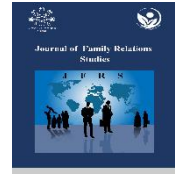




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## Research Paper

# The Role of Listening Style and Negative Meta Emotion in Marital Dissatisfaction of Women with Anxiety Attachment



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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Research was conducted with the aim of investigating the role of listening-style and negative meta-emotion in marital dissatisfaction of women with anxiety-attachment.

**Methods:** The research was done by descriptive-correlation method. The statistical population included all married women between the ages 20 -50, in Herreris-city of East-Azərbayjan in the 2021. Among them, 150 people with high anxiety-attachment were selected using the available sampling method and filled out Doel Listening-style-questionnaire (1997), Negative Meta-Emotion-questionnaire by Mittmansgraber et al.(2009), and Glumbeck-Rust Marital-questionnaire (1987),also the Bernan-et al. Experience in Relationships were used. Pearson correlation and multiple Regression analysis were used.

**Results:** The study results indicated that there was a significant negative relationship between couple's comprehension listening-style with marital dissatisfaction in anxious attached women and a positive relation between responsive style and negative emotion. regression analysis showed 62% of the variance of marital disturbance in women with anxiety-attachment is explained by negative variables of couple's listening-style and negative emotions.

**Conclusion:** Considering that the sense of secure attachment facilitates use of secure emotion regulation strategies and constructive listening. These skills reduce tension, maintain satisfying intimate relationships and increase personal adaptability through constructive and realistic efforts. Therefore, these are an important factor in establishing successful interpersonal relationships.

## 1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the main goals in human life (Role, 2018) which is the chief of attachment in most adults (Davis et al., 2016). Attachment means, deep bond people have with their important person in life (Matin & Etemadi, 2021), attachment is to ensure of being protected by a worthy one when needed

(Mikulincer & R. Shaver, 2020). Spouse or partner usually is the first attachment image in adulthood (Simpson & Rholes, 2015). Bowlby believes, individual's attachment style is formed due to primary emotional bond based on child experience with caregiver (Ma et al., 2022). If secure attachment is not

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formed by the caregiver and infant, it leads to insecure attachment. 40% of general population has an insecure attachment style and these statistics increase in clinical population (Carr, Hardy, & Fornells-Ambrojo, 2018). Clark, Bernan & Shaver (1998) proposed two insecure attachment style in adults: Anxiety and Avoidant attachment. Anxious attached people have negative self-image. They fear to be rejected, worried about the absence of important people in their life. Anxious attached people also have a negative self-image. They do not feel comfort in intimate relationships and withdraw from these in their adulthood (Cameron, Finnegan, & Morry, 2012). Anxious attached person is worried about absence of his/her spouse when is needed and sensitive to abandonment, so h/she is attached to the spouse (Mikulincer & R. Shaver, 2020) and faces lots of difficulties in controlling relationship conflicts (Costa & Botelho, 2021). Marital relationship is the information convey process between spouses and the skills which leads to talk about their thoughts and emotions, including subskills which they are understanding verbal and nonverbal messages, controlling emotion, effective listening, insight to relationship (Pourmeidani et al., 2020). Listening style is the way people choose how to listen to each other based on individual differences and situational limitations (Williams, Brown, & Boyle, 2012) which is divided into comprehension and responsive styles. comprehension style is an active and deliberate style which requires close attention from the listener. People who try to understand and deeply hear what their spouse says, try to have a deeper understanding of their partner to interpret his/her messages correctly. It is thought that these people try harder to continue the relationship (Pourmeidani et al., 2020), because the patient listener allows his spouse to express himself or herself in a free space without judgment and tries to identify his/her needs in order to better understand her husband or his wife's thoughts and feelings. Responsive listening style is a simple and effortless method whose main goal is to understand meaning of what was heard. Individuals with responsive style seek to receive enough information to response their spouse. In this listening style, individuals believe they have fully received their spouse's message and try to answer their spouse without thinking. For this reason, spouses think that they are not understood and not being heard properly (Doell, 2005). Individual with responsive listening style only understand what their spouse says on the surface, so they do not get a correct understanding of spouse's complaint which leads to wrong perceptions of spouse's message (Pourmeidani & et al., 2020). They do not notice the implicit meaning

of many conversations because pay little attention to nonverbal cues to add meaning to communication (Chesebro, 1999). Nonverbal communication in personal reactions, especially in conveying emotions to other are very important (Maleki, Mohagheghi, & Nabizadeh, 2019). Individuals can affect each other's emotional states in different ways. Their attention and evaluation towards emotions and social acceptability of emotions causes arousal of meta emotion (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2019). Meta emotions mean secondary emotions, that is, emotions which a person feels about his emotions (Hurrell, Houwing, & Hudson, 2017). In fact, meta emotions are those emotions that arise in response to other emotions (Haradhvala, 2016) and have positive and negative dimensions (Ebadi, Basharpour, & Narimani, 2021b). Positive emotions point to individual's ability to adaptation with stressful conditions, which cause acceptance of emotions (Gheybi & Zeinali, 2021). Negative dimension reflects individual's inability to accept his/her emotions (Hurrell & et al., 2017). The study shows that meta emotions are closely related to people's knowledge and awareness of their emotional processes (Norman & Furnes, 2016).

Insecure attachment is related to experiencing negative emotions in romantic relationships. Anxious attached one perceives negative emotions and understand them more negatively (Feeney & Fitzgerald, 2019). On the other hand, this negative evaluation from negative emotion, leads to arise negative meta emotion (Miceli & Casterfranchi, 2019). Studies showed that inability to regulate emotions is associated to low satisfaction in marital relations for couples (Fischer et al., 2022). Emotion is the center of attachment (Johnson & Zuccarini, 2010). Some researchers have suggested that insecure attachment disrupts emotion regulation and consequently leads to psychological problems (Psouni, Frisk, & Brocki, 2021). Anxious attached people often express themselves to their spouses and seek to be loved, so they put the relationship in pressure by using some behaviors to be more closed, which is called over activity of attachment system (Brassard et al., 2012). Attachment system hyperactivity strategies exposes the anxious attachment to all kinds of emotional problems and disrupts the ability to regulate emotions, which cause the anxious attachment to evaluate interpersonal conflicts more catastrophically, which itself leads to continuation of negative emotions raised by conflicts, so increase of emotional responses in anxious attached people related to the fear of abandonment and rejection of relationship (Yuspendi et al., 2018). These cases leads to conflicts in relationship which remain unresolved. Anxious attached people tend to evaluate negative emotions and ruminations related to threats as

more threatening and this issue may lead to intensification of anger and resentment towards their spouse and intensify the conflict between anxious attached and his/her spouse (Mikulins & Shaver, 2020). Therefore, the awareness of emotions and ability to control negative emotions can prevent the occurrence of many marital problems (sahebdel, zaharakar, & delavar, 2016). Considering that the sense of secure attachment facilitates use of secure emotion regulation strategies. strategies that aim to reduce tension, maintain satisfying intimate relationships and increase personal adaptability through constructive, flexible and realistic efforts. Therefore, emotion regulation is an important factor in establishing successful interpersonal relationships. Considering the ability to identify the role of negative emotions and meta emotions in marital disturbance, the present study sought an answer to the question, "what was the role of listening style of couples and negative emotions in marital disturbance of women with anxious attachment?"

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research method was descriptive and correlational and its statistical population included all married women between ages 20 to 50, lived in Heris city of East Azerbaijan province in 2021. The sample was considered to be 250 and answered the Experience in Relationship scale made by Bernan and et al. (1988). Then among them 105 people who had obtained one standard deviation higher than the mean in the subscale of anxious attachment style, were selected by purposeful sampling and formed the research sample and completed the research questionnaires.

**The Listening Style Questionnaire:** This questionnaire first was made by Doel (1997) includes 32 questions. The main purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate listening style of couples. In 2003, Doel revised it again and reduced its items to 18 questions. Currently, this questionnaire evaluates two subscales: Responsive and Comprehension listening style. The scoring consists of seven-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha for these subscales were 0.91 and 0.82, respectively and the correlational coefficient was 0.66. One-month retest coefficient were 0.86 and 0.89 respectively. Internal consistency coefficient was 0.88 by retest method. The reliability and validity in Iranian version was evaluated by Pourmeidani and et al (2020). Internal consistency for 18 items was between 0.43 to 0.77 and factor loading were between 0.43 to 0.94. Cronbach's Alpha was reported 0.88 & 0.99 for women and men respectively.

**Negative Meta emotion Questionnaire:** It was

designed by Mitmensgraber and et al., (2009) which consists of 28 items and has two components which are positive and negative meta emotions. It evaluates 6 subscales including meta compassion, meta passion, meta anger, meta shame/contempt, meta control of thought and meta inhibition. It is scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 for very little to 5 for very much. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.91 and 0.85 for positive and negative meta emotion respectively. There is a significant relationship of coefficient of this scale with Neo personality questionnaire, positive and negative emotion scale, Beck's Depression and Meta cognition questionnaire.

Cronbach's alpha for total scale, positive and negative meta emotion subscales were 0.89, 0.87 & 0.70, respectively.

**Marital Dissatisfaction Questionnaire (Marital status GRIMS Test):** This questionnaire was designed by Glumbok Rust & et al. (1987), including 28 questions and evaluates 8 subscales which are sensitivity and attention of couples to each other, commitment, loyalty, participation, sympathy, trust, intimacy and couple's empathy. Scoring are based on Likert 4-degree (0 for completely agree & 3 for completely disagree). The Cronbach's alpha correlation for women in Iranian sample and their husbands was 0.92 and 0.94, respectively. The correlation coefficients between the subject's scores in two-week interval for all, female and male subjects were: 0.77, 0.73 & 0.75, respectively, which is a sign of test retest reliability of the questionnaire.

**Experience in Relationship Scale:** This questionnaire is designed by Bernan and et al (1998). It consists of 36 questions, evaluated two dimensions of anxiety and avoidance with 6 subscales: fear of abandonment, over preoccupation to spouse, fear of rejection, avoidance of intimacy, feeling uncomfortable and self-reliance. Scoring are based on 7 point Likert scale from 1 for very little and 7 for very much. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for anxiety and avoidance were 0.91 & 0.94, respectively (Bernan et al., 1998). The 3-week test retest interval reliability reported 0.7 (Bernan et al., 2000 cited, wee et al., 2005). Correlation obtained significant between the anxiety, avoidance, depression, hopelessness (Russel & et al., 2004) shame, depression and loneliness (Shuffer & et al., 2005) subscales. The Cronbach's alpha for avoidance and anxiety were, 0.75 & 0.71, respectively (Nadali & Gol Shirazi, 2010). Pearson correlation test and multiple regression analysis were used to test research hypothesis.

## 3. Results

The present study was conducted on 250 women,

among them, 105 women whose anxious attachment score was one standard deviation higher than the average, were selected as research samples of which, 54.3% & 45.7% were housewife and employee,

respectively. 16.2 % had no child, 20%, 50.5%, 11.4% & 1.9% had one, two, three and four children, respectively. In descriptive section, research indicators variables were obtained as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics and normality of studied variables for women**

Variable	M	SD	KS	SL
Couple Disturbance	60.75	11.66	0.654	0.785
Comprehension listening	23.72	8.72	1.042	0.227
Responsive listening	49.79	7.15	1	0.27
Negative meta emotion	100.60	16.10	0.641	0.806
Anxious attachment	53.73	5.36	-	-

The results shown in Table 1, Kalmogrove Smironov test indicates that distribution of studied variables is normal. Considering that, the conditions of using Pearson`s correlation test are available, this test was

used to investigate the relationship between the components of marital dissatisfaction, comprehension listening style and negative meta emotions. The results of correlation tests are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results of Pearson correlation tests for variables**

Variable	1	2	3	4
Marital dissatisfaction	1			
Comprehension listening style	-0.424**	1		
Responsive listening style	0.621**	-0.281**	1	
Negative Meta emotion	0.575 **	-0.289**	0.194*	1

The findings in Table 2 show that listening style and negative meta emotion have a significant relationship with dissatisfaction of anxious attached women.

this assumption, attention should be paid to two indices of tolerance variance and VIF. If the variance tolerance indicator is 0 to 1, also the value of VIF is less than 10, it can be said that the assumption in collinearity of variables has been met. In addition, in order to check the independency of predictor and criterion variables, the value of Durbin Watson indicator should be close to 3. The results of examining the assumptions of this analysis in Table 4 indicates this assumption is also valid. The results of multiple regression analysis are presented in Table3.

In order to test the role of listening style and negative meta emotions to predict, dissatisfaction of anxious attached women, there have been used multiple regression analysis. In order to use this test, assumptions must be met. First the data distribution must be normal, which results in this assumption show the data normality distribution in Table1 (p>0.05).

Another assumption of this test is the collinearity predictor variables indicators, and in order to check

**Table 3. The results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, Role of Listening style in couples, Negative Meta Emotions in Marital Disturbance of Anxious Attached women**

Sources	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	sig	R	R <sup>2</sup>
Regression	8818.321	3	293.440	55.729	0.001	0.79	0.623
Error	5327.241	101	52.745				
Total	14145.562	104					

Results in Table 4 show that the linear combination of predictor variables, reactive listening style and negative meta emotions could significantly predict the

marital disturbance in anxious attached women (F=55.729, P<0.001).

**Table 4. coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	sig	Collinearity		Durbin Watson
	B	Std Error	B				VIF	Tolerance	
Constant	-5.78	7.61	-		-0.759	0.45	-	-	2.80
comprehension listening style	-0.215	0.088	-0.16		-2.443	0.016	1.157	0.864	
Responsive listening style	-0.803	0.105	0.492		7.678	0/001	1.102	0.907	
Negative Meta Emotion	0.314	0.047	0.434		6.751	0/001	1.107	0.903	

Comprehension listening style and Responsive listening style of couples and Negative Meta Emotions were able to evaluate 62% of variance in marital dissatisfaction of anxious attached women. The regression coefficients in Table 4, indicate that responsive listening style ( $\beta=0.49$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) and negative meta emotions ( $\beta=0.434$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), positively, also comprehension listening style ( $\beta=-0.16$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), negatively, could predict the marital disturbance of anxious attached women.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating role of listening styles, negative meta emotions in marital dissatisfaction in anxious attached women. The results of Pearson correlation test showed that responsive listening style as positive a comprehension listening style has a relationship with marital dissatisfaction in anxious attached women, also, the multiple regression results indicated, the responsive listening style and comprehension listening style significantly predict marital dissatisfaction in anxious attached women. These studies are laid in other researcher's findings (Rajabi, Leyagat, & Abaspour, 2021). Researches show that individuals probably use a dominant listening style in their relationship and many listeners are doubted about changing their style. People who are less sensitive in listening, probably pay attention to the subjective aspect of conversations and this will cause dissatisfaction so creates misunderstanding, conflicts and marital disturbance. The attachment system is a security regulation system that is triggered in situations which cause a threat or stress to individual (Pallini et al., 2018). Anxious attached women show a poor pattern in interpersonal relationships and are worried about being unloved or abandoned (Ashnad & et al., 2020). When anxious attached women can get into intimate relationships without fear of being ignored, they feel more secure (Sahebdel & et al., 2020). Comprehension style shows attention, empathy and nonjudgmental listening. Empathic listening makes a person feel their relationship and whatever they experience is heard and understood, therefore it can be expected relationship satisfaction will increase so marital disturbance will decrease (Pourmeidani & et al., 2020). Another finding in current research was the direct relationship between responsive listening style and marital disturbance of anxious attached women. The results are in line with other findings (Rajabi et al., 2021). Couples who use a responsive listening style, just understand what their spouse says and do not get a correct impression of spouse's

complaint. In fact, these people try to get enough information so as they could answer their spouses (Yoosefi, 2021). The difference in how people listen to each other is related to communicative problems that couples refer to as marital issues or problems (doell, 2005). Responsive listening style prevents effective communication between spouses (Pourmeidani & et al., 2020) and their mutual understanding of each other (McKenna et al., 2020). People with anxiety attachment perceive communication conflicts in a negative way, this leads to negative reactions to their spouses. These people are biased in expressing and understanding events, therefore, they find relationship threats more exaggerated, which fuels their constant fear of being abandoned and neglected by their spouse. So, they immersed in their worries and convey wrong messages to their partner, which cause a low relationship satisfaction and the experience of marital disturbance (Candel & Turliuc, 2019).

Another findings of the current research were that there is a positive and significant relationship between negative meta emotion and marital disturbance of anxious attached women. Also, the result of multiple regression analysis test predicted a direct relation between negative meta emotion and marital disturbance in anxious attached women. The results are in line with the findings of (Behbahani Mandizadeh & Homaei, 2020)., (Ebadi, Basharpour, & Narimani, 2021a)., (Vahdani et al., 2020) , (Khajeh, farhadi, & aghayei, 2022) , (Role, 2018) , (Jardine, Vannier, & Voyer, 2022), Miceli & Casterfranchi (2019), Fischer et al. (2022). Being aware of other people's feelings and emotional states, people engage in special supportive behaviors (Keaton, Bodie, & Keteyian, 2015). Understanding others negative emotions is essential to solve interpersonal problems (Overall et al., 2015). Many marital problems are caused by the inappropriate expression and misunderstanding of emotions (Sahebdel et al., 2016). Constant conflict is emotionally distressing for partners and activate the attachment system (Feeny and Fitzgerald, 2019). Anxious attached women get into conflict with their husbands, on the other hand they lack problem solving skills by continuing the conflicts to prevent them. So there would be emotions and negative emotional responses in these people's relationship (Kanarkuhi, Sadeghi, & Shaykhi Ghale Sardi, 2020). Anxious attached people repeat their voluntary and involuntary traumatic memories. So they have problems in turning the emotions (Costa & Botelho, 2021). Spouses who are emotionally disturbed and distressed, involved in series of inflexible plans. Inability to bear

these negative emotions lead tension and confusion in their relationship (Ebadi et al., 2021a). Negative emotions and negative evaluation of conflicts lead to poor performance in relationship. The anxious attached person is always afraid of being abandoned by his/her conflicts with his/her partner, because the anxious attachment style causes them to negatively experience their romantic relationship (Fakhri, mahdavianfard, & kimiaee, 2018). People with low positive emotions and high negative emotions, have difficulty in expressing their emotions in timely manner. Lack of emotion and its expression will lead problems in their marital relationships. There is significant relation between negative meta emotions and sensitivity to rejection with marital disturbance (Ebadi et al., 2021b).

#### Limitations of the study

Among the limitations of the research, we can mention the demographic characteristics such as age, education and length of marriage that can play a role in marital disturbance in anxious attached women. In this research these variables were not controlled. The availability of the sample in this research is also considered one of the limitations, because it will limit the generalization of results to individuals and other communities.

### 5. Ethical Considerations

#### Compliance with ethical guidelines

Compliance with ethical guidelines in designing and compiling this research, ethical principles have been considered. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and the information was received confidentially and used only for research purposes.

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#### Authors' contributions

All authors have participated in the design, implementation, and writing of all sections of the present study.

#### Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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