

The relationship between personality traits and situational anxiety about marriage in young people at the age of marriage

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Suggested Citation:

Shams, Z. (2018). The relationship between personality traits and situational anxiety about marriage in young people at the age of marriage. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools*. 8(2), 86-91.

Received from July 10, 2017; revised from September 05, 2017; accepted from August, 02, 2018.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Kobus Maree, University of Pretoria South Africa

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Abstract

This study was carried out with the aim of investigating the relationship between personality traits and situational anxiety about marriage in young people at the age of marriage. Correlational-descriptive research design was used for this study. Fifty young adults between 19 and 35 years residing in Tehran, after receiving information about research goals and giving their consent to participation, completed the NEO Five-Factor Inventory and situational anxiety questionnaire. Multiple correlation and multiple regression matrices were used for analysing the obtained data. The results indicated a positive correlation between situational anxiety and neuroticism (N), and a significant negative relationship between situational anxiety and extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). Thus, the personality traits (OCEAN) were able to predict situational anxiety in young people at the age of marriage.

Keywords: Personality traits, situational anxiety, marriage.

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1. Introduction

Most of the mental, physical and emotional needs of human are met through healthy marriage, and usually those who have successful marriage are more purposeful, cheerful and healthier than single ones or those who have failed in their own marriages. Marriage, as a primal and natural right of humankind, contains certain rules and following them brings about satisfaction (Rostami, Saadati & Navvabinejad, 2016). Inability to cope with anxiety and phobia of marriage may progress to getting paranoid about it. Some young people concentrate on joint life problems, or probable divorce and subsequent pain and suffering than love and intimacy. Therefore, the anxiety before marriage is quite natural and any young person depending on the conditions of his or her life may experience it before marriage. But sometimes this anxiety may be so intensive that lead to conflict and problem between couples. Usually, a couple who experiences anxiety is very vulnerable. Therefore, if she/he is not understood by her/his partner, it is likely that the conflicts result in misunderstanding and hurt. However, sometimes arguments appear so unsolvable and crucial that may lead to break up (Abdokht, 2005). Because the pre-wedding period has its own particular problems and stresses, coping with pre-marriage anxiety becomes difficult. Anxiety can have different physical and emotional symptoms including difficulty in sleeping, concentrating and eating. The anxious person usually breaths quickly and his heart rate goes high. He or she also may feel dizzy and nauseous. She or he may become upset for no reason and feel emotionally and socially rejected by others. This problem may get worse during the pre-marriage period when emotional effects can separate couples. Some studies have also examined the role of personality traits in the intimate relationships and marriage, and their importance to and role in many areas such as mate selection, marital satisfaction and permanence of marriage has been confirmed (Jebraeily, Zadehmohammadi, Heidari & Habibi, 2014). Furthermore, for many years there have been controversies over the meaning of personality, and scholars have suggested several definitions. Although there is no single definition, in general, personality is relatively permanent patterns of characteristics, features or trends that make the behaviour of individual endure to some extent. More specifically, personality consists of features or tendencies that result in individual differences in behaviour, behavioural stability during treatment and behavioural continuity in different situations (Costa & McCrae, 1990). McCrae and Costa (1985) characterised personality as consisting of five main elements neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness while considering each of them as a product of six features. In recent decades, the role of personality traits in interpersonal situations, specially emotional and intimate relationships of couples, has been considered. Research has shown that personality traits are the most important factors affecting establishing and keeping intimate relationships, and are important to mate selection (Barelds, 2005). Studies have also shown that individuals tend to choose someone similar to themselves as mates (Botwin, Buss & Shackelford, 1997). In addition, characteristics like shyness and social anxiety may interfere with intimate relationships, while features such as agreeableness, emotional stability and openness are preferred potentially in a mate (Jebraeily et al., 2014). Kimmelmeier, Danilson and Batten (2005) in their research emphasised that everyone has equipped with a psychological structures and special features for socialising and confronting with different persons and situations that affect interpersonal relationships in different situations. Therefore, this study is of great importance for several reasons: several studies confirmed the effect of personality traits on romantic and intimate relationships and consequently on selection of a mate and marriage; the importance of investigating mate selection as a foundation of family establishment; the importance of the criteria of this selection to probable success or failure of marriage according to personality traits (Rostami et al., 2016); and lack of a study on relationship between personality traits and situational anxiety about marriage in young people. The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between these variables and to answer whether there is a relationship between personality traits and situational anxiety about marriage in young people.

2. Method

The statistical method of this study is descriptive and correlational. Samples were selected after receiving information about research goals and giving their consent to collaborate with the researcher. First, 50 participants were recruited amongst young adults between 19 and 35 years residing in Tehran. Then, NEO personality characteristics and situational anxiety questionnaires were completed by participants. Data analysis was performed using *SPSS Statistics V22.0*. In order to specify the relationship between personality characteristics and situational anxiety in young adults at the age of marriage, Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regressions were used.

2.1. Neo five factor questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Costa, McCrae and Dye (1991). According to this model, personality consists of five main dimensions, neuroticism (N), extroversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C), based on a well-known personality pattern called the Five Factor Model, each factor consisting of 12 items, altogether were 60 items. The responses were measured by Likert scale (totally disagreeing, disagreeing, indifferent, agreeing and totally agreeing). The NEO Personality Inventory was used by McCrae and Costa (1985) for 208 American students in a 3-month period, with coefficients ranging from 0.83 to 0.75. Costa and McCrae (1998) reported in the test guide extensive information about convergent and divergent validity of NEO. In MMPI, with regard to personality scales, the correlation of obsessive-compulsive scale to anxiety subscale of NEO scale, boundary scale to aggression subscale, avoiding scale to shyness subscale and the schizoid scale to collectivism were 0.51, 0.70, 0.58 and 0.66 respectively. In Zabihi and Ramedani's (2016) research Cronbach's alpha for neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness subscales were calculated as 0.99, 0.82, 0.70, 0.72 and 0.71, respectively.

2.2. Situational anxiety questionnaire

Spielberger Standard Anxiety Inventory, developed by him in 1973, contains 23 multiple-choice questions that are scored in Likert type and rating from 1 to 6. Some questions, depending on their content, are scored reversely. The validity of the Persian version of the Spielberger Inventory was measured using the norm group and criterion group and comparing the average scores of them (Bech, Gormsen, Loldrup & Lunde, 2009). The reliability was also calculated using the Cronbach's alpha formula as 0.9 (Ali abadi, 2010).

3. Findings

The mean and standard deviation of the participants' age was 3.32 ± 2.22 . The minimum and maximum ages of the samples were 22 and 39 years, respectively. The descriptive index and correlation matrix factors of personality traits and situational anxiety scores of participants are presented in Table 1. Also in Table 2, multivariate regression results have been reported to predict situational anxiety according to personality traits.

Table 1. Correlation matrix of personality traits and situational anxiety correlations

Variable	Average	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
Neuroticism (N)	17.82	4.28	1					
Extraversion (E)	18.16	3.47	0.76**	1				
Openness (O)	17.50	3.62	0.54**	0.80**	1			
Agreeableness (A)	16.74	3.17	0.74**	0.90**	0.73**	1		
Conscientiousness (C)	17.03	3.43	0.67**	0.90**	0.64**	0.77**	1	
Situational anxiety	57.73	9.43	0.70**	0.89**	0.64**	0.74**	0.76**	1

* $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$.

The results of Table 1 show that the highest 18/16 (3/47) and the lowest 16/74 (3.17) averages are related to extraversion (E) and agreeableness (A), respectively. Also, there is a positive relationship between situational anxiety and neuroticism (N), and a significant negative relationship between situational anxiety and extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C).

Table 2. Summary of multiple regression coefficients to predict situational anxiety according to personality traits

Predictor variable	Criterion variable	R	R ²	F	Sig	B	Beta	T	Sig
Constant value	Situational anxiety					52.29	-	6.96	0.000
Neuroticism (N)						1.15	0.28	3.19	0.002
Extraversion (E)									
Openness (O)		0.30	0.09	2.07	0.01	-0.67	-0.20	-02.22	0.02
Agreeableness (A)						-0.84	-0.19	-2.05	0.04
Conscientiousness (c)						-1.11	-0.19	-2.43	0.01

The results of Table 2 show that R^2 value in personality traits is equal to 0.30 which indicates that 30% of changes in the situational anxiety index depend on predictor variables (personality traits) in the dependent participants. Also, considering the value of beta coefficients for neuroticism (N) with ($B = 0.25$, $P = 0.02$), extraversion (E) ($B = 0.28$, $P = 0.002$), openness (O) ($B = -0.20$, $P = 0.02$), agreeableness (A) ($B = -0.19$, $P = 0.04$) and conscientiousness (C) ($B = 0.19$, $P = 0.01$) the variables are able to predict situational anxiety.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The historical experience of countries and societies in the contemporary era indicates an increase in the median age for marriage. This increase amongst women has been much more than men. Iran, like other regions of the world, has witnessed the same increase and modern marriages have taken place at later in life (Rostami et al., 2016). Considering the importance of marriage and family establishment for individuals lives and increasing the population of eligible young men and women for marriage in the country, study on changes in the age of marriage and its impact on the mental health of young people and thus recognising the effective causes of it both scholarly and functionally is of great importance in economic and social planning, and even in national and local psychology. Therefore, in the present study, personality traits and situational anxiety with regard to the men and women at the age of marriage in Tehran have been investigated.

The results of this study showed a positive relationship between situational anxiety and neuroticism (N), and a significant negative relationship between situational anxiety and extraversion (E), openness (O), agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C). Also, considering beta coefficients of neuroticism (N) ($B = 0.28$, $P = 0.002$), extraversion (E) ($B = 0.25$, $P = 0.02$), openness (O) ($B = -0.20$, $P = 0.02$), agreeableness (A) ($B = -0.19$, $P = 0.04$) and conscientiousness (C) ($B = 0.19/0-$, $P = 0.01$), these variables are capable to predict situational anxiety, being supported the effect of them on the anxiety and mate and marriage by various studies. Hence, neuroticism is related to individuals' trend to experience anxiety, tension, pity seeking, hostility, impulsivity, depression and low self-esteem. Findings of various studies have shown that people with high neuroticism exhibit more negative behaviours and emotions in problem-solving situations in comparison with those who have low neuroticism. These scholars believe that such features are likely to increase divorce and separation. The results of Bogeller and Shilling's research on the role of personality traits in dealing with life's tensions showed that there is a correlation between neuroticism with interpersonal conflicts and general hurts. Also, openness is related to the person's trend to forgiveness, kindness, generosity, empathy, sympathy, altruism and gain trust. Many scholars believe that openness is an intrapersonal

process that has an important impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships (Jebraeily et al., 2014).

In addition, conscientiousness is related to the person's trend to orderliness, efficacy, reliability and self-reliance, self-regulation, progressiveness, reasonableness and calmness. The likeness theory in mate selection states that individuals choose someone as a mate who has similar characteristics to their own. If it were true, the conscientious person should prefer someone with the same characteristic as his or her spouse. In general, it can be said that to be entered to the academic and business fields has challenged men and women's ability to keep work-family balance (Milliken, Martins & Morgan, 1998). Although it has contributed to a more dynamic environment and society, it has caused to experience conflicts between work, education and family in a broad level, and delaying marriage timeline increases doubts and anxieties over marriage (Siegel, Post, Brockner, Fishman & Garden, 2005). Hence, getting a good and positive marriage requires the knowledge of self, of personality traits and of current status, and standing of the person. Lack of knowledge about self and personality traits is one of the factors that can lead to situational anxiety about marriage. As in some cases, despite suitable occasion and person with the right qualities and mood and personality for marriage, because of lack of knowledge they make wrong decision or show indecision. This indecisiveness, uncertainty and inability to choice and ultimately loneliness and singleness may decrease the mental health of young people. Many philosophical, religious and psychological views emphasise the importance of identifying the personality traits to protect and promote the individual's psychological well-being at the time of marriage and future mate selection (Rostami et al., 2016).

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