

The Roles of Object Relations, Paranoid Thoughts and Interdependence in the Stability of Married Women's Life (Mashhad City)

Fateme Sadat Mortazavi Karimabad^{*1}  Amir Karami² 

1. M.A. in Psychology, Hekmat Razavi Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran.

2. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Psychology, Hekmat Razavi Institute of Higher Education, Mashhad, Iran.
(Corresponding Author)

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 01 April 2024
Accepted: 19 September 2024

Article Type

Research paper

Keywords:

Marital Stability, Object Relations, Paranoid Thoughts, Interdependence

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the roles of object relations, paranoid thoughts and interdependence in the stability of married women's life in Mashhad. This study was a descriptive correlational study. The research population consisted of the married women in Districts 10 and 12 of the city of Mashhad in 2023, and the exact number was not known. Based on Tabachnick and Fidell's formula, 74 samples were required, but for higher reliability and more accuracy in the results, 212 people were selected through convenience sampling (e.g., households, university and hospitals). The research tools included Booth et al. Marital Instability Questionnaire (1983), the Bell Object Relations Questionnaire (1995), the Green et al. Paranoid Thoughts Scale (2008) and Fisher et al. Interdependence Questionnaire (1991). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and enter regression were used in data analysis. The results of data analysis showed that there is a significant negative relationship between object relations, paranoid thoughts and interdependence with the marital stability ($P < 0.01$). Also, the results of the regression analysis showed that only paranoid thoughts and interdependence are significant predictors for the marital stability ($P < 0.01$). According to the findings, it can be concluded that the higher the amount of paranoid thoughts and interdependence in married women, the lower their marital stability will be.

Citation: Mortazavi Karimabad, F. S. & Karami, A. (2025). The Roles of Object Relations, Paranoid Thoughts and Interdependence in the Stability of Married Women's Life (Mashhad City). *Journal of Woman and Family Studies*, 12(4), 47-61. DOI: 10.22051/jwfs.2025.46791.3077

¹Correspondence: a.karami@hri.ac.ir

Introduction

Nowadays, personal and intimate relations are important owing to their positive effects on physical and psychological health. The role of such relations is justified mainly based on the findings about marriage stability (Benson & Coleman, 2016). Marriage stability refers to a situation in which a man and his wife enjoy a relative peaceful life together, give each other enough love, and try to maintain their marriage tie through mutual care (Hariri et al., 2019). However, marriage instability occurs when one of the spouses or both begin to think about divorce and show a behavior with a tendency for ending the married life. In case the spouses respect each other's identity, share the life responsibilities and fulfill their commitments, they are said to have marital stability. This stability is considered as an index of marital happiness (Bijani et al., 2021).

Discussions of married life take women for granted as one of the two parties involved. In recent years, the increasing presence of women in social, cultural and political arenas has made considerable changes in life. For example, compared to the past, married lives have somehow been affected by the intellectual, educational and economic empowerment of women. According to some researchers, failing marriages have become a matter of increasing concern, hence a need for certain strategies to protect families against the factors threatening their integrity (Walsh, 2015). Studies on marriage stability earnestly began in the 1990s. Their initial focus was on the theoretical models of marriage stability. From the 2000s on, however, researchers paid more attention to the various factors affecting marriage stability and their interrelationships (Lee & Jo, 2020). In this regard, Park and Jeon (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of those factors and classified them into individual, interpersonal, and social types. Each type includes a set of positive and negative factors that affect the stability of marital relations. Individual factors, such as emotional stability, help the couple behave better in the face of conflicts. In contrast, features like pessimism raise the likelihood of conflict and divorce. Interpersonal factors have to do with the couple's interactions. As for social factors, they include social push for divorce, alternatives for marriage, and social support (ibid).

Of the individual factors affecting marriage stability, object relations are worth noting. From a psychoanalytic point of view, childhood experiences significantly impact the romantic relations in adulthood (Eyisoğlu & Erdem, 2023). In married life, either of the two spouses has specific personal history and character traits as well as a set of covert internalized features, all of which affect the in-family relations (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Object relations theoreticians emphasize the importance of early mother-child relations and



believe that the child's personality is shaped up at a lower age than Freud thought (Arjmand et al., 2022). As Svrakic and Zorumski (2021) state, object relations serve as an early cognitive-affective unit of the mind that is formed through the initial experience of interactions with important objects, usually the mother in the sensitive periods of infancy and babyhood. Also, as Handelzalts et al. (2014) believe, object relations are the reflections that individuals make of themselves and others and the ability that they achieve during early years of life to set up human relations. Based on the object relations theory, children internalize their parents' relations as well as the beliefs and conflicts in the family and then project these already-learned objects when they grow up enough to establish new intimate relations (Thomas et al., 2023). In this regard, John Bowlby (cited in Arjmand et al., 2022) asserts that the experiences which a child gains through the development of his attachments make his self-image and, thereby, affect his emotional health, self-esteem, attitude towards others, and interpersonal relations. Object relations are, thus, concerned with the ability of individuals to establish sustainable relations in different cases.

One of the interpersonal factors affecting the stability of marriage is mutual dependency, which generally refers to the interdependence of two separate entities. This interdependence is the main feature of any relationship (Arriaga, 2013) and is manifested in various aspects of social interactions (Gerpott et al., 2017). Intimate marital relations, love affairs and close friendships are characterized with deeper and stronger interdependence than other relationships (Arriaga, 2013). The interdependence theory was first presented by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The theory addresses certain concepts and principles that help to understand how spouses affect each other and how dyadic interactions bear upon the general trend of relations. So far, different reasons have been proposed as why people get into mutual dependencies, the main ones of which are improper relations with parents in childhood, a set of stressful experiences in the family of origin, childhood problems such as physical, sexual, emotional and psychological offenses, and inefficient childrearing methods such as coercion, control, low communication and emotion expression, and lack of acceptance (Danaeifar et al., 2016).

The interdependence theory is of six dimensions including mutual dependence, power, contrast, coordination, future mutual dependence, and information certainty (Kelly et al., 2003). The mutual dependence dimension represents the rate of dependency between the two members of a couple who aim to gain desirable results. The mutuality in this dependency ranges from full independence to full interdependence (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). The members of a couple can see how mutually dependent they are. This

perception forms a basis for their behavior toward each other (Gerpott et al., 2017). The power dimension of the theory explains how a member of a couple controls the other member. The contrast dimension points to the behaviors that yield the best results for one member and the worst consequences for the other (ibid). Coordination is a dimension which accounts for whether or not and how a member of a couple adjusts his or her behavior based on that of the other member. As another dimension, future mutual dependence indicates whether or not the results of the current situation affect the future interactions of the couple. Finally, information certainty refers to the accessibility of the information about the effect of one member's acts on the results that the other member obtains. This dimension is usually of relevance in the case of "interactions with unfamiliar partners" (Van Lange & Rusbult, 2012).

Since married life is a mutual relation, the application of the interdependence theory in this study seems plausible. This theory is also widely used in studies on close relations (Arriaga, 2013). In psychology, variable interdependence is considered as a character flaw that can adversely affect interpersonal relations (Zeinali et al., 2021). The main facets of this disorder are radical emotional expectations, limited and imbalanced relations, low self-esteem, loneliness phobia, fear of isolation, extreme sense of attachment to others due to desperate need for them (Sharifi et al., 2018). Interdependence is also defined as identifying oneself by giving too much importance to interpersonal relations, trying continually to attract the love and support of others, and monopolizing in close relations (Sharifi et al., 2019). Those who are attached to important ones in their life monopolize and control the loved ones, scold others for leaving, commit jealousy, and compete with their love rivals. They do all this so as not to be left alone by others (Lajevardi et al., 2020).

Dependence on a valuable relation is found to affect the individual's jealousy; that is, such an individual is very likely to behave jealously. Fear of losing one's spouse induces the behavior of monitoring and controlling him or her. These concerned people feel that their spouses will inevitably cheat (Sharifi et al., 2018), which is suggestive of paranoid thoughts, or marital suspicions.

In their meta-analysis study, Park and Jeon (2023) found that having paranoid thoughts, i.e., being suspicious, is an interpersonal factor affecting the stability of married life. Clinically, these thoughts are known as 'persecutory delusion'. They seem to be the unreasonable notion that someone plans to do harm, thus inducing a fear of control, deception or/and abuse. Persecutory delusion is common in several psychological disorders. It is also the main symptom of psychotic problems such as schizophrenia and



delusional disorder (Aggelidou & Georgaca, 2017). Across a population, the delusional disorder is of various levels of intensity and is related to depression and mental occupation (Bebbington et al., 2013). In a study conducted on 800 young adults, 41% of the participants were found to have experienced paranoid thoughts (Cella et al., 2011). In another study, one third of the nonclinical participants were shown to have paranoid thoughts (Freeman et al., 2005). Depending on their intensity and persistence, these thoughts can cause problems of different degrees in people's relations, work and everyday life (Connell et al., 2012).

Delusional behavior is associated with psychotic disorders, social isolation, and considerably reduced psychological wellbeing (Freeman et al., 2014). In this context, paranoid thoughts show up as mild distrust, suspicion, and delusive sense of freedom (Bianchi & Verkuilen, 2021). Those who are beset with these annoying thoughts just think that someone is hurting them intentionally or planning to hurt them in the future (Bahlinger et al., 2021). While a set of cognitive mechanisms are involved in the formation and retention of paranoid thoughts, empirical studies have also frequently referred to the role of reasoning bias, or jumping to conclusion (JTC) (Garety & Freeman, 2013). Biasing in this sense is the tendency for using insufficient data to draw a rapid conclusion before making a logical decision. It usually occurs through the rapid evaluation of non-normal or vague stimuli so as to gain a delusive conclusion regardless of any alternative information. Briefly, in many cases, paranoid behavior directly reflects the emotional concerns that underlie it and help to form and retain paranoid thoughts (ibid).

Compared to normal people, paranoid individuals have more flaws in their real-world interpersonal relations and social acceptance (Heydari et al., 2019). Indeed, paranoids are distrustful of others, while they have no reason for it; they simply assume that others have an intention to hurt them. This pervasive and unreasonable distrust is the major feature of paranoia (Abdolmohammadi et al., 2018). As some researchers believe, inappropriate initial object relations in childhood may lead to paranoid thoughts and their effects on the later married life. Moreover, suspicious individuals resort to certain initial crude ways and means of dealing with problems, such as projection and thought suppression. Through avoidant coping in their relations, paranoids attribute their negative traits and internal threats to an external reality, thus presenting a threatening image of others (Hasanvand et al., 2021). Generally, paranoia is a commonplace aspect of human life that, if chronic or severe, can pose problems to individuals and their married life (Abdolmohammadi et al., 2018).

Basically, families can enhance their capability of coping with crises and challenges by emphasizing the factors that make marital relations sustainable and satisfactory rather than the factors that cause a decline in those relations. The present study seeks to contribute to the improvement of married lives by evaluating the factors involved in the satisfaction of married women and the stability of their lives. The facts to consider in this regard are the great social significance of marriage, the recent rising trend of divorce in Iran, the great effect of childhood on the later life, the detrimental role that the dependencies of a spouse may play in the marital relations, the adverse effect of paranoid thoughts or marital suspicions on the peace in the family (Shahmoradi, 2016), and the salient role of women in both family and society. Given these points, this research focuses on the roles of object relations, paranoid thoughts, and interdependencies in the stability of the marital life of married women.

The current investigation examines the roles of object relations, paranoid thoughts, and interdependence in the stability of the marital life of married women. The following hypotheses was tested:

1. There is relationship between object relations and stability of the marital life of married women.
2. There is relationship between paranoid thoughts and stability of the marital life of married women.
3. There is relationship between interdependence and stability of the marital life of married women.

Methods

Study Design: The research design is correlational (a non-experimental study). The research population consisted of the married women in Districts 10 and 12 of the city of Mashhad in 2023. The sample size was determined with the formula proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) as follows:

$$N \geq 50 + 8M$$

In the formula above, M represents the number of the predicting variables. Since there were three such variables to evaluate, a sample of 74 participants was needed. However, to have more accurate results, as many as 212 women were selected through convenience sampling in different places of the target area (e.g., households, university and hospitals). The selected ones took a number of questionnaires as the data collection tools.

Measurments

Marital Instability Index (MII): This questionnaire, introduced by Booth et al. (1983), serves to measure marital instability and especially the aptitude to divorce. It includes 14 items answered on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale



(1: never, 2: seldom, 3: sometimes, 4: often, 5: always). The scores on this questionnaire range from 14 to 70. The higher the score, the more likely the spouses are to get divorced (Jafari et al., 2010). The tool is based on the view that marital instability and the potential risk of divorce cannot be evaluated unless both the behavior and mutual recognition of spouses are taken into account. In 1983, this scale was put to test in 1578 trials on 2034 couples under 55 years of age. It proved to have excellent internal consistency with the alpha coefficient of 0.93 (Booth et al., 1983). Then, in 1999, Yaripour standardized the questionnaire in Iran. It had an acceptable validity index of .70 calculated with a split-half correlation test (Ghasemi Sheykhtabaghi & Zadehmohammadi, 2024). In a study by Ziarati (2013), Cronbach's alpha of .73 was obtained for the reliability of the questionnaire. In the present research, however, the alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was .91.

Object relations questionnaire: This questionnaire, designed and validated by Bell (1995), includes 45 items addressing the four factors of alienation, insecure avoidant attachment, egocentrism, and social incompetence. The responses to the items are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1: completely wrong, 2: wrong, 3: somehow, 4: right, 5: completely right). A high score on this questionnaire suggests that the individual has problem establishing basic relations. The Cronbach's alpha for the object relations scale is .78. In Iran, Gholizadeh (2009) used the questionnaire for two times at a two-week interval to investigate the relationship between fatherhood and object relations quality. The reliability indices were .60, .64, .80 and .61 for the subscales of alienation, insecure attachment, egocentrism, and social incompetence, respectively.

In 2011, the psychometric features of the Persian version of the object relations questionnaire were examined, and it was approved owing to its alpha values, from .66 for social incompetence to .88 for alienation. Moreover, the convergent validity of the SCL-90-R questionnaire with a revised list of 90 items was confirmed (Hadinezhad et al., 2013). In a study by Shaker (2017), a sample of 30 participants was initially examined, and the reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .78. In another research by Bagheri et al. (2019), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales were from .66 (for social incompetence) to .82 (for alienation). These percentages indicate the good validity and reliability of the object relations questionnaire. In the present study, the alpha value for the whole questionnaire was .86.

Green et al. Paranoid Thought Scale (GPTS): This questionnaire was devised by Green et al. (2008). It includes 32 items and serves as a self-

reported scale of paranoid thoughts over a past month. The questionnaire is made up of two parts. The first part deals with basic, or main, thoughts, and the second explores the thoughts of offence and aggression (Kolloleamad et al., 2018). The items are answered on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale (1: never, 2: seldom, 3: sometimes, 4: often, 5: always). The scores are within a range from 32 to 160, and they are positively correlated to the rate of paranoid thoughts. Green et al. (2008) reported the ability of this questionnaire to distinguish paranoid individuals from non-paranoids as its validity index. In Iran, Abdolmohammadi et al. (2018) standardized the GPTS among teenagers and young adults and found it correlated to the MMPI questionnaire with the concurrent criterion validity of .71 and the internal consistency index of .81. They also reported a significant correlation between the scores on the entire GPTS and its subscales and the scores on paranoia in the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI). The Cronbach alpha coefficient that those researchers obtained for the GPTS was .908, and its reliability calculated through a test-retest process within a month was found significant. In another study by Sadeghirad et al. (2022), the alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was .73 in the pretest, .74 in the posttest, and .93 in the follow-up stage. As for the present study, the alpha coefficient of the whole questionnaire was .95.

Spann-Fischer Codependency Scale (SFCS): This is a self-reporting tool designed by Fischer et al. (1991) to measure mutual dependencies. It contains 16 items to answer based on a 6-point Likert scale (1: completely disagree, 2: somehow disagree, 3: disagree a little, 4: agree a little, 5: somehow agree, 6: completely agree). The possible scores range from 16 to 96; the higher a score, the higher the codependency. In this questionnaire, items 5 and 7 are scored in reverse. In order to assess the validity of the questionnaire, Fischer's team administered it to three groups including a codependent group, an improved group, and a control group. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .77, .73 and .8 in the control, improved and codependent groups, respectively.

In a study by Ashraf (2010), the wives of a group of addicted men in Iran were investigated, and the alpha coefficient of the SFCS questionnaire was found to be 0.73. Also, the Spearman-Brown split-half coefficient was .74. In terms of convergent validity, the SFCS questionnaire was correlated to Wilson's co-dependence questionnaire at the coefficient of .59. As for the criterion validity of the questionnaire, it was reported to be acceptable. The validity of the SFCS questionnaire was assessed in another Iranian research; Khosravi et al. (2013) obtained the alpha coefficient of .76 for it, but Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire was .80.

Research procedure: The research participants were 212 women selected through convenience sampling in different places (e.g., mosques, universities,



and cultural centers) of Districts 10 and 12 in the city of Mashhad. The inclusion criteria were being married, being in the age range of 18-60, and being able to read and write. The exclusion criterion was lack of tendency to cooperate with the researcher. For ethical considerations, the researcher began by introducing himself and explaining the research goals and procedure. Then, informed consent was received from the individual participants. They were also assured about the secrecy of their data. Before responding to the questionnaires, the participating women were given clear information about the research and a permission to stop cooperating whenever they liked.

Data analysis: In this study, first, the data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, and Pearson's correlation coefficients served to determine how the research variables were related to marriage stability. Then, enter regressions were carried out to identify the role of those variables in predicting marriage stability. All the analyses were done with the SPSS software version 26.

Findings

Those who attended this study ranged from 18 to 59 years of age with the mean of 37.25 and the standard deviation of 9.41. In terms of education, 24 women (11.3%) had not completed the high school, 85 (40.1%) had high school diplomas, 47 (22.2%) had bachelor's degrees, 34 (16%) held master's degrees, and 22 women (10.4) were PhD holders. The means and standard deviations as well as the lowest and highest numbers of the cases in the research variables are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and minimum and maximum values for the research variables (N=212)

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Object relations	71	177	115.43	17.26
Paranoid thoughts	32	139	58.65	23.79
Interdependence	24	79	48.86	10.49
Marriage stability	48	86	78.54	9.00

Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to examine the correlations among the variables (Table 2). As it can be seen in Table 2, object relations, paranoid thoughts and interdependence are negatively correlated to marriage stability ($P\text{-value} < .01$). Before the calculation of the concurrent regressions, the corresponding hypotheses were taken into account.

Table 2. Matrix for the correlation of the variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
Object relations	1			
Paranoid thoughts	.66**	1		
Interdependence	.72**	.62**	1	
Marriage stability	-.52**	-.53**	-.71**	1

* $P\text{-value} < .05$, ** $P\text{-value} < .01$

One of the hypotheses regards the normal distribution of the scores on the research variables. This issue was examined with skewness and kurtosis indices. For all the variables, the two indices were in the range of -2 to +2. Hence, the hypothesis was confirmed. Another basic hypothesis was the randomness of the collected data and the independence of errors before the regression tests. This hypothesis was confirmed too because the Durbin-Watson test result in the regression analysis was 1.78, suggesting the independence of errors (Meyers et al., 2006). Moreover, to verify the multicollinearity of the independent variables, the overlap of these variables was measured through calculating the variance tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) coefficients. Both coefficients emerged to be acceptable. It is to be noted that a tolerance coefficient lower than .1 or a VIF coefficient higher than 10 indicates the collinearity of independent variables. The corresponding hypothesis in this study was confirmed owing to the acceptable values obtained for object relations ($\text{tolerance} = .41$, $\text{VIF} = 2.44$), paranoid thoughts ($\text{tolerance} = .52$, $\text{VIF} = 1.92$), and interdependence ($\text{tolerance} = .44$, $\text{VIF} = 2.27$). The effects of these three variables on marriage stability were evaluated through enter regression analyses (Table 3).

Table 3. Standard coefficients of enter regression analysis of marriage stability through predictor variables

Variables	B	β	t	$P\text{-value}$	F	R	R^2
Object relations	.03	.06	.74	.000	73.94	.72	.52
Paranoid thoughts	-.25	-.65	-8.91**				
Interdependence	-.15	-.17	-2.48**				

As the results in Table 3 show, the stability of marital life is predictable with paranoid thoughts ($\beta = -.65$, $P\text{-value} < .01$) and interdependence ($\beta = -.17$, $P\text{-value} < .01$). In this context, object relations are of no predicting role. Besides, the value obtained for ($F=73.94$) is significant at ($P\text{-value} < .01$), suggesting the effect of paranoid thoughts and interdependence on marriage stability.



Discussion & Conclusion

Nowadays, instability of marital life and high rates of divorce have turned into serious concerns in modern societies. In this regard, the present study was conducted to identify the effects of object relations, paranoid thoughts, and interdependence on married life stability. Based on Table 2, object relations are negatively correlated to marriage stability. According to Table 3, however, such relations cannot significantly predict the stability of marital life. The finding on the negative correlation of the two variables is in line with the results obtained by Khosrobeigi et al. (2020), Falahzadeh et al. (2016), Jahanbakhshian et al. (2018), and Ferdowsi (2018). Basically, the matters that are internalized in childhood emerge as a part of one's psychological structure in adulthood, based on which the individual's experiences are organized (Bagheri et al., 2019). As the results reported in Table 2 imply, insecure object relations in childhood form unhealthy cognitive structures, making it likely for the individual to face problems in the married life later. In such a situation, spouses experience a decline in their relations, which may ultimately lead to the rupture of the marriage tie. According to the object relations theory, the spouses' behavior together, the common beliefs and attitudes in the family, and the domestic conflicts are internalized by the children. After they grow up and make new intimate relations, the internalized matters show up and begin to be experienced. As Klein believes, the initial relations form the next relations, and the type and strength of the emotions involved in the initial relations determine how the next interactions are understood and dealt with. Couples with relational problems unconsciously test each other with the early models of love matters which they have never been certain about. Thus, quarrels between spouses are the result of mutual projection. This occurs because individuals copy their mother or father's object and then, when married, project it on their spouse. As Jamil et al. (2015) state, marital life becomes unstable when one of the spouses fails to successfully play the role of a certain or imaginary parent.

Considering the results reported in Table 2, marital life stability has a significant negative correlation with paranoid thoughts. Also, based on Table 3, those thoughts can significantly predict the stability of married life; that is, the stronger the paranoid thoughts, the weaker the marriage tie. This finding is consistent with the research by Shahmoradi (2016). Paranoid thoughts are deemed to be a persistent tendency for distrust, anger and spite against others (Sadeghirad et al., 2022). Those beset with paranoid suspicion have pessimism schema of themselves, which makes them highly vulnerable in the face of a perceived threat (Hasanvand et al., 2021). This brings one to conclusion that, compared to normal women, paranoiacs are more distrustful of their husbands;

with the least undesirable act of their men, paranoiac women may be outraged, bear grudges, or decide to control them. All these cases can make men bored of life, push the spouses away from each other, and continually exert adverse impacts on their marital life. Paranoid biases have also been observed in nonclinical populations. For example, about 20% of the participants in the research conducted by Freeman et al. (2008) showed a bias for paranoid thoughts, and this bias was strongly related to the participants' conviction of paranoid beliefs. Connected to it somehow, Garety and Freeman (2013) state that, in many cases, delusional disorders are the direct reflection of emotional or affective concerns, and that these feelings of concern contribute to the formation and retention of delusions. As shown by confirmatory factor analyses, paranoid thoughts are structurally made up of two factors, suspicion and hostility (Falkum et al., 2009). Both of these factors may deter intimate relations and trust building. Besides, frequent or continuous negative judgments, along with incompatible attitudes rooted in paranoid thoughts, may have unfavorable interference with the formation of long-term romantic relations (Smith et al., 2006).

As the results reported in Table 2 suggest, interdependence has a significant negative correlation with the stability of marital life. Also, based on Table 3, interdependence is a significant predictor of married life stability. That is, the more dependent a woman is in her married life, the less stable that life. These results are in agreement with the findings of Sharifi et al. (2018) and Hosseinpour Moghaddam et al. (2022). In marital relations, dependency means the extent to which an individual excludes other important relations in favor of attaching to his or her spouse as a the only source of help and social support, the sole intimate and trustworthy companion, and a partner in acts and likes (Sharifi et al., 2019). Moreover, such an over-attached person usually views his or her spouse as the only source of love and problem-solving potentials (Sharifi et al., 2018). Interdependence is an obstacle to the flourishing of a free and accountable personality, and those who lack this personality often have no decision-making power; it is the others who decide for them. Interdependent people are also characterized with a sense of being valueless, fear, sense of insecurity, extreme control, and freedom limitation (Hosseini Ardakani, 2020). Their relational orientations are also limited due to their unreasonable requests and constant search for support (Sharifi et al., 2019), hence a reduction in the positive interactions demanded by close relations. Since these people think of their spouse as the unique source of love, they may show attachment behaviors, which is embarrassing and boring for their spouse. This may also put the embarrassed person in doubt about his ability to meet her needs.



Limitations and Implications: This study is not without limitations. First of all, it is a cross-sectional study, making it hard to draw conclusions from a causative point of view. Secondly, since the research hypotheses were verified with self-assessment questionnaires, the results of the study should be interpreted cautiously. Thirdly, the research sample was not homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status and education. Finally, the participants were all from Mashhad. Therefore, it is suggested that this research be carried out in other urban areas of Iran so as to gain generalizable results. It is also recommended that the variables studied herein be examined on male populations. The two genders can be compared in terms of these variables too. It is especially important to include a set of other factors that may affect marital life stability.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of the research: All the ethical principles for human studies were regarded in this research.

Funding: No fund was received for this study.

Authors' contribution: First author: conceptualization, writing the first draft, methodology, sampling. Second author: statistical analysis, supervision, writing and editing the final draft.

Conflict of interests: There is none to declare.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank all those who participated in this study.

Data availability: The data supporting this research are of no public access.

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