

Role of Personality Characteristics and Family Communication Patterns in Predicting Couple Burnout among Employee in Iranian Oil Terminals Co

Zari Ahmadi^{1*}, Foroeddin Adl, Asghar²

1. Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch, Roudehen, Iran

2. Islamic Azad University, Roudehen Branch, Roudehen, Iran

*Corresponding author Department of Psychology, Roudehen Branch University, Islamic Azad, Roudehen, Iran
E-mail: zahmadi44@gmail.com

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Abstract

Introduction: Couple burnout is a state of physical, emotional and psychological exhaustion, which is associated with marital dissatisfaction that ultimately leads to divorce. The present study explores personality characteristics as well as the role of family communication patterns in predicting couple burnout among the staff working in Iranian Oil Terminals Co.

Methods: This research utilizes a correlational, descriptive method. In doing so, a total of 200 staff was selected using simple random sampling. Participants completed questionnaires concerning couple burnout, personality characteristics, and couples' communication patterns. With respect to data analysis, the study employs correlational coefficient and multiple regression analysis.

Results: The findings suggest that except for "openness", other personality dimensions are significantly correlated with couple burnout. Accordingly, neuroticism has a positive correlation with couple burnout while extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness have a negative correlation with couple burnout. Moreover, there is a significant correlation between communication patterns and couple burnout. Mutual constructive communication has a negative correlation and the other three subscales have positive significant correlations.

Conclusion: Overall, data analysis indicates that both personality characteristics and family communication patterns are significantly correlated with couple burnout ($p < 0.01$). It is important to note that couple burnout among the working staff is predicted based on both personality characteristics and family communication patterns ($p < 0.01$).

Declaration of Interest: None.

Key words: Couple burnout, Family communication patterns, Personality characteristics, Couple burnout, Family communication patterns.

Introduction

Couple burnout is often defined as either a state or a process of exhaustion, bearing a similarity to the processes of extinguishing the fire or quenching the candle flame (citation). Individuals start their marriage life based on certain assumptions in their minds at an earlier time. However, once they realize their

expectations are no longer in line with reality they gradually begin to experience exhaustion, annoyance, and, eventually, burnout (1).

Couple burnout does not occur overnight, it is a gradual loss of emotional attachment and love by one partner for the other that gives way to both exhaustion and disappointment. The process, as a kind of physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion, occurs, more likely, on the grounds of long-term

involvement with emotional demands (2). According to the aforementioned definition, physical exhaustion may be associated with symptoms such as lack of energy, chronic fatigue, weakness as well as a large variety of physical and psychosomatic complaints. While emotional exhaustion involves the feelings of helplessness together with disappointment, mental exhaustion elevates negative attitudes toward life, job, and even one's self (3).

Communication style plays a critical role in the context of marital relationship. Over 90 percent of distressed couples identify inability to communicate as the primary issue in their marital relationship (4). In other words, interpersonal relationships serve as the basis of identity and human perfection, as well as creating a primal bond between the individual and others. Effective communications, thus, pave the way for prosperity, better marital relations, and satisfaction with life (5). Therefore, identifying and describing family communication patterns (i.e. channels through which couples interact with each other), could play a significant role in predicting life satisfaction among couples as well as related recommendations and prescriptions (6). Family communication patterns refer to how couple communicates to gain a shared understanding of thoughts and making decisions (7). A shared understanding of communication patterns is in fact a clarification of positive relationships between couples which helps them in resolving marital problems and gaining communication skills (8). Personality characteristics could be deemed as patterns for predicting both the spouses' behavior and the ways of coping with their anxiety; as an essential factors, personality and individual differences indicate the reason why some spouses get along with conditions and variables of marriage life better than others, not to mention enjoying different levels of motivation together with marital satisfaction (9).

Personality is defined as a dynamic organization within the individual that involves both psychological and physiological systems, determining particular thoughts and behaviors (citation). Apart from childhood experiences, personality is the product of both

heredity and environment (10). The research conducted by Babai Givi, Nazari, and Mohsenzadeh on "A Comparison of Psychological Well-being and Marital Burnout and their Dimensions among Employed and Unemployed Women" only reports a significant difference between employment status of women with respect to burnout (11). Adib Rad explores the link between the relationship beliefs and marital disaffection and compares the results with two groups: women who are getting a divorce and those who attempt to marry. The findings of the aforementioned study show this meaningful difference between both marital disaffection and relationship beliefs in these two groups (12).

Fatehi Zadeh and Ahmadi, investigated the relationship between marital communication patterns as well as marital satisfaction among the employed spouses working in the University of Isfahan; the contribution of this study supports the fact that women's group has the highest correlation between mutual constructive relationship and marital satisfaction (13). The findings by Pine have significant implications for attachment styles and their relation with marital disaffection mark the point that attachment styles are correlated with marital disaffection in a way that there is a positive significant relationship between insecure attachment style and disaffection (14). The objective of this paper is to explore the personality characteristics and the role of family communication patterns in predicting couple burnout among the staff working in Iranian Oil Terminals Co.

Methods

This study presents the results of a descriptive, correlational survey. Samples are estimated employing Fidel and Tabachnik formula for 220 subjects. The administrative department of the company provided list of married personnel and assigned a number to each subject; a total of 220 subjects were recruited utilizing simple random sampling (twenty questionnaires, being more than the sample size were administered to account for lack of full participation). Copies of the questionnaire

were sent to the participants who were assured of the confidentiality of the returned questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were kept in a box which was collected by the researcher at a later time.

Couple burnout scale is a 21-item questionnaire, consisting of three subscales, namely, physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion, that has been developed for measuring couple burnout. This questionnaire is found to test a seven-point scale (15). Atari demonstrates the reliability coefficient of this scale by calculating Cronbach's alpha, yielding an acceptable value of 0.79 (16). Adib Rad has calculated confidence coefficient that is found to have one-month test-retest reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$), considering the fact that Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.91 to 0.93.

NEO personality inventory is a 60-item personality test which evaluates Big Five personality factors (i.e. neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness). Five-point Likert-type scale is able to account for each of the Big Five personality factors. NEO personality questionnaire has the following components: (1) neuroticism, (2) extraversion, (3) openness to experience, (4) agreeableness, and (5) conscientiousness. The criterion validity of the test is measured via the correlation between both the subject's form and that of the observer which varies from 0.45 to 0.66 (17). Conducted studies support acceptable three to six year test reliability ranging from 0.63 to 0.79 and 0.68 to 0.63, respectively (18). Retesting has occurred on 26 subjects at a mean of 6.7 months with correlation coefficients varying from 0.53 to 0.76 for each scale; Moreover, the alpha coefficients of scales range from 0.71 to 0.83.

Christensen and Sullaway's communication patterns questionnaire consists of 35 questions determining the relationship behaviors of spouses in three stages of marital conflict. These three stages are as follows: (1) a problem arises in spouses' relationship (2) during the discussion about the communication problem in their relationship (3) after the discussion about the

communication problem in their relationship. Each relationship behavior is calibrated based on 9-point Likert type scale (1 = rarely possible, 9 = highly possible). Some of these behaviors include mutual avoidance, counterarguments, argument / avoidance, mutual discussions, verbal abuse, physical violence, and mutual withdrawal. This questionnaire is composed of three subscales, namely the demand/withdrawal pattern, constructive communications/mutualism, and mutual avoidance. These three subscales are presented by Christensen and Shenk(1991). The demand/withdrawal pattern is divided into two categories: man's demand/withdrawal and woman's demand/ withdrawal. Ebadat Pour (2000) has demonstrated the abovementioned questionnaire in Iran; correlational coefficients being obtained from these three subscales of mutual constructive communications (five items), that is to say measures for the mutual avoidance as well as the demand/withdrawal pattern are presented as -0.58 and 0.35, respectively, not to mention enjoying the significance level at 1% (19).

This study employs the results of the previous research being conducted by Christensen and Heavey (1990) together with Heavey et al. (1996) (20 – 21). Cronbach's alpha for both men and women in this subscale is calculated to be 0.84 and 0.81, respectively. Considering German and Swiss samples, Bodenmann et al. (1998) measured the reliability of the subscales and compared the results with the American sample (Christensen and Heavey, 1990); in doing so, Cronbach's alpha reveals that satisfaction results range from 0.85 to 0.44. This study focuses on both the number and type of the variables in order to test the study's hypotheses via Pearson's correlation coefficient as well as multiple linear regression analysis.

Results

Statistical components for variables are listed in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 presents the correlations between the variables. Excluding "openness", there exists a significant correlation between other aspects of personality characteristics and couple burnout.

This correlation is positive in regard with neuroticism while extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are found to have negative correlations. In addition, the correlations for agreeableness and other aspects of personality characteristics are ascertained significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively. Furthermore, the correlation between all subscales of communication patterns and couple burnout is reported significant at 0.01 and this correlation is

negative when it comes to mutual constructive communications while other subscales are indicated to have positive correlations.

Table1. The results of Pearson`s correlation coefficient

Personality Characteristics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.Neuroticism	-									
2.Extraversion	-0.564*	-								
3.Openness	-0.150*	0.320**	-							
4.Agreeableness	-0.623**	-0.573**	0.002	-						
5.Conscientiousness	-0.684**	-0.657**	0.145*	0.658**	-					
6.Family communication Patterns										
7.Mutual constructive communication	-0.315**	-0.310**	0.008	0.268**	0.398**	-				
8.Man demand / woman withdraw	0.049	-0.118	-0.124	-0.097	-0.040	-0.074	-			
9.Woman demand / man withdraw	0.172*	-0.084	-0.062	-0.111	-0.092	-0.254**	0.553**	-		
10.Conflict avoidance	0.021	-0.021	0.197**	-0.081	-0.024	-0.127	0.348**	0.466**	-	
11.Couple Burnout	0.329**	-0.210**	-0.101	0.155*	0.187**	0.307**	0.337**	0.452**	0.270**	-

Table2.Hierarchical multiple regression to predict couple burnout

Variables	b	SE	B	R ²	ΔR ²
Family communication Patterns					
Mutual constructive communication	-0.013	0.005	-0.167*		
Man demand/ woman withdrawal	0.019	0.010	0.145*		
Woman demand/ man withdraw	0.036	0.011	0.262**		
Conflict avoidance	0.007	0.008	0.056	0.265**	-
Second stage Personality characteristics					
Neuroticism	0.032	0.008	0.353**		
Extraversion	0.003	0.012	0.024		
Openness	-0.013	0.009	-0.112		
Agreeableness	0.014	0.010	0.117		
Conscientiousness	-0.003	0.008	-0.040	0.332**	0.067**

As indicated in Table 2, communication patterns in conjunction with personality characteristics, in general, represent 33.2 percent of couple burnout variance. All dimensions of communication patterns did predict the significance level of 0.01 for couple's burnout ($p < 0.01$). The value of R^2 , in measuring the squared multiple correlation, is equal to 0.265. This indicates that communication patterns, alone, determine 26.5 percent of couple burnout variance. When regression coefficients of communication patterns are examined, it is found that the regression coefficient between the mutual constructive communication and the couple burnout is negative, not to mention having the significance level of 0.05.

In addition, the regression coefficient between man demand/woman withdrawal and couple burnout is positive and at the 0.05 level is significant. Similarly, the regression coefficient between woman demand/man withdrawal and couple burnout is positive, enjoying the 0.01 significance level. It is important to note that, despite what was expected, the regression correlation of mutual correlation and couple burnout was not significant at the level of 0.05.

The abovementioned assumptions suggest that the F value of ANOVA for multivariable regression at the 0.01 level is significant ($p < 0.01$); as a result, the research hypothesis (i.e. the role of communicative patterns in predicting the couple burnout) is supported and the null hypothesis is refuted. Moreover, all dimensions of mutual constructive communications have negative value and they are significant at the level of 0.05; the value of man demand/woman withdrawal is positive and its significance level is 0.05; in a similar vein, the woman demand / man withdrawal has positive value and it is significant at the level of 0.01. Accordingly, the aforementioned values did predict the significance level of 0.01 for couple's burnout. After measuring the personality characteristics via the regression equation, it was revealed that the value of R^2 is equal to 0.332, meaning that the couple burnout variance meets 33.2.

Examining the regression coefficients of personality characteristics, it is only the regression coefficient between neuroticism and couple burnout that has a positive value and is significant at the level of 0.01. It must be noted, however, that, regardless of neuroticism, none of the regression abovementioned measures indicate that the F value of ANOVA for multivariable regression at the 0.01 level is significant ($p < 0.01$). Thus, another hypothesis in this research was supported regarding the role of personality characteristics in predicting the couple burnout, not to mention rejecting the null hypothesis; in sum, it was determined that neurotic characteristics have positive value as well as predicting a 0.01 level significance for couple burnout.

Conclusion

The findings of this study imply that the variables of personality characteristics (save for openness) and family communication patterns have a significant correlation with couple burnout. Mutual constructive communication has a negative correlation with couple burnout while the other three subscales have a positive correlation with couple burnout. Considering the results, the increase in the mutual constructive communications plays a critical role, in turn, in regard with decreasing couple burnout.

In addition, our findings regarding the prediction of couple burnout based on all dimensions of communication patterns were obtained using mutual constructive communication with a negative value, and the positive value of both man demand/woman withdrawal in conjunction with woman demand/man withdraw. The findings support the fact that mutual constructive communications together with couple burnout have an inverse relationship which could be considered as a strong factor concerning the prediction of couple burnout.

Noller and Fitzpatrick (1998) maintain that marital satisfaction is correlated with higher levels of effective communication for those couples who focus on closeness and mutual reliance. On the other hand, marital

satisfaction may be correlated with conflict avoidance for couples having emphasis on both independence and avoidance. The correlation between the demand / withdrawal pattern shows that these patterns are strong predictors of couple burnout (22).

The findings of this study are in line with those of Caughlin (2002), Heavey et al. (1995), and Ahmadi (2005) (23, 24). To clarify the objective of these findings it could be taken into account that we are all, up to some range, seeking ways to find someone so that we could have enough in common with, enjoy being in touch with as well as gaining more experiences. If couples take advantage of non-verbal communications besides using appropriate words, they could find ways to solve their marital problems. Establishing and maintaining effective as well as satisfactory relationship with one's spouse is of crucial significance and, in part, has a strong role in elevating marital adjustment, to say nothing of lowering couple burnout.

Overall, it could be claimed that the lack of communication skills among couples would lead to marital problems and failure in establishing an effective, appropriate relationship with your spouse. However, couples who have this potential to improve the way they analyze their marital problems could overcome such problems; in doing so, they can promote their relationships with each other, and in addition such relationships could increase life satisfaction as well as lowering the effects of couple burnout. All personality dimensions, except for openness, are correlated with the very variable couple burnout.

Considering the results, neuroticism and couple burnout have a positive correlation whereas the correlation between couple burnout and the very variables extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness is negative. The findings of this study are in line with that of Mollazadeh (2002), Amanonoullahi (2005), Watson and Clark (1984), Karney and Bradbury (1995), Nemechek and Olson (1999), Shahmoradi, Fatehizadeh and Ahmadi (2011) (25–31). Moreover, the results indicate that neurotic characteristics can predict couple burnout as

well as supporting the research conducted by Hoseini Nasab et al. (2009). In other words, neuroticism is considered as a personality component that predisposes subjects to experience a negative emotional state; further, studies underline the point that neuroticism and mental health are negatively correlated.

Subjects who fail to control the emotional aspects of their married life besides being incapable of understanding each other's demands have to deal with both a negative impact on the quality of their intimate relationships that may lead to experiencing an early couple burnout. As revealed by studies, neuroticism is associated with such characteristics as anxiety, anger, depression, and impulsivity, all of which could result in couple burnout (33). With respect to the negative correlation between extraversion and couple burnout, it is found that extraversion is always concerned with intimacy, decisiveness, activity, collectivism, and positive emotions. It is important to note that the aforementioned factors have this potential to increase intimacy among couples and, in doing so, they could prevent couple burnout.

As a result, subjects with low neuroticism are less influenced by couple burnout for they have moderate mental and emotional health. Neuroticism has such characteristics as anxiety, mood swings, hostility, and impulsivity, leading to subjects' inability to control negative emotions as well as permanent positive relationships (34). In regard with the negative correlation between agreeableness and couple burnout, agreeable subjects are philanthropist and understand other people's feelings. Such philanthropists are always seeking ways to deal with problems, not to mention sympathizing with others. Given that the very factor extraversion has a positive influence on mental health; conscientiousness is positively correlated with positive emotions, happiness, hopefulness, self-regulation, and achievement orientation.

Considering the negative correlation between conscientiousness and couple burnout, it could be claimed that this personality characteristic is concerned with consultation, regularity, and self-regulation of couples who have such characteristics as conscientiousness,

extraversion, and agreeableness always tend to both maintain and rehabilitate their relationships. Conscientious subjects focus on their targeted efforts so that they can maintain and perpetuate their relationships (35). In doing so, they determine a certain goal for themselves and plan to achieve their goal for they have a sense of duty towards it. To conclude, with respect to conscientiousness, spouses feel highly responsible for their marital life and, in being so, they are less likely to experience couple burnout.

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