nature (except obsession, happiness, irritability) could significantly predict the aggression. In explaining and clarifying this finding, it has to be said that although some authors have tried to relate the aggression to natural motivations and similar issues, the researches have shown that neither incentive for violence nor devastations caused by failure is regarded as the root of human aggression. Humans are attacking each other because they have learned aggressive reactions and are rewarded for them or achieved these rewards. On the other hand, human being is a creature that is capable of predicting the most probable behavioral consequences and its meaning via the development of the brain and its potentials. But when it comes to the fact that someone else's life has been badly affected, it's very unfortunate that it distorts its receipts and Instead of comprehending the feelings of the surrounding people, comes to autocrats' justifications. Also, the results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between the emotional nature and adult attachment as well as the regression analysis showed that the dimensions of emotional nature could significantly predict the adult attachment. In justifying this relationship, it is believed that the psychological consequence of insecure attachment styles is stress anxiety and depression and the

psychological consequence of safe attachment style in such situations is mental relaxation. The lack of self-confidence and trusting others is one of the main characteristics of unsafe people.

The lack of self-confidence by analyzing the inter-psychological foundations reduces the ability to deal with stressful situations and imposes the psychological distress on an unsafe person. This distress and helplessness according to the unfavorable experiences give rise to self-inflicted feelings and person's anxiety.

Conclusion

The safe attachment is an intrinsic resource that maintains the psychological health during periods of stress, while lack of safe source leads to the emotional issues. Some researchers believe that the attachment is generally associated with negative emotional experiences, and individuals with insecure attachment to a safe case may have a higher level of negative emotions and the existence of negative emotions leads to the relationship between insecure attachment and anxiety and depression and perhaps there is no connection between the insecure attachment and anxiety and depression (Safford, 2002). Finally, the sample is unique to the depressed patients in Ardabil city and the use of sampling method available from the limitations of this study. Also, the use of self-report tests that are more likely to be biased can also be affected by research. It is suggested that this investigation should be done in other cultures and more precisely in order to enhance the generalization of the results by sampling method.

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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