



ISSN No: 2319-5886

International Journal of Medical Research & Health Sciences, 2016, 5, 7S:127-133

## Examining the Relationship between Communication Patterns of Source Family and Self-Consciousness with Defensive Styles of Discordant Couples

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### ABSTRACT

Research has shown the relationship between communication patterns of source family with defensive styles of discordant couples. For this reason, the present research has examined the relationship between communication patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles of discordant couples. This study is a descriptive-correlation type. Its population consisted of all discordant couples referred to counseling centers of Mashhad in 2015. Among the referred 140 discordant couples, there were selected 110 discordant couples as the targeted and available sampling, based on Morgan Table. There were used the revised questionnaire of communication patterns (RFCP), self-consciousness scale (SCS) and defense style questionnaire (Defence Style questiinnair-40), in order to collect the data. The obtained data by statistical approach of the Pearson correlation and regression analysis were analyzed simultaneously. The findings showed a significant direct relationship between communication patterns of source family (conformity orientation) with self-consciousness as well as between conversation orientations with defensive style (immature) ( $P < 0.05$ ). There is a reverse significant relationship between communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation) with defensive style (immature) of discordant couples ( $P < 0.05$ ). According to the research results, it can be said that defensive style (immature) of discordant couples will be reduced by developing communication patterns if source family (conversation); and in the other hand, defensive style (mature) of discordant couples will be increased by enhancing self-consciousness.

**Keywords:** communication patterns, defensive styles, discordant couples

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of defense mechanisms was raised by Freud [1]. for the first time in the psychology. He described defense mechanisms as mental operations that keep away the painful thoughts and feelings from consciousness field [2,3,4]. Individuals have different defensive styles, with regard to their used defense mechanism. The defensive style means the used involuntary and unconscious ways by "self" to reduce anxiety and coping with negative emotions through distorting or denying the fact; in this way, he maintains balance and integrity of the character temporarily to find a real solution [3]. People vary in their used certain defense mechanisms that the personality differences are called defensive styles .Therefore, one can resort to a variety of defense mechanisms to avoid and change the vigilance psychiatric fact [5]. Andrews, Singh and Bond [6]. divided defenses into three styles: mature, immature

and neurotic. The mature defenses are more adaptive. The immature defenses include more immature mechanisms and neurotic defenses are less adaptive and in general, they are seen in morbid population.

Contemporary psychoanalysis considers defense mechanisms as part of the normal communication pattern and normal cognitive development that keeps individual's self-esteem and play a role in his adjustment [4,7]. Therefore, it seems necessary to recognize and access to defense mechanisms as one of the fundamental structures of character flowing thought and behavior [8]. In the conducted study by Hibbard et al [9] on a group of men and women, the findings suggest the application of denying in relation to the immature characteristics of personality. Women who use more replication defense report more positive emotions communications [34]. As a result, the following hypotheses have been supported: using immature defenses are consistent with other immature indicators of character; and using mature defenses are related with compatibility and health indicators [10,11].

Defense mechanisms are results of experiences, interactions and human relationships in childhood. Elis [12] and Framo [12] quoted by Seif and Latifian [12] consider the relationship problems of people as reflect of their main family issues. They believe that we cannot clearly see our wife, so we project the images. As a result, the interactions between the mutual projections cause the problems of couples. To explain these factors, some experts consider individual characteristics and current conditions of couples. While, the most important factor creating their current character is communication patterns of source family of each couple that is one of the most important and the most sustainable factors impacting various aspects of life of each person [13,14].

Basically, the concept of family communication pattern or family communication schema, structure is a science of the apparent world of family that is defined based on the relationship between family members, what family members are saying to each other, what they are doing and what is their meaning about the relationships ([15]. Fitzpatrick and Rich [16]. have introduced two concepts of conversation orientation and conformity as two key determinant dimensions how the relationship between family members in this theory . The efficient communication patterns are parts of social skills that an individual practices and learns them in the context of family. Couples require an effective and efficient communication for having a satisfying relationship [18]. Individual characteristics refer to family history, personal and empirical factors that each of couples brings them to their mutual marital relationship [19]. Different studies have shown that one of the most important factors causing problems in joint life is communication disorder, or in other words, disorder in the process of understanding and explanation [20].

Self-consciousness is one of the individual's cognitive components that is formed by affecting the communication patterns. The concept of self-knowledge is a conciliator, scanned and integrator structure that is obtained by developing cognitive structures and processes with their intertwined emotions. It includes perception, attention and awareness in the existential dimensions, attributes, thoughts, feelings, trends and self behavior over time [21]. Morin [22] has defined self-consciousness as an individual capacity to pay attention to him. He believes that self-consciousness is achieved when an individual focuses not on the outside environment, but to the inside. In this study, it has been attempted to examine the relationship between communication patterns of source family in the created self-consciousness and finally, the applied defensive style by individuals in the joint life. In today's complex communication world, achieving the skill of self-consciousness can help significantly couples to improve their relations because the research has proved that creating self-consciousness in the individual can have a permanent impact [10]. It has been affected by social interaction and interpersonal relationships from the earliest years of childhood to adulthood and it is one of the basic requirements of compatibility [21, 12]. Therefore, according to the above-mentioned matters, the research aims to whether there is a relationship between communication patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles of discordant couples.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is descriptive-correlation type. Its population consisted of all discordant couples referred to counseling centers of Mashhad in 2015. Among the referred 140 discordant couples, there were selected 110 discordant couples as the targeted and available sampling, based on Morgan Table. Form 110 distributed questionnaires among discordant couples, there were 100 questionnaires were considered usable and the rest of questionnaires were not used because of deficiency to complete data. There were provided complete descriptions to the participants about the research purpose, how to process the study, how to complete the questionnaires. Then they were asked to answer the questions carefully and in accordance with the provided directions.

### The Research Tools

*The Revised Scale of Communication Patterns (RFCP):* In this scale, participants read 26 items related to the communication method in their family [23] then they determine that how much each sentence is true about them. The scale measures the family communications using a five-point scale from completely similar (score 5) to completely different (score 1). Kooroshnia has reported proper value for validity of Persian version; he identified 0.87 and 0.81 for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for conversation orientation and conformity orientation respectively.

*Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS):* It contains 24 items that the items are answered using the five-point Likert scale from completely agree to completely disagree. Self-consciousness includes three dimensions: private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness and social anxiety. During a study, Latifian and Seif [12] examined the validity of reliability of this scale among students. In their study, evidences of internal correlation between dimensions of the scale are consistent with the obtained findings by Rilo and Elic [24] that showed the constructional validity of this scale. Validity of its three dimensions was confirmed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The obtained coefficients for private self-consciousness, public self-consciousness and social anxiety were 0.71, 0.57 and 0.84 respectively. The coefficients indicated the acceptable internal consistency for score of the scale [12].

*Defensive Styles Questionnaire (Defence Style questiinnair-40):* This questionnaire contains 40 questions that have been made in nine-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Totally, it measures 20 mechanisms in three mature, immature and neurotic defensive styles, so that both questions measure a mechanism. The mature defensive mechanisms include sublimation, suppression, prediction and humor. The immature defensive mechanisms include projection, inactive aggression, outflow, isolation, non-worthiness, autistic fantasy, denial, displacement, twofoldness, somatization and discrimination. The neurotic defensive mechanisms include idealization, inverse reaction, false altruism and cancellation. In Iran, Heidarinasab et al [5] conducted the reliability of this questionnaire. The reliability and the Cronbach's alpha of defensive styles show the highest and the lowest value for the immature defensive styles (0.72) and neurotic style (0.50) respectively. Results of retesting defensive styles show that correlations of all defensive styles in the questionnaire are significant [5] There were used the descriptive statistics (such as tables, frequency, average and standard deviation) and the inferential statistics (such as Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis) to analyze the results. The analyses were performed using SPSS software, version 22.

## RESULTS

In this section, we firstly describe the obtained statistical data from the questionnaire and then according to the type of research is descriptive-correlation, there have been used statistical test of correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis to analyze data and significance of the research hypotheses.

**Table 1. The descriptive indicators related to the studied communication patterns, self-consciousness and defensive styles in discordant couples**

Variables	Frequency	Min.	Max.	Ave	SD
Communication patterns (conformity orientation)	100	4	41	19.58	10.088
Communication patterns (conversation orientation)	100	7	60	40.64	13.172
Self-consciousness	100	34	74	53.27	8.378
Defensive styles (mature)	100	26	66	44.49	9.268
Defensive styles (immature)	100	72	159	104.34	19.159
Defensive styles (neurotic)	100	14	48	33.40	7.432

As seen in Table 1, there have been examined the descriptive indicators (average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) related to communication patterns and self-consciousness with defensive styles in discordant couples.

**Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to examine hypothesis of the variables' normality**

Variables	Statistic value	Sample size	p-value
Communication patterns (conformity orientation)	0.951	100	0.326
Communication patterns (conversation orientation)	0.454	100	0.729
Self-consciousness	0.523	100	0.819
Defensive styles (mature)	0.824	100	0.505
Defensive styles (immature)	0.724	100	0.671
Defensive styles (neurotic)	0.837	100	0.485

Table 2 shows the obtained results to examine hypothesis of the data normality. For this purpose, there was used Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The above results show that due to lack of significant in  $p < 0.05$ , the hypothesis of the data normality is confirmed. Therefore, due to approve the hypothesis of the data normality for all variables, we will use the Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the research hypotheses.

### The Research Hypothesis

*There is a significant relationship between communication patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles in discordant couples*

**Table 3. Correlation matrix between communication patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles in discordant couples**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication patterns (conformity orientation)	1					
Communication patterns (conversation orientation)	-0.35**	1				
Self-consciousness	0.24*	-0.16	1			
Defensive styles (mature)	-0.17	0.28**	0.15	1		
Defensive styles (immature)	0.12	-0.23*	0.24*	0.06	1	
Defensive styles (neurotic)	-0.01	0.13	0.16	0.01	-0.27**	1

\* Significance at level of 0.05

\*\* Significance at level of 0.01

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix between communication patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles in discordant couples. The above Table shows the relationship between communication patterns of source family (conformity orientation) with self-consciousness is significant statistically at the level of  $p < 0.05$ . The relationship between communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation) with defensive styles (mature) is significant statistically at the level of  $p < 0.01$ . The relationship between communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation) with defensive styles (immature) is significant statistically at the level of  $p < 0.05$ . In other words, self-consciousness of discordant couples will be increased by increasing communication patterns of source family (conformity orientation). The defensive styles (immature) of discordant couples will be increased by increasing communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation). The defensive styles (immature) of discordant couples will be reduces by increasing communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation). The defensive styles (immature) of discordant couples will be increased by increasing self-consciousness. As a result, the research hypothesis about the relationship between patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles of discordant couples was confirmed.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the research findings, it can be said in families with dominant communication patterns of source family (conversation orientation) all family members are encouraged to participate freely interact and discuss about a wide range of topics. They interact with each other freely, repeatedly and spontaneously. The family members proposed their individual activities, thoughts and feelings with other members and the members make decisions with each other. The defensive will be increased by developing this pattern (conversation). The grown children in these families will use such a manner in their future interactions. Its reason can be due to the matter that acquisition of these skills in the family causes that people use the mature mechanisms in dealing with the challenges of life stressors, especially in the challenges of joint life. The families with low value in the mechanism have less interaction with each other. They discuss with all family members only about quantitative open issues. In other words, all the family members do not play a role in family decisions. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles of discordant

couples. The research results showed a relationship between patterns of source family and self-consciousness with defensive styles of discordant couples.

The research results are consistent with the theories of Loonich (2004) because he believed that parent-child relationships are strong predictors of children's social communication and sensitivities. There are evidences to confirm the effects of early experiences of life on next social development too [23]. The research results can be consistent with the conducted study by Zare'a, Ahmadi and Sarkhooi [25] on the role of spiritual predictors and communication patterns with marital satisfaction. In this study, among subscales of couple's communication patterns and spiritual intelligence, the subscales of mutual constructive communication and spiritual life had the greatest prediction in the dependent variable variance marital satisfaction. Its reason can be the matter that unhappy marital relationships often are the results of negative communication patterns. As mentioned earlier, the heritage is granted to individuals by their family. In a study, Guttman [26]. showed that using couples from the pattern of expectation, withdraw and avoidance in their relationships affects their mental health and decreases marital satisfaction; it can predict divorce emerge. The research results can be consistent with the conducted study by Abolghasemi, Kiamrsi and Agh [23]. on the relationship between religious behaviors and self-consciousness with cognitive defects in the middle-aged. They found a negative relationship between religious behaviors and self-consciousness with cognitive defects. Their research results indicate that religious behaviors and self-consciousness will decrease cognitive defects.

Many studies have shown that the effective marital relationship is a strong predictor of marital quality [27]; and in contrast, the ineffective marital relationship is the major source of discontents [26] that it results to incompatibility between couples. The importance of considering communication patterns is not more practical for its influence on marital satisfaction, but in changing communication patterns in compared with other factors affecting marital discord such as personality traits and social and economic conditions [28]. If families want emerging the effective defense styles for their children, they should be flexible in their relationships with them. They also should prepare conditions for comfort conversation with their children about a wide range of issues and avoid imposing their ideas and attitudes on them and force them to accept family principles unquestionably because its damage consequences will be more than its advantages.

Morin [22] believes that self-consciousness is achieved when an individual focuses not on the outside environment, but to the inside. In such conditions, it can be said that the person is a thinker observer who processes individual information. It is necessary to mention that the skill will be delivered to the person through family and common communication patterns in the family. The results of the conducted research by Kord and Pasha Sharifi quoted by Yousefpoor et al [28] considered self-consciousness skill in the first priority of life skills. The skill of self-consciousness is related with the ability to recognize thoughts, beliefs, emotions, personality traits, personal values, habits, biases, strengths, weaknesses and psychological needs, which cause our behaviors. The skill includes the recognize ability that how we respond to environmental cues and how our emotions affect our approach to interact with others [29]. Its reason can be the matter that using self-consciousness, we try to communicate exactly with what we already feel. According to the mentioned studies, the cognitive processes have a direct relationship with the adopted defensive methods by individuals. Therefore, the relationship between self-knowledge with the used defensive methods was another objective of the present study. the conducted studies by Leventhal, Brown, Shacham and Engquist [30], quoted by Shah Mohammadi et al and Jonson quoted by Shah Mohammadi et al show that people with high self-consciousness can use appropriate defensive mechanisms due to manage their internal states; while , people with low self-consciousness will be upset due to use inappropriate defensive mechanisms. They will involve in their problems and use inefficient defensive mechanisms. The obtained findings by Gibbons, Shcier, Caver and Hormouth quoted by Shah Mohammadi et al (2009) show that people with high self-consciousness are more sensitive to their body internal changes and they evaluate themselves more accurately. It is possible that understanding the information aspects of stressful stimuli leads to a correct non-emotional and non-threatening interpretation. The consequence of such a control will be the adjustment of emotional practical responses (such as exercise and proper planning for life) and cognitive reassessment. In contrast, people with low self-consciousness are unable to understand and recognize themselves and do the ill-considered actions unconsciously. They not to plan and solve their physical and mental problems, but they may consider denied and avoidance approaches. The consequences of such confusion and lack of knowledge about themselves is more drowning in problems and set up inefficient defensive mechanisms. The research results are consistent with the obtained results by Ralph and Pearson [31] about better solving interpersonal problems and conflicts with training self-consciousness, as well as with the

conducted research by Mayer quoted by Yosefpoor et al that indicate people with high self-consciousness will control their excitements during severe anxiety [28].

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