

The Mediating Roles of Defense Mechanisms in the Relationship between Attachment Styles with Fear of Success

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Abstract

The aim of present research was mediating roles of defense mechanisms in relationships of attachment styles with fear of success among female students. The research method was descriptive and correlational by path analysis. The research population consisted of all female students at the Khatam University during academic year of 2017-2018. A convenience sampling of 310 students were chosen. In order to collect data, Zuckerman and Allison Fear of Success Scale, Andrews Defense Style Scale and Hazan and Shavers Adult Attachment Style were used. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and path analysis. Results showed that only neurotic defense mechanisms had mediator roles in relationships between attachment and fear of success. Also attachments affected fear of success directly. Based on these findings the importance of the role of defense mechanisms, in relationships between fear of success, with attachment were emphasized.

Keywords: Attachment styles, defense mechanisms, fear of success.

Introduction

Fear of success is an anxiety factor which is derived from the concept and meaning of success. In such situations the individual has a strong tendency towards success but there also exists with him the fear of achieving this success. In fact, lack of self-confidence and believing in one's power may lead to this fear (Stanculescu, 2013). Since there has been numerous researches studying and explaining the reasons for fear of success from the perspective of cognitive and behavioral factors; there is a distinct lack in studying the factors from the viewpoint of psychosis. In psychological theories there is emphasis on meaning of latent signs, unconscious conflicts, defense mechanisms and attachment for description and etiology of a psychological phenomenon (Slavin, et al., 2012). Hence this research endeavors to study the relations of defense mechanisms and attachment styles with fear of success. Attachment styles and defense mechanisms are some kind of data processing, and it is assumed that both of them grow in early childhood and affect wide range of cognitive factors (Laczkovics, et al., 2018). Also the results of a research; carried out by Francisco and colleagues to study the relation between defense mechanisms and pathological features of the individual; showing that there are positive and meaningful relations between pathological features of individual and the use of psychotic mechanisms. The hypotheses in this research were: Attachment styles affect fear of success with mediation of defense mechanisms, Attachment styles have direct impact on fear of success.

Methodology

The research was carried out in a descriptive, correlational and path analysis method. The study population consisted of all the female students (1600 students) of Khatam University studying in different levels and fields during 2017-2018 academic year. The sample number was determined 310 persons according to Krejcie & Morgan chart. The sample was selected with available sampling method among 340 volunteered students to participate in the research. They completed the research tools, individually. Data analysis were performed with the use of statistical software: SPSS25 and LISRE 8.80 and statistical correlation test and path analysis with 0.05 alpha error. The tools in research were as follows:

Defense mechanisms questionnaire(DSQ-40): This instrument was developed by Andrews, et al (1993) including 40 questions having 20 defense mechanisms, in three levels of immature, mature and neurotic, with Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.73, 0.75 and 0.74, respectively. Also, the test-retest reliability coefficient for this questionnaire was reported 0.82.

Attachment style questionnaire: This tool consists of 15 questions, developed by Hazen & Shaver (1987) with Cronbach's alpha reliability method for total score of 0.79. Shaver & Hazen reported the criterion, content and its construct validity favorable.

Fear of success questionnaire: These 27 questionnaires were developed by Zuckerman & Allison (1976), scored with the use of seven-point Likert scale. Content validity of the test according to correlational coefficient of each question with overall score were reported, ranging, 0.27 to 0.32.

Findings

The results of Kolmogorove-Smirnov test on the average scores of study variables indicated that all research variables had normal distributions with of $p > 0.05$ significance-values. By applying Pearson correlation test; attachment style with immature defense style showed positive correlation ($p < 0.05$), but didn't have any significance correlation value with mature defense style and neurotic. Attachment style showed a positive relation ($r = 0.37$) with fear of success. Fear of success variable correlated with all defense styles and it was positive with immature defense style and neurotic, and negative ($p < 0.05$) with mature defense style. With respect to the mediation style of the research and considering the mediating and dependent variables three paths came along in the test path analysis (mediation variables were three defense styles and the dependent variable was fear of success). The results showed that the amount of attachment had direct impact on fear of success ($p < 0.05$). Considering that the impact of immature and mature defense styles had no significance-value with fear of success, their mediating impact were declined. Hence, immature and mature defense styles didn't play mediating roles in attachment and fear of success ($p > 0.05$), but the direct impact of attachment on fear of success was proved ($p < 0.05$). Neurotic style influenced fear of success ($p < 0.05$). Influence of correlation on neurotic style was also proved, and mediation was proved regarding the significant-value of all model relationships but, the kind of

mediation was minor. Attachment influenced fear of success both directly and indirectly and the intensity of indirect impact was 0.08.

Table (1): The summary of statistical results

Kind of relation	result
Mediation of immature style between attachment and fear of success.	declined
Mediation of mature style between attachment and fear of success.	declined
neurotic style mediating attachment and fear of success.	proved
Direct impact of attachment on fear of success.	proved

Discussion and conclusion

The results of the research showed that attachment; both directly and with mediating neurotic defense mechanism; influences fear of success, attachment can influence individuals confronting success. Since fear of success is under the influence of attachment and internal conditions of the individual mixing up with neurotic defense mechanism dashes the individual's hope and intensifies this feeling in person. Regarding the research limitations, it should be pointed out that the current research is related to female students in a specific time interval in Khatam university and this has to be considered when generalizing the results. According to findings, a study of individual's defense mechanisms is recommended in consultation sessions so that necessary measures can be taken in line with that and the person can achieve greater success at work and in social relations. The authors at the time need to thank and appreciate the respected students who participated in this research and the respected university officials who provided the background for this research.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors found no conflict of interests.