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Prediction of Marriage Expectation Models from Differentiation with the Mediator Variable of Marriage Attitudes in the Single Girls of Hormozgan University

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The aim of this research was to evaluate and explain the predicting role of "marriage expectation models" based on "differentiation" mediated by "marriage attitudes." The statistical population of this study consists of all the students of Hormozgan University. To this end, 200 female students were selected randomly as the sample. The research method was both descriptive and correlational. The research tools include the Jones and Nelson Marriage Expectation Scale (1997), Skowron Differentiation Scale as well as the Braaten and Rosén Marriage Attitude Scale (1998). For the evaluation of the proposed model, the Structural Equation Modeling using AMOS-23 software as well as the maximum likelihood estimation method was used. The results showed that the evaluated model benefit from acceptable goodness of fit indicators. The results of structural equations revealed that differentiation has a direct and positive effect on marriage attitude and on the realistic expectation of marriage. Differentiation also has a direct and negative effect on the

pessimistic expectation of marriage. On the other hand, the differentiation has an indirect and positive effect on the realistic expectation of marriage and on the pessimistic expectation of marriage through the marriage attitude. The present study showed that differentiation can be a determinant for marital expectations and attitudes.

Keywords: differentiation, marriage expectations, marriage attitude

Marriage is a bond between men and women, by which a permanent and unique commitment is created between them, which naturally results in the birth and rising of children (Mal, 2013). The family being one of the social institutions is found by marriage, and the biological, psychological, and social needs of the individuals in marriage are provided, which is not just by an individual. In fact, it can be said that society is based on marriage. The solidity of the family depends on marriage as well as the stable and fundamental marital relationship. Having said that, any dilution in marital satisfaction or the absence of a successful marriage endangers the survival of the family in addition to disturbing the mental health (Faghirpour, 2005). A fundamental change in the goals of marriage requires changing expectations, roles, and increasing the skills of spouses to achieve these goals and needs. Clinical studies and experience show that in contemporary society, couples have severe and complex problems when establishing and maintaining intimate relationships, and satisfying emotional and psychological needs during a marriage, which is a skill (Nevabinejad, 2001). With regard to marriage, issues such as the expected roles of both spouses, the expectations and goals of family formation and marriage are highly considered as they keep ringing the reality all through our minds. Therefore, one of the issues that are importantly considerable in the family discussion and marriage, and plays a role in shaping the cohesive relationships associated

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with physical and emotional health, is the expectation of marriage. Marital expectations are mental standards and hypotheses, predetermined frameworks, and the do's and don'ts that couples have concerning their spouse and their marital life, which may or may not be based on the reality (Khamseh, 2005). The expectations further include what couples consider as a proper role in marriage, and how their beliefs work on whether marriage is successful or not (Rios, 2010). There are different approaches to the formation of marital expectations. Gender role theory states that, individuals become socialized for a variety of roles in almost all cultures based on the gender. Gender roles can be defined as the purposes or concepts created by the society for the behaviour of men or women. It can be expected that marital expectations will be affected by the socialization of girls and boys who have gained idealist, pessimistic, or realistic expectations about their roles in future relationships. Just as children are socialized for gender roles throughout life, they also learn future marital expectations from the various experiences that they see in their families (Dilion, 2005). Future marital expectations can be transferred by a multigenerational transmission process in a family system theory. In particular, the divorce experience can affect the level of separation that an individual experience. As a result, that person may have patterns of disordered relationship that create pessimistic or idealistic marital expectations (Farokhzadian, Arshadi, & Sa'adattalab, 2016). One of the features of a healthy family is to help its members to differentiate. In other words, those family members that were mentioned earlier learn to separate their rational and emotional functions from their family members and their function (Sanaei, 2008). Differentiation of the self-rational and emotional processes is a manifestation of differentiation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) introduced the theory of

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multigenerational family systems, which has been popular in family therapists forty years ago as a popular awareness theory (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Bowen introduced 8 theoretical constructs to explain family and individual dynamics: self-differentiation, multigenerational transmission, triangulation, emotional cut off and fusion, familial projection, sibling position, socio-emotional processes and the nuclear family emotional system (O'Hara & Meteyard, 2011).

A high level of differentiation is correlated with marital satisfaction, a stable relationship with the opposite gender, and the relationship between effective parenting relationships. A high differentiation level is also correlated with rational-emotional functioning and contributes to having individual identities and positive interpersonal relationships. Also, those with high levels of life satisfaction show more stable levels of emotional and more positive attitudes toward marriage (Kim & Jong, 2015; Afsar, Foroutan, Karamad, Salehizadeh & Kashani, 2016). The attitudes and values of the people in the society are shaped and changed according to the changing circumstances (social, cultural, political and economic), as well as their experiences during the process of socialization. However, in recent years, young people's attitudes toward marriage and family formation have been negatively oriented, following the negative attitude of moral, social, and economic deterioration in youth (Johnson, 2015; Coleman 2017). In most societies, marriage attitudes and the criteria for choosing a spouse are changing. In the past decade, the marriage rate has declined while the divorce rate has risen. Attitudes toward marriage and family formation are affected by several factors. Development and modernization in the new world has resulted in a rapid and significant change in the social and economic conditions of individuals, a change in marriage attitude,

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and its delay (Mahmoudian, 2004). Research on attitudes is in the most important issues, especially in the field of social psychology. The importance of attitude is that some researchers consider it as the main issue of social psychology (Karimi, 2006). Marital attitudes are the subjective beliefs of the individual involved in customary marriage to the opposite sex (Brattan & Rosen, 1998). Both experimental and theoretical literature gave a suggestion that the relationship between parents and the child should be related to the attitude of adolescents towards marital relationships. Nevertheless, marriage attitudes and expectations play an inevitable role towards marriage (Omidvar, 2007).

In regard to the conducted types of research in the field of marriage expectations; Johnson (2015), in a study entitled "Satisfaction of Marriage Expectations and a Relationship to High Marital Expectations, Optimism and Self-Efficiency of Relationships in Married Persons", it was concluded that expectations have a negative correlation with marital satisfaction, unless they are met. The satisfaction of expectations is positively correlated with marital satisfaction. A combination of high expectations and high self-efficacy is the best predictor of the emotion that life expectancy faces. The self-efficacy of the relationship is considered as the greatest variance in meeting expectations. (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal de Gregorio & Muñoz San Roque, 2016). Karkhaneh et al (2016) measured the validity of Bowen theory hypotheses in the Spanish sample in a study entitled "Differentiation, Choice of Spouse and Marital Adaptation." In Bowen's theory, better differentiation and more similarity with parental differentiation levels predict better marital adjustment. In contrary to this theory, men have shown higher scores for differentiation than women in the gender differentiations observed in S-DSI and there is no established

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relationship between differentiation and spouse selection (McNutly & Karney, 2004). Moharrami, Pashib, Zandi, Abbaspour & Torbati (2017). in a research entitled "Positive Expectations in the early stuff of Marriages: Do Couples Have to Expect the Best or Waiting for the Worst?" covered 300 couples as the sample. The results showed that contrary to the idea that expectations in the first marriage packages had a great effect on satisfaction; recent findings suggested that the effect of expectations is in contrast to the skills that partners bring to their relationship. Rios (2010) investigated the relationship between premarital expectations, premarital advice, and marital satisfaction, and found that people's expectations and beliefs are a determining factor in the prediction of marital satisfaction.

The present study seeks to answer the following question Is the differentiation between attitudes toward marriage and realistic expectations pessimistic or not?

Method

The research method used in this study is the descriptive correlation. The statistical population of this study consisted of female students of Hormozgan University. The first sample size consisted of 220 single girls, but incomplete questionnaires were deleted and the analyzed sample included 200 female students. All the subjects with average age of 20.2 (SD= 1.3) were single and lived in dormitory.

Instruments

Differentiation Questionnaire

This questionnaire, developed by Skowron (2008), is a 46-item tool that is used to measure the degree of differentiation of individuals. It focuses mainly on the important relationships of

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life and the communication between individuals and their families (Skowron, 2000). The mentioned questionnaire consists of 4 sub-scales including emotional response; I position, emotional cut off, and emotional fusion that are rated by the Likert scale and in a range of 6 options from 1 (not at all correct in my case) to 6 (completely correct in my case). Each question has grades between 1 and 6. Hence, score 1 belongs to option 1 and score 6 belongs to option 6. Therefore, the maximum score in this questionnaire is 276. Questions 4-7-11-15-19-23-27-31-37-41-43 are scored positively and other questions are scored in a reverse order. The lower scores in this questionnaire are indicative of lower levels of differentiation (Sanaei, 2008). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the (total) scale was .78 and this value for each subscale including emotional cut off, emotional response, I position, and emotional fusion were .73, .79, .82, and .85, respectively, which indicates the desired reliability of this scale. The reliability of the Persian version was reported in the range of .81 to .87. Also, the researchers confirmed content validity for the Persian version (Oskeian, 2005).

Marriage Expectation Scale

The marriage expectation scale is provided by Jones and Nelson (1997). This scale measures the pessimistic, realistic, and ideal expectations of individuals toward marriage (Jones & Nelson, 1997; Nilfrooshan, Abedi, Ahmadi Seyed & Navidian, 2011). The questionnaire contains 40 propositions. Respondents used the 5-point Likert scale from 1, completely disagree to 5, and completely agree. Thus, the minimum score is 40 and the maximum is 200. Propositions 4-18-23-28-30-35-38 are graded in reverse order (Nilfrooshan et al., 2011). In general, lower scores represent the pessimistic expectations of marriage, and

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higher scores represent the idealist expectation of marriage. Medium scores show realistic expectations. Jones and Nelson (1997) reported Cronbach's alpha for the total questionnaire (.79, .80). The internal consistency of this scale in the Iranian sample was .88 and the 3-week test-retest coefficient was .91. In addition the correlation of this scale with the Marital Attitude Scale was .43($p<.01$). (Nilfrooshan et al., 2011). In this study, reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.75).

Marriage Attitude Questionnaire

The Marital Attitude Scale was made by Braaten & Rosen (1998). This scale consists of 23 propositions with a 4-degree Likert scale from completely agree to completely disagree that measures the beliefs and attitudes related to marriage. Propositions 1-3-5-8-12-16-19-20-23 are reciprocally scaled. The total score, which is at least 23 and at most 92, is obtained through the summation of propositions' scores. Higher scores represent more positive attitude toward marriage. Subjects are asked to specify the amount of their consent or opposition to each proposition. The results of the research on reliability showed that the attitude to marriage scale had an adequate and sufficient reliability coefficient (Nilfrooshan et al., 2013). The convergent validity of this tool was examined with Attitude Toward Marital Scale (r= .77) (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). Cronbach's alpha coefficients in preliminary studies were reported .84 and .82 (Bratten & Rosen, 1998; Valerian, 2001) and in Iranian population was .77 and the 3-week test-retest coefficient was .91. In this study, reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.78).

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Results

To evaluate the proposed model, structural equation modeling was applied using the AMOS-23 software, as well as the maximum likelihood estimation method. The evaluated model in the research consists of a total of 4 variables, of which 1 variable is hidden (differentiation) and the other 3 variables are explicit (marriage attitude, realistic expectation of marriage, and pessimistic expectation of marriage). In addition, in the present model, there is an independent variable (differentiation), a mediator variable (marriage attitude), and three dependent variables (realistic expectation of marriage and pessimistic expectation of marriage). In other words, this model examines the relationships between 1 exogenous and 3 endogenous variable.

Table 1

Descriptive Indicators and Cross-Correlations of Research Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Differentiation	145.64	21.71	1			
Marriage attitude	81.89	7.82	.21**	1		
Realistic expectation of marriage	70.61	5.69	-.23**	.39**	1	
Pessimistic expectation of marriage	11.02	2.33	-.27**	-.28**	-.42**	1

As shown in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the variables including differentiation, marriage attitude, realistic expectation of marriage, and pessimistic expectation of marriage were 45.64 ± 12.71, 81.89 ± 7.82, 70.61 ± 5.69, and 11.02 ± 2.33, respectively. More so, this table shows the significance of all

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correlation coefficients between research variables at the level of p<.01.

Before examining the path coefficients, the goodness of fit of the original model was examined. To determine the goodness of fit of the proposed model with data, a combination of fitness indicators was used, which are:

1. Chi-square (χ^2), and p-value≤.05,
2. Degrees of freedom;
3. Goodness of Fit Index (GFI);
4. Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI);
5. Comparative Fit Index (CFI),
6. Incremental Fit Index (IFI),
7. Bentler-Bont index or Normed Fit Index (NFI),
8. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and
9. Root mean square error approximation (RMSEA).

Table 2
The Presented Model's Fitting Indicators

Fitting	χ^2	p	df	χ^2.df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
Value	73.5	.345	21	3.50	.96	.90	.96	.92	.92	.95	.08

According to Table 2, although χ^2 (73.5) shows a good fitness, it is non-significant. The values of GFI, AGFI, NFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA are .96, .90, .96, .92, .92, .95 and .08, respectively. Given that all these indicators are above 90%, the model in these indicators is fitted with data. The value of RMSEA was also reported to be .08, which is less than .08, thus indicating that the

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model presented in this index also has a suitable fitting. Kline (2015) suggested p-value > .05 for χ^2, GFI ≥ .95, AGFI ≥ .90, NFI ≥ .95, CFI ≥.90, TLI ≥ .95 and RMSEA< .08 as standard values. In general, the model fitting indicators indicate a fit between the data and the proposed model.

Figure 1 shows the research model, along with the standard coefficients of the paths and their significance. As can be observed in the model, the differentiation path to realistic expectation (β= .14) was statistically significant at p <.05, the differentiation path to pessimistic expectation (β= - .27) was statistically significant at p <.05. The differentiation path to marriage attitude (β =.23) was statistically significant at (p <.01), the marriage attitude path to realistic expectation (β = .35) was statistically significant at (p <.01), and the marriage attitude path to pessimistic expectations (β= -.22) was statistically significant at (p <.01). Therefore, all direct research hypotheses are confirmed.

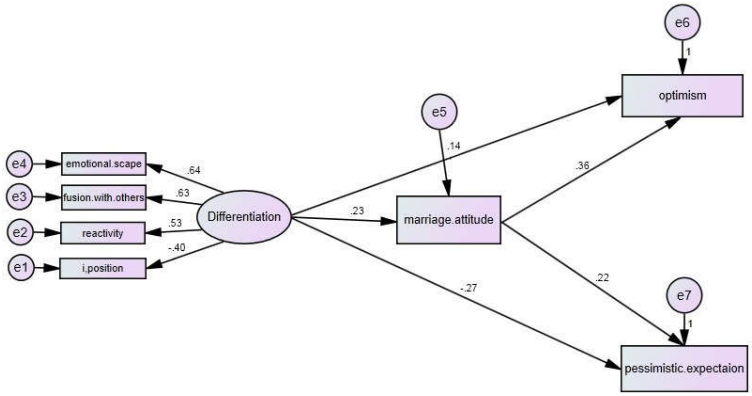

Figure 1. The present research model along with the standard coefficients of the paths

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To test the indirect effects of the intermediate relationship test of the structural model, the Bootstrap test was used and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Bootstrap Test Results for Intermediate Paths

Intermediate path			Bootstrap	Lower bound	Upper bound	P
Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable				
Differentiation	Marriage Attitude	Realistic expectation of marriage	-.052	.039	.149	.002
Differentiation	Marriage Attitude	Pessimistic expectation of marriage	.086	-.112	-.024	.003

The contents of Table 3 for the "differentiation" path to the realistic expectancy through marriage attitude shows that the down bound of the confidence interval for this path is .039 and its upper bound is .149. The absence of zero at this distance ensures the significance of this indirect path and thus confirms its hypothesis. In addition, the "differentiation" path to the pessimistic expectancy through marriage attitude shows that the

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down bound of the confidence interval for this path is -.112 and its upper bound is -.024. The absence of zero at this distance ensures the significance of this indirect path and thus confirms its hypothesis. The confidence level for all of these intervals was .99 and the number of bootstrap re-sampling was 2000.

Discussion

This research compares the results of previous studies in this field. The research variables were discussed and conclusions were drawn using already existing theories.

The results of structural equation analysis showed that differentiation has direct and positive effects on realistic expectations and positive attitudes of marriage and also some direct and negative effects on unrealistic expectations as well as negative attitudes in the marriage of female students. Whenever students have a higher positive attitude towards marriage; they have a realistic expectation of marriage. The greater the differentiation of the female students, the greater the realistic expectations and positive attitudes they will get married. Also they have more negative marriage attitudes with less differentiation (Jafary, Alavi, Irajpour & Mehrabi, 2017).

This study investigated the relationship between the differentiation and the models of marriage expectation and likewise the marriage attitude or the relationship between marriage attitude and patterns of marriage expectation does not exist. However, it can be said that the research made by McNutly and Karney (2004) titled: "Positive expectations in early marriage stuffs: Do couples have to expect the best, or wait for the worst?" is in line with 300 couples. The results showed that contrary to the idea that expectations in the first marriage stuff had a great effect on satisfaction; recent findings suggested that the effect of

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expectations is in contrast to the skills that partners bring to their relationship. People with better skills will have a logical realistic expectation.

In explaining this relationship, it is necessary to find out the subscription differentiation and realistic and unrealistic expectations model. What are the characteristics of the differentiated individuals that make them expect a realistic expectation of marriage and have a positive attitude towards marriage, and vice versa? Differentiation means the ability of individuals to create a distinct identity for themselves about their families. With partial differentiation, one can be in touch with his family and at the same time have his separate board (Gandy, 2007; Vaterlaus, Skogrand, Chaney & Gahagan, 2017). Individuals who become differentiated can independently control their emotions and thoughts based on their personality, and not to be influenced by others, and ultimately seek clues that impose anxiety and pressure on him/her. How can one individually adapt to anxiety effectively from the start (Whiffen, 2012)? Differentiation is the equilibrium that each person establishes between two forces of coherence and individuality, resulting in a stable balance between maintaining independence and maintaining relationships with important people of life. (Kerr and Bowen, 1988; Rezaie, 2012) seeks a single relationship in marriage versus those who have a model of marriage unrealistic expectations; this means that they expect their future spouse to meet all their needs, without any words being exchanged, i.e. their future spouse will read their minds and they will not have any problems in their marriage. In general, it can be said that these individuals have problems in establishing a relationship with others. People who have problems forming intimate relationships and encountering irrational events in the event of incidents have

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ineffective communication beliefs (Larson and Hallman, 1994). The consequences of inefficient beliefs are the formation of unrealistic expectations, maladaptive relationships, reading the mind, and problems in sexual relationships (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981). It can be concluded that people who have a differentiated personality have enough skills in establishing appropriate and satisfying relationships with others, and do not seek profit in their relationships with others. They can focus on relationships not only on their values and needs, but also on the values and needs of the other party. In contrast, individuals with unrealistic expectation models seek a "one-way" relationship agenda in their relationships and they cannot balance their relationships with others to establish an appropriate and effective relationship.

Family experiences play an important role in building the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of children during childhood (Ganong, Coleman & Brown, 1981; Amato & Cheadle, 2008). By observing their parents' marital relationship, children learn how marriage and family life should be (Ganong et al., 1981). Studies have shown that the parents' values, behaviors, and attitudes have a significant relationship with adolescent beliefs and attitudes toward marriage and divorce (Heaton, 2002). Besides, the multigenerational transmission process in family system theory can transfer future marital expectations. Positive and negative experiences cause children to behave in a way that can create cynical, idealistic, or realistic marital expectations (Dillon, 2005). This expression suggests that children who do not have a differentiated character have not yet been able to draw their path and consistently adhere to family or other guidance (Friedman, 1991). Therefore, it can be said that childhood experiences play a role in differentiation, and if children cannot find an independent

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personality, they cannot have realistic expectations in their relationships with others.

The attachment theory and the Bowen theory of family system have many similarities; both agree on a particular subject, which is that both interpersonal and family relationships are accepted by health and disorder. Both of factors consider humans as a function of family relationships and suppose that tasks are part of the natural system, which holds them together by mutual forces. It is said that the original and primary families have a strong influence on individual relationships, and that man needs credible and meaningful relationships that the basic concept of attachment theory resembles the concept of Bowen's differentiation (George & West, 2003 quited by Daneshvar, 2014).

Skowron and Randy claimed that these two structures (safe attachment and self-differentiation) could be used instead. Self-differentiation requires the ability to acquire a sense of autonomy while the individual does not miss his/her emotional attachment and affinity. This definition has similarity with the description of secure attachment, which is the ability to achieve the support of essential individuals in life (parents). When an individual is under stressful conditions, he/she can maintain autonomy and independence. Apparently, these two concepts are complementary and are interpreted as the two edges of human emotional interactions, communication with caregivers, and the achievement of adult autonomy (Ali Abad, Amirjan, Younesi, Eskhosh & Asgari, 2012).

According to Bowen, those who have come to enough differentiation have clear, independent, and distinct thoughts. These individuals can clearly isolate and control their thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and thrills. Individual differentiation is likely to affect the selection of a spouse. Individual differentiation

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theory and intergenerational transmission have provided a framework and a reasonable explanation for marital commitment, preparation for marriage, and the choice of a spouse.

In Bowen's view, marital intimacy requires a strong sense of identity and differentiation, and marital conflicts are caused by weaknesses in the following cases. Types of marital problems from Bowen's point of view are the protracted conflict that occurs when there is a large amount of chronic anxiety and a small amount of individual differentiation in couples. The difference in the levels of differentiation leads to creating recoiled tracker model and triangulation (Young & Long, 1998). Based on Bowen's family system theory, the family is considered as an emotional unit because there are strong emotional relationships between its members. Such strong emotional ties affect the beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of family members. The concept of differentiation in this theory is important because it shows the family's impact on the way people think, feel, and behave. Also, as regards to this theory, the intergenerational transmission process occurs at different levels of attitude, behavior, and values (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Mueller and Pope (1977) invented the concept of transference theory to refer to the apparent pattern of family disorder in a generation that is transmitted to a family disorder in the next generation. A part of this disorder can be due to parenting stress, which is one of the most important factors influencing the attitude of the youth about marriage and family values (Jones & Nelson, 2008). The effect that an individual accepts from communication with parents is closely related to the individual's feelings and attitudes about marriage (Jones & Nelson, 2008). Stress affects people who are prone to parental communication (Kalter, 1987). In other words, children who experienced marital conflict are later

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pessimistic about their marriage. It appears that those parents who have a significant amount of stress in their marital relationship create more cynical marriage attitudes in their children (Jones & Nelson, 2008). An individual with pessimistic marriage expectations can be afraid of communication and such a person doubts his/her ability to act positively. Therefore, the person considers romantic friendships in the outside world as an individual mechanism of defence with pessimistic marriage expectations and has an uncompromising attitude (Jones & Nelson, 2008).

Also, the way in which each couple presents their intimacy greatly influences the needs and expectations they have gained from the original families. This effect can be promising in marriage (Sperry & Carlson, 1991).

Thus, it can be said that the main problem of individuals who have unrealistic expectations of marriage is to have a good relationship with other people. This can be due to the lack of proper and emotional bonds between parents in their childhood. In addition, the family plays a great role in shaping the attitudes, behaviors, and values of individuals, and those who have not yet been able to have an independent personality cannot balance their relationships with others while respecting the values of others based on their values and beliefs. Consequently, it is suggested to pay special attention to the importance of establishing an emotional relationship between parents and their children in childhood. Also, children who are in stressful families should be trained about the effective communication skills.

Using self- report data and not verifying the results with other sources of data collection such as interview; exhaustion resulted from a long question and generalization of the obtained results to other areas. Also sample availability can be a limitation in this

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research. Therefore, it is suggested that the next research should be done in other areas with local culture and using another research method. Also, regarding the importance of the relationship between differentiation with marital attitude and expectation, it is suggested that single girls are educated to improve differentiation in premarital programs.

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