

Comparison of differentiation rate and patterns of coping skills between single and dual working couples

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ABSTRACT

Today, the sumptuous life, high level of expectations, the change in gender roles, etc. have collectively led to more manifestation of dual working couples in today's societies, more than ever. Undoubtedly, it has advantages and disadvantages whose features require to be better recognized for having a healthy family. The current study has aimed at comparison between the differentiation and the patterns of coping skills among the single and dual working couples in Kalat City. In the current study, the four components of differentiation and eight components of coping skills patterns have been investigated. 146 couples who were teachers, were chosen (60 dual working couples and 86 single working couples) through simple random sampling method. The data collection instruments were a 46-item questionnaire of DSI (Differentiation of Self Index), and the questionnaire of Lazarus and Folkman (CSQ). The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used for data analysis. The results indicated that working status (single and dual working couples) has no significant effects on the differentiation variables (the significance level is 0.14 which is >0.05); however, it has a significant effect on the coping skills patterns (with a significance level of 0.004 which is <0.05). The investigations indicated that there is no difference between the single and dual working couples in terms of differentiation level. Also, there is a significant difference in coping skills patterns between the dual and single working couples, in escape-avoidance component between the men and women married to a working spouse, and the men and women married to a housewife. The dual working couples use problem-focused coping skills patterns in the stressful situations, which can be due to the skills acquired through working in the society. Also, in specific components of differentiation, the training and skill learning are required.

Keywords: differentiation, coping skills patterns, dual working couples, single working couples.

Introduction

Psychologists define the system of family as a supporting and loving environment for the family members. If the family is involved with the struggles, malfunction, and internal violence among the members, it would lose its position as an emotional-psychological base for its members, and the morbid relationships resulted from intra-family struggles would directly lead to, and distort the emotional and psychological stability of the family members, preparing the grounds for affliction of them by the mental disorders. According to Bronphen Bronz (1995), the behavioral interactions among the couples is one of

the important instruments though which, the immediate environment affects the children's mental growth, as the conflict between the parents can lead to the physical damage to the familial relationships and the parenting behaviors. Thus, one of the indirect processes is the effect of the conflict, distortion, or collapse in the familial relationships. When the system of the family has a healthy function, the family members make a coherent and integrated group, but under the stress and pressure, the balance of familial relationships is lost ^[1].

Buen believes that there is a type of chronic anxiety in the lives of all creatures, which is an inevitable part of the nature, as the family is constantly struggling with creating a balance between the sense of being together and the unity between his own 'self' and the members. He, through expressing the term 'differentiation of self', has expressed this concept to a high extent. The differentiation is the individual's ability to express his personal beliefs and feelings, while he listens to the others and is emotionally tied to them. This concept includes the decisions based on the thinking without anxiety, instead of absolute reactions ^[2]. The degree of manifestation of differentiation of self in each individual indicates his ability to

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distinguish between the intellectual process and the emotional process he goes through, i.e. the degree of individual's ability to avoid the spontaneous adherence of the behaviors to feelings, and being indicative of the extent of differentiation of the self. Here, the desired perfection is not to be a distant and soulless person, highly apathetic and objective, but we are supposed to opt for a balance and find a personal definition and identity. The main objective of differentiation of self is to create a balance between the feelings and the perception^[3].

Whether the individual distinguished himself from his original family and how he succeeds in doing so, depends on the emotional process within the family, i.e. the emotional forces within the family being active in the framework of repetitive patterns, for years^[4]. Theoretically, there are at least four factors affecting the degree of differentiation of self^[5], and consequently the emotional process within the family. 1) Emotional reactivity: when the emotions overcome the thoughts and bury the personal individualism in it, 2) emotional separation: when the family members avoid each other physically or mentally, due to an unsolved emotional attachment, 3) fusion with others: merging the intellectual and emotional functions in a way that individual has no clear feeling of himself or others, 4) I place: adoption of I place and speaking in a way that the individual expresses his feelings and thoughts in personal and responsibly manner, so he would encourage the others to express their ideas^[6]. The undifferentiated people get excited more easily, and their lives are affected by reacting to others. The differentiated person is able to create a balance between thinking and feeling. On the contrary, the undifferentiated usually react to others hesitantly, through obeying or disobeying. They have problem in maintaining their autonomy, especially in the subjects related to anxiety^[4].

With the expansion of technology and transition from the traditional society to the industrial one, the difficulties and sufferings of human have been increased, and complications such as anxiety, depression, suicide, addiction, divorce, leaving school, sense of worthlessness, etc. are seen more than ever. Parallel to these complications, the psychologists and researchers have offered great ways to people seeking health, which provide their mental health^[7]. One of the fundamental factors of mental health is the coping skills. From the Lazarous and Folkman (1984) point of view, coping is the intellectual, emotional, and behavioral efforts of the individual when facing the mental pressures in order to overcome, tolerate, or minimize the stress complications^[8]. The strategies for coping the stress are divided to two general categories as problem-focused and emotion-focused. It is believed that people use both coping styles when facing the situations. If the coping is focused on the task to ameliorate the emotional pressures, it would be known as the emotion-based coping, and if the individual tries to change the factors creating these factors, they are known as the problem-based coping^[9].

Today, the high costs of living, the rise in expectations, the change in gender roles, etc. have led to the manifestation of the dual working couples in today's societies, more than ever.

Undoubtedly, there are advantages and disadvantages in the lives of couples with both spouses working. The sense of self-esteem of having an independent job, enriching the relationship through supporting the spouse, and a proper financial condition are among the advantages of the lives of dual working couples^[10]. Besides these cases, the complications and congestion in familial roles, problems in children upbringing, and the lack of time of being together are among the disadvantages of the lives of dual working couples. In addition to these cases, the dual working couples are naturally exposed to tenser and more anxious situations compared to the single working couples. What is debatable here is the reaction of the couples to these situations. Each of the individuals have had a family pre-marriage, and these families have had unique situations and environments. Naturally, each of them have found familiar ways to cope with anxious and stressful situations in their original families, and used the strategies they have learned in their original families to get out of situations. Many people might use the same ways they have learned in their original families, to get out of these situations, before they make an independent family. The stressful situation of the married life, besides the stressful job situations, have led to creation of a new marital identity by the dual working couples, in the 21st century^[10].

Based on what was mentioned, the current study has aimed at comparison of the differentiation level and coping skills patterns between the dual and single working couples.

Methodology:

The current study is of a causal-comparative (post-event) type. The statistical population of the study includes all the dual and single working couples in the Education Department of Kalat City. The sampling method was of availability sampling type with regards to the objectives of the study and the existing limitations such as the low number of dual working couples working in Kalat City's Department of Education. Therefore, all the dual working couples teaching in the Kalat City (60 couples) were chosen as the samples. On the other hand, there were 110 single working couples among which 86 were chosen as the samples by the simple random sampling method, and through the use of Morgan table.

Instrument:

Two questionnaires were used for data collection in the current study: 1- The DSI questionnaire: this questionnaire included 43 items, and was developed by Skowron and Friedlander in 1998. This questionnaire includes 4 micro-scales as emotional reactivity, I place, emotional separation, and fusion with others, in a 6-item Likert scale. The emotional reactivity (11 items) is indicative of a degree to which the reacts to the environmental stimulus with an excessive sensitivity or emotional variability. The I place (11 items) besides clearly defining the self's feeling, determines the degree of loyalty to the personal beliefs when the individual is faced with the beliefs contrary to those of his own. The emotional separation (12 items) is indicative of a

sense of fear from intimacy and feeling too vulnerable to others. Finally, the fusion with others (9 items) is indicative of involvement with highly emotional relationship with others. An acceptable internal consistency for the DSI and all the four micro-scales was reported. The Cronbach's alpha estimate for DSI was 0.88, and it was 0.84, 0.83, 0.82, and 0.74 for emotional reactivity, I Place, emotional separation, and fusion with others, respectively [5]. In the Najafloei's study, the Cronbach's alphas score for the questionnaire's scales were as follows: the total DIS score was 0.72, for the emotional reactivity it was 0.81, for the I Place it was 0.64, for the emotional separation it was 0.76, and for the fusion with others, it was 0.79.

2- Coping Skills Questionnaire of Lazarus and Folkman (CSQ): this questionnaire included 66 questions which were scored based on a 4-degree Likert scale. This questionnaire is divided to two general strategies as problem-focused and emotion-focused. It also included 8 subscales as follows: 1- direct coping, 2- distancing, 3- self-control, 4- seeking social support, 5- accepting responsibility, 6- escape-avoidance, 7- planned problem solving, and 8- positive reappraisal. Lazarus (1998) reported the inner stability of the subscales to be 0.66 for the problem-focused strategies, and 0.79 for the emotion-focused strategies, calculated by the Cronbach's alpha. Alipour et al. (2011) also reported the reliability of this test to be 0.85 [11].

In order to conduct this study, firstly a briefing was held for the authorities in Kalat City's Education Department in the form of research council, aiming to familiarize the teachers with the objectives and procedure of this research plan, and obtaining the required permissions. Then, after arranging with the authorities, the couples in the statistical population were invited to a meeting to participate in a briefing meeting for familiarizing with the conducting procedure. In this meeting, the DSI and CSQ questionnaires were filled out by all the participators.

Findings:

In order to analyze the data and generalize the results, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used, since it makes it possible to compare the groups after statistical monitoring the role of other variables such as the age and pretest scores.

Table 1: The demographic attributes

Components	Index	Male	Female
		Frequency (percentage)	Frequency (percentage)
Education level	Diploma and lower	(4/8)7	(4/8)7
	Associate degree	(6/5)9	(17/7)26
	Master's	(8/1)12	(35/5)52
	Bachelor	(80/6)118	(41/9)61
	Total	(100)146	(100)146
Age status	Average age	37/71	34/90
	Lowest age	26	20
	Highest age	51	51
Duration of	Average	12/49	

marriage	Lowest duration	1
	Highest duration	30
Number of children	Age average	1/77
	Lowest number	0
	Highest number	4
	Total number of children	258

Table 2: The descriptive indices of the two groups in differentiation and coping skills

	Single working		Dual working		F ratio	Significance level	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation			
Differentiation	Emotional reactivity	80	9/45	78/75	10/80	1/29	260/
	I Place	82/33	13/16	86/03	9/92	950/	330/
	Emotional separation	80/83	8/71	85/94	11/01	1/93	160/
	Fusion with others	66/13	10/05	66/06	7/15	3/55	060/
	Total score	309/30	30/53	316/78	25/53	540/	460/
Coping skills	Social support	34/30	5/004	31/72	5/207	0/18	0/66
	Accepting responsibility	21/90	3/089	22/69	3/468	0/066	0/79
	Problem solving	33/67	4/172	32/97	6/856	0/51	0/47
	Reappraisal	39/13	5/111	36/72	5/101	0/008	0/92
	Direct confrontation	26/50	4/032	28/63	3/740	0/94	0/33
	Distancing	28/77	5/124	29/59	3/732	2/18	0/15
	Escape-avoidance	30/10	5/248	34/81	6/056	0/70	0/40
	Self-control	37/13	4/740	36/75	4/565	0/011	0/91

The hypothesis of equity of variances in all the dependent variables has been respected for both groups since the significance levels are higher than 0.05 for all the variables (the maximum possibility of committing a type 1 error).

Table 3: Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)

Wilks' s Lambda effect	F statistics	Inter-group degree of freedom	Intra-group degree of freedom	Significance level	Eta-squared
Differentiation	1/792	4	57	0/14	0/11
Coping skills	3/24	8	53	0/004	0/32

The results indicate that the working status (the single or dual working couples) has no significant effects on the differentiation variables (a significance level of 0.14 which is above 0.05); however, it has significant effects on the coping skills (a significance level of 0.004 which is below 0.05).

Table 4: Inter-group effects test

Source of changes	Dependent variable(s)	Mean squares	Degree of freedom	F Statistics	Degree of freedom	Eta-squared
Differentiation group membership	Emotional reactivity	24/19	1	0/23	0/63	0/004
	1 Place	211/73	1	1/57	0/21	0/026
	Emotional separation	403/39	1	4/06	0/04	0/063
	Fusion with others	0/07	1	0/001	0/97	0/000
	Total score	866/61	1	1/10	0/29	0/018
Coping skills group membership	Social support	103/167	1	3/951	0/51	0/062
	Accepting responsibility	9/602	1	8/87	3/50	0/015
	Problem solving	7/542	1	2/31	6/33	0/004
	Reappraisal	90/274	1	3/463	0/68	0/05
	Direct confrontation	69/919	1	4/636	0/35	0/072
	Distancing	10/592	1	5/33	4/68	0/009
	Escape-avoidance	343/860	1	10/659	0/002	0/15
	Self-control	2/275	1	1/05	7/74	0/002

Discussion and Conclusion:

The concept of differentiation includes the decisions based on a thinking without anxiety, instead of absolute reactions, and it is able to create a balance between thinking and feeling. The undifferentiated people get excited more easily, and their lives are affected by reacting to others. They usually react to others hesitantly and through obeying or disobeying. They also have problems in maintaining their autonomy.

The first hypothesis of the current study was that there is a significant difference between dual and single working couples

in differentiation levels. The type of the group (single working or dual working) as the independent variable, has no statistically significant effects on the five dependent variables, since the related significance level, which is 0.14, is higher than 0.05. Also, the findings in Table 4 show that group membership (single or dual working couples) as the independent variable, has no significant effects on any of the dependent variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is approved and the opposite hypothesis is rejected, i.e. the difference created between average scores of the two groups in the dependent variables, as is claimed by the null hypothesis, is due to the chance or the measurement error, and not created by the independent variable. Therefore, between the single working couples and the dual working couples, there is no significant differences in any of the differentiation subscales, and the difference created can be due to the chance, or measurement error. Elaborating this phenomenon, the teaching job itself can be mentioned as one of the most trusted jobs in the country, and it has led to the reduction in job-related anxiety and stress in the education departments, which helps with the decrease in couples differentiation and their equity. These results are in lines with those of Heill, Huasty, and Moore (2011) and Ariamanesh, Fallah, and Zarei (2012), in which there were no significant differences observed in differentiation between the men and women with marital satisfaction^[12, 13]. Also, it is manifested in the research by Lavasani, Bakhshayesh, and Teymouri (2016).

The second hypothesis of the research was that there is a difference in coping skills between the single and dual working couples. The investigations showed that the assumption of the equity of variances is true for all the dependent variables, since the significance levels for all the variables were above 0.05, and it means that the variance or dispersion of the scores of the both groups is met in all dependent variables. The findings indicate that generally, working status of the couples (single or dual working) as the independent variable, has a significant statistical effect on the coping skills patterns since the related significance level, which is 0.004, is lower than 0.05. The type of group as the independent variable, has a significant effect only on the variables of accepting responsibility, problem solving, reappraisal, and the self-control. Therefore, in relation to these variables, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is approved. In analyzing the descriptive data obtained from the working couples, the average score in problem solving, reappraisal, and self-control was higher for the single working couples, while, it was lower for accepting responsibility in this group, and there is a significant difference only in this subscale. Working is an effective factor in choosing the coping skill pattern. These results are in line with those of Mohammadi, Khoshkonesh, and Zade Mohammadi (2014) study which was conducted on the teachers, addressing the coping strategies^[14]. Through a more detailed investigation of this subject, it was revealed that the use of problem-focused coping skills is more common among the working couples, compared to the emotion-focused skills, which is indicative of the fact that the couples, due to being present in the society,

have learned more problem solving skills when facing the problems.

Regarding the numerous financial problems in today's society, some of the youth who want to get married, in order to be able to cope with financial problems, and reach their goals, try to find a spouse who, like themselves, tries to solve the financial problems, and seek to find a working spouse. On the other hand, most of the single girls, after graduating from the university, and due to awareness of the fact that by having a job, the possibility of being chosen, or choosing an ideal spouse is significantly increased, look for a working position in the society. Definitely, through recognition and awareness of the effects of job on the intra- and inter-personal relationships of the couples, we can help with preparation, anticipation, and training of the couples who want to make a successful marital relationship. Undoubtedly, the marital satisfaction is the most important and fundamental factor in sustainability and durability of marital life. It exists when the existing status of marital relationships are in lines with the expected status. In case the couples succeed to increase the level of satisfaction in marital life, they would be able to keep the family from the damages (2012). The differentiation components as the predictors of the level of marital satisfaction ^[15] can make it possible to increase the satisfaction and quality of marital life and decrease the struggles, through training and awareness ^[16].

Research Limitations:

- 1- Numerous variables affect the results, and the researcher cannot control all of them.
- 2- Lack of attention and impatience of the participators in responding to the high number of the two questionnaires in spite of the researcher's explanations in the meeting were also among the limitations.
- 3- The statistical population of the study includes all the teachers in Kalat City, and absolutely, there are differences between the different cities of the country in the culture, traditions, and financial-social status. Therefore, regarding the cultural and domestic effects of each region, contemplation in generalization of the findings is required. The results would be probably different.
- 4- Regarding the newness of the subject of the study, and lack of direct research on the hypotheses, both internally and externally, and lack of the sufficient related literature in this filed, the researcher faced complications in adopting the results.

Research Suggestions:

Based on the results obtained from the study, it is suggested that:

- 1- To use other questionnaires in the field of coping skills can be effective on citation of results on coping skills.
- 2- Based on the results obtained, it is suggested to conduct empirical studies on Buen theory, and investigate the methods for increasing the differentiation.

- 3- A study on broader populations, different from the population of teachers is suggested.
- 4- It is suggested to study the differentiation training effectiveness on other life variables.

Applied Suggestions:

It is suggested that counsellors in the counselling centers, through passing a training course in differentiation, use this educational method in their clinics. Since in Iran, the people are highly involved in their core family emotional system, and intentionally or unintentionally are affected by it, the implementation of this program can be generally an effective step to help with the people's differentiation. Also, in terms of coping skills patterns, through training these patterns, the challenges in spouses' relationships can be reduced. Moreover, the researcher suggests that domestic treatment programs of coping skills and differentiation be codified for the individuals and families, and through implementation in pilot studies, obviate their shortcomings and strengthen the strong points.

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