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# Prediction of depression in students with emotional breakdown based on attachment styles and self-concept

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## Abstract

This study aimed to predict depression in students with emotional breakdown based on attachment and self-concept styles. Methods: This study was correlational type and the society consists of single male and female students aged 19-34 years, from Karaj Islamic Azad University, which at least 6 months past their romantic relationship breakdown and failure symptoms remain on them, who were selected by purposive sampling method and responded to questionnaire of the adult attachment styles Collins and Reid (RAAS), questionnaire of the self-concept of Rogers, and emotional difficulties questionnaire (DASS-21). For data analysis, the significance test, Pearson correlation and multiple regression were used. Results:The results showed a significant relationship between attachment and depression styles ($p<0.05$). Subscale (closeness, dependence), has a significant negative relationship with depression. Poor or negative self-concept subscale of anxiety and depression also has a significant positive relationship. Conclusion: This study showed that attachment and self-concept styles predicts that depression has an emotional breakdown. In order to reduce the depression of the students has an emotional breakdown, it is suggested to pay attention to their attachment styles and to strengthen positive self-concept in all them.

**Keywords**: attachment style, self-concept, depression, emotional breakdown

## Introduction

Love states from the passion, euphoria, mania, freshness, vitality, creativity and so on, in the lover. Although some positive evidence are in romantic love, girls and boys in love, encounter with shortcomings and the bitterness in the defeat of love. In total, love is like a two-edged double-edged sword (Manteghi,). That's why romantic relationships is an important part of most people's lives and when this relationship ends, can lead to severe emotional distress. Almost 70% of students had experienced the collapse of a romantic relationship (Collins and Gylat, Roback, Griffin, 2012). By entering the university, a new dimension of emotional breakdown appeared, because by changing the position and away from family, more specific emotional needs and also provides the possibility to communicate with the other sex (Peasant,).

Thus, young duration is one of the critical stages of a life and confront person with the obstacles and problems. Because of the high demands of the environment beyond the capacity of an organism lead to the biological and psychological changes that can lead a person to depression (Cohen and Hmryk, 2003 and Hanj, Harvey and Morgan, 2010; quoted Rahimi Nejad et al.,). In such a situation, the ability of person compatibility against stress is not equal. Some people in similar social environments lose the ability to cope with challenging situations very soon and suffer from depression, anxiety, stress and anti-social behavior and suicide. Whatever such capacity is much higher or more, the person will be able to keep a better level and positive manner of mental and social health, and resolve their own problems with adaptive and efficient way (Ingram, Miranda and Segal, 1998; According to the Zaree and Solgui,).

The results showed, the quality of children relation with primary care which specified with attachment and safety, is an important factor in mental health in the life and the quality of this attachment meaningfully effects on the mental health. Attachment is relatively stable emotional bond between the child and with an increasing number of people who regularly interact constantly with their baby, is created. Based on Bowlby research, Ainsworth detected three styles: secure attachment, Insecure-Avoidant attachment and Insecure-Ambivalent attachment. Secure attachment with features positive communication is including: intimacy and pleasure, avoidant attachment with lower levels of intimacy and commitment and ambivalent attachment with excitement and concern about relationships, associated with low satisfaction .

Bowlby (1980), believed that many forms of neuroticism and personality disorders is due to the depriving children of instability mother care or children's relationship with the attachment. So attachment style can be considered a risk factor to be considered next psychopathology. Attachment styles with multiple variables such as self-esteem and impaired interpersonal relationships, anger and hostility, anxiety, depression, and personality disorders are related. The results revealed that attachment styles determines the principles of emotional, cognitive and emotional reactions in people and strategies that guide interpersonal relationships.

Liu, Nagata, Keita Mora (2009; quoted from Haddadi Kohsar and Ghobari Bonab,) studied the relationship between attachment styles of adults, the pressures of life, and depression during the day in the 437 undergraduates. The results showed insecure attachment and stress are highly correlated with students mood during the day. Also Bifulco, Moran and Ball (2002) showed in their study that the existence of any kind of insecure attachment is associated with depression year. Morley and Moran (2011; quoted in the continuous et al.,) showed that the insecure attachment styles has been confirmed as a vulnerability. Bifulco, Moran, wings, Brnazany (2002; quoted vice Nia et al.,) showed in their research that insecure attachment is associated with depression. In Cassidy and Shaver (1919), people with secure attachment are safe resource in confronting and coping with life events. Sochos & Tsalta (2008) showed in their study that subjects people to secure and insecure ambivalent attachment, show more signs of psychopathology.

Other approaches to the prediction of depression in people with emotional breakdown, is a theory of self-concept which introduces the relatively unified structure, uniform and stable over time. It includes physical or mental structures, which absorbs the required specifications from person past behavior. This is the mental representation of one's self-concept. In the same way that people have mental representation from different places, and events, they have also mental representation of himself. The self-concept is made of experience and the thinking of the experiences. People to build self-concept pay attention to feedback from their daily routine. This feedback shows their characteristics and preferences. The self-concept includes a set of unique features that person as a self-perception understand and obtain through social relations (Marcus and Nvryvs, 1986). In every period of life, a person involved in a special relationship with others that can improve personal health or social him or hurt him. Finding partner is an important event in the development of adult mental health and has a profound impact on self-concept (Akbari et al.,).

Cognitive theories assert that knowledge affects people on their emotions (Lazarus, 1999), so expect that there is a closeness relationship between the self-compassion and emotions. Many researchers believe that the extent to which individuals achieve distinctive identity or coherent self-concept, are involved with a variety of positive or negative feelings. According to them, uncoordinated and disjointed beliefs about the "self" leads to many emotional problems (Cooper and Parvin, 1998). In fact, people who have clear self-compassion, well-defined, coordinated and sustainable have almost greater psychological health. These people have a clear vision about themselves and less affected by daily events and assessment of these events (Campbell et al., 1996).

The results of Kim (2003) Ybrandt (2008) and Najafi Kilian et al. corroborates the notion that the development of depression in students due to the weakening of the self-compassion. The research of Slaughter, Gardner, Finkel (2011), showed that emotional breakdown can lead to reduced self-concept clarity and incidence of depression in people. Psychologists and sociologists are considered the self-compassion and its components as an essential ingredient and the core character of social adaptation and know the youth duration as one of the most critical periods in life.

Thus, according to the mentioned study, the prevalence of depression in the country as well as short-term and long-term implications and consequences of emotional breakdown, and limited research on predictors of depression in young people with emotional breakdown, as well as special attention the mental health of youth and the interaction of attachment styles and self-concept and depression, this research addresed to examine the question whether attachment styles and self-concept predicts depression in students with emotional breakdown?

## Research method

The research method was correlation. The population of male and female students aged 34-19 years were married at least six months past their romantic break and were referred to Islamic Azad University Counseling Center. Failure symptoms such as withdrawal, depressed mood, impulsive behavior, inability to create new connections with others as well as their performance was left. Sampling was targeted. The choice of those who met to study. So 100 male and female students with love failure with the consent and the criteria for entering the study responded to the questionnaires.

Eligible for the study, male and female students aged 19-34 years old who have emotional breakdown at least 6 months past their romantic relationship breakdown and failure symptoms such as withdrawal, depressed mood, impulsive behavior, inability to create new connections others are also experiencing a drop in performance.

## Research tools

(A) Revised Questionnaire of Adult Attachment Styles (RAAS). This self-assessment questionnaire included communication skills and individual style of intimate relationship that was built by Collins and Reid in 1996, and has 18 words that respondents in a 5-point Likert scale to rate their agreement or disagreement of any Article (1 =

not at all characteristic of me not to 5 = strongly my property) is expressed. In order to obtain scores for each subscale, scores of its related phrases is summed together and divided to the number of expressions (6). Three subscales: dependence that will show confidence, near subscale, which measures the degree of intimacy and emotional closeness with others subjects; anxiety subscale, which assess the level of concern to one of expulsion. 6 words dedicated to each subscale. Retest reliability coefficient for each of the three subscales closeness, dependence and anxiety are 0.68, 0.71 and 0.52, respectively. In a study conducted by Ghobari and Haddad on 468 students of Medical Sciences, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) Adult Attachment scale Collins and Reid, scale proximity, dependence and anxiety are respectively: 0.48, 0.55 and 0.79 respectively (according to the Haji Alizadeh,).

(B) Rogers self-compassion questionnaire: the questionnaire were prepared in 1938 and 1957 by Rogers to measure self-concept. It consists of two separate forms "A" and "B", form "A" base self-concept means the individual as it sees itself and the current thought he measures himself. Form "B" the ideal self-concept measures, means that any one wishes to be. Each form contains 25 questions and is including objective tests of a 7-point level that are between the two polarization traits (positive and negative), and participants will choose only one issue between the two traits. Grading the test in this way that every individual scores for each question of the difference between each of the individual characters A and B form is obtained. In this case: person score=X1-X2 for a question mark (trait), which in this formula X1 is the score in the form A, and X2 is the score in form B, according to the 25 questions, and then they have to be exponentiation to 2, then summed together, then the square root is taken to obtain the person score. The raw scores range from 0 to 7 is normal subjects, from 7.01 to 10 is average and above are considered to be negative. (Mousavi,; quoted in Bijar Farah et al.,), test reliability is estimated using split-half and is reported 0.8. The internal consistency test measured and verified by calculating the correlation of each question and total measured. Content validity of the test can be verified according to the theory of Carl Rogers (Producer of the scale) and approved by the supervisor and rely on specialists and also due to confirm internal consistency, this test has evidence of construct validity.

(C) Emotional problems scale (DASS-21): 21-item scale, was built by Lavybvnd and Lavybvnd in 1995 and scored in the whole four-point Likert. The scale is set of three self-report scale for assessment of negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Any questions scored from zero (does not apply at all) to 3 (Completely is true in my case). Total scores on the depression scale questionnaire was used to measure participants' depression. This questionnaire in Iran was examined by Saman, Jokar and Sahragard and the retest reliability for depression, anxiety and stress are 0.81, 0.74 and 0.78, respectively, and Cronbach's Alpha is 0.81, 0.74 and 0.78, respectively (Dehdari et al.,).

To do, a researcher, with the permission of the management of Advising Center of University, attended at the counselling centre of Azad University of Karaj for a month. Researcher visited students with love failure and interviewed with them and if they have criteria for entry into the study (at least 6 months past the failure of love, isolation, low mood, impulsive behavior, inability to create new connections with others as well as performance), asked the students to response to the questionnaires, adult attachment styles (RAAS), Rogers self-concept and scale of emotional problems (DASS-21).

## Results

The research sample consisted of 100 students (52% female and 48% male), with ages ranging from 19-34 years.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistical analysis of attachment style scores, depression and self-concept**

| Number | SD | Average | scales |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 0.78 | 1.95 | Closeness subscale |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | 0.62 | 1.72 | Dependency subscale |
| 100 | 0.95 | 2.16 | Anxiety subscale |
| 100 | 5.58 | 13.51 | Depression |
| 100 | 3.96 | 10.33 | Self-concept |

Table 1 shows that attachment anxiety and depression has the highest average among college students.

**Table 2. The correlation matrix attachment styles and self-concept and depression**

| **5** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **Subscales** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | Depression |
| | | | 1 | -0.614** | Closeness |
| | | 1 | 0.590** | -0.513** | Dependency |
| | 1 | -0.498** | -0.440** | 0.500** | Anxiety |
| 1 | 0.29* | -0.012 | -0.24** | 0.23* | Self-concept |

**P<0.01 *P<0.05

Table 2 shows that the anxiety subscale and negative and week self-concept has a positive correlation with depression and closeness, Dependency subscale has negative correlation with depression.

**Table 3: results Summary of regression analysis to determine the relationship between attachment styles and self-concept and depression**

| Regression coefficient | | | | | Regression model suitability | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **t** | **B** | **βeta** | **$R^2$** | **R** | **F** | **variable** |
| 4.102** | 11.556 | | | | | Constant coefficient |
| | | | 0.483 | 0.695 | 22.205** | Depression |
| -4.312** | -2.888 | -0.404 | | | | closeness |
| -1.753 | -1.528 | -0.171 | | | | Dependency |
| 2.403* | 1.244 | 0.212 | | | | Anxiety |
| 2.278* | 0.242 | 0.172 | | | | Self-concept |

**P<0.01 *P<0.05

As the results in Table 3 show that attachment styles and self-concept predicts 48 percent of the variance in student depression and relationship between attachment styles (proximity, dependence and anxiety) and self-concept with depression is less than 0.01. The predictive variables, subscale closeness, anxiety and self-concept is capable of predicting depression. T-test for the subscale closeness, anxiety and self-concept in lower levels of 0.01 and 0.05 is meaningful. closeness subscale regression coefficient is (-0.404), dependence subscale is (-0.171), anxiety subscale is (0.212) and self-concept is (0.172). So anxiety subscale has positive correlation with depression. Also with the increase in the average depression scores their self-concept score is also increased that reflects their negative and low self-concept. For this reason, a negative and week self-concept has positive correlation with depression. Also nearby subscale was negatively correlated with depression. It should be noted that dependence subscale in this model has no significant relationship with depression.

## Conclusion and discussion

Our findings show that attachment styles and self-concept predicts depression in students with emotional breakdown. Also, there is a significant relationship between the attachment styles and self-concept with depression in students with emotional breakdown. This result is consistent with the results of Haddadi, Kohsar and Ghobari), Lazarus (1999).

Results showed anxiety subscale (anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment) has a significant positive relationship with emotional problems (depression). This result is consistent with the research results of Befoloko (2002) and Nayebi Nia, which showed that there is any kind of insecure attachment associated with depression. Also nearby subscale (secure attachment) has significant negative relationship with emotional problems (depression). The result of the research, Cassidy and Shaver (1919), showed that people with secure attachment are safe resource in

confronting and coping with life events. The findings are consistent with research by Barnett and Gottlieb (1988). They believe that it is likely that negative life events in people who do not have much of a sense of self-worth, has more depression. Because the depression makes people's lack of self-worth. The results of the Kim (2003), Ybrandt (2008) and Najafi Kilian et al. corroborates the notion that the negative development of depression in students lead to weaken their self-worth. Also, our results are consistent with the results of Slaughter, Gardner, Finkel (2011), which showed emotional breakdown could lead to a reduction in depression and self-concept.

Based on the results of this study, according to Greenberg research, McLaughlin (1998) and Prg, Mykvlynsr (2004) which showed that people with insecure attachments used the pattern agrees with emotion cognitions to reduce the negative emotions (worst way positive data readout). They are less compatible with the situation arisen. The individuals with secure attachment to reduce negative emotions that caused problems, used opposed-kindness pattern of cognitions (the best way to read positive information) and satisfied with the position arisen. It can be mentioned that students with emotional breakdown with inefficient and insecure attachment style have a negative perception and in stressful situations, they lost cognitive and emotional control and cannot harness control in stressful situations. They feel fear and insecurity. In relationships, they contact with an attitude of wanting to approach, but they fear of rejection constantly. On the other hand they only feel and think that they do not have the support of others, because they consider themselves as someone not worthy of love and affection. So more and faster get depression. According to research by Rogers (1961, quoted by Ybrandt, 2008), Who is a strong and positive self-concept, compared with someone who has poor self-concept, comments will be completely different than the world of work and education and their interpersonal relationships will be successful.

So in the people who have been failed in love by anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment style, they are negative self-concept and weak. As a result, they found themselves in control of the expanding feelings and thoughts flow, annoying and ineffective. And their conception of the world and those around them is unsafe and uncomfortable places that people are not open to them, and life expectancy were decreased in them. The results showed that the student's anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment styles and self-concept predict more depression. People with secure attachment also has a positive perception of their own in stressful situations, and do not lose cognitive control and emotional and stressful situations and can bring in own control. By having positive perceptions of themselves and others can use the resources of social support in their environment and in their ability to cope with depression increases. So when safe people with an internal or external stimuli or events that may provoke unpleasant emotions encountered can be involved in problem solving, planning, and re-evaluate their cognitive. But according to the theory of Campbell et al (1996), people who have self-clear, well-defined, coordinated and sustainable almost have greater psychological health. These people have a clear vision about themselves and less affected by daily events. The results suggest that people with secure attachment and positive self-concept and strong have less depression. In this research, secure attachment style predicts a significant negative emotional problems (depression).

## Limitations and suggestions:

According to the study have been done on student youth ages 19-34 years old and single in Islamic Azad University counseling center which have different social and family background, placing restrictions on generalizing the findings, interpretations and attributions of aetiological factors and also provides follow-up sessions that need to be considered. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be done on statistical communities that are more homogeneous in terms of family and social situations. The lack of native questionnaires (Iran), which is better suited to the conditions of Iranian students have other limitations of this study, which suggested that in future studies, native questionnaires (Iran), to assess attachment styles and self-concept and depression students will develop an emotional breakdown.

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