

The Influence of Adult Attachment Styles on Marital Satisfaction among Married Couples

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Abstract

Previous studies indicate a strong relationship between adult attachment styles and marital satisfaction. It is revealed that individuals with secure attachment style are the most satisfied with their marriage compared to those having an ambivalent or avoidant attachment style while individuals with ambivalent attachment style are the least satisfied with their married life. This study aims at studying the influence of attachment style on marital satisfaction among married couples in Sri Lanka. Since this area has not been studied in relation to the Sri Lankan context, this study looks into identifying the dynamics among Sri Lankan married couples. Based on the notions from the previous studies, it is hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between secure attachment style and marital satisfaction while ambivalent attachment style would result in less marital satisfaction. Two separate questionnaires are administered to identify the attachment style and level of marital satisfaction of 68 married couples ($N = 136$) who have been married at least for one year. Adult attachment style is identified through Experience in Close Relationships Scale and marital satisfaction is measured by Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The correlation between adult attachment style and one's level of marital satisfaction is analyzed for its statistical significance. Results indicate a positive correlation between secure attachment style and marital satisfaction. As hypothesized, ambivalently attached individuals reported the least marital satisfaction with an insignificant difference to the results of the previous studies. The findings will be useful to family therapists and marital counsellors to understand the expectations of partners in a marriage.

Key words: Attachment style, Marital satisfaction, Secure attachment, Family therapist

Introduction

The present study aims to investigate the impact of an individual's attachment style on his or her marital satisfaction. In the cultural context of Sri Lanka, marriage is considered an important institution which has been identified as a significant segment in the culture where different patterns of cohabitation could be seen before the influence of the British law in the country which legalized marriage restricting it to monogamous relationships (Amaratunga 2009). A long lasting marriage has been perceived as the ideal situation in which concepts

such as divorce and separation were always looked down upon. But in the recent years, a rise in divorce could be seen in Sri Lanka where a survey carried out by the Western Provincial Social Services Department in Sri Lanka revealed an occurrence of approximately 300 divorces per day in Sri Lanka in the year 2012. Compared to the other countries, even though the divorce rate is considered low as 0.15 per 1000 individuals, it is still perceived as a higher rate considering the cultural value assigned to marriage (Wijesekera 2010). It is reported that most of these divorces occur within the first year of marriage due to the increasing lack of understanding among the individuals. Even though the present divorce rate is considered low in a global index, it has been viewed a rise in the Sri Lankan statistics. Yet, there are very few studies done especially in South Asia to explore the reasons for the 'lack of understanding' among couples. Even in the neighboring country India, there have been very few studies on marital satisfaction – especially on the psychological aspects of it (Surendra and Ramadevi 2012; Yelsma and Athappilly 1988). According to the previous studies, adult attachment styles are linked with how an individual perceives him or herself as well as their partners. Therefore the present study hypothesizes that there could be a relationship between an individual's attachment style and his or her marital satisfaction. Previous studies have established a relationship between these variables that give rise for the present study to explore whether those findings are valid in a different cultural context. This study will be a base to explore the dynamics in determining psychological factors such as an individual's attachment style in determining his or her marital satisfaction. The lack of research in this line sets the rationale for this study to be conducted among a sample of Sri Lankan married couples.

Attachment styles

John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth and several other theorists described a special bond between a child and its primary caregiver which they later called as attachment (Ainsworth 1964; Bowlby 1958, 1969). John Bowlby (1973) initiated research into the area of human attachment and according to him, the attachment system brings out the evolutionary significance of infant – caregiver interaction which is later on extended by many other theorists in the area of attachment theory. Bowlby observed that during a separation from its mother, number of emotional responses could be observed in an infant towards it such as either *protesting*, being resistant to others' soothing efforts, *despair* through expression of obvious sadness and *detachment* by avoiding the mother when she returns. Research by Ainsworth and others (1978) suggests that a mother's sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs creates a significant impact in the child's behavioral and emotional responses. This paved way for them to identify the three attachment styles namely, secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant. According to this notion, when a care giver attends to the child's attachment needs continuously and appropriately, the child develops a trust

towards the caregiver, establishing a secure attachment in the child. The inconsistent or limited response from the caregiver may result in lack of trust and aroused activation of the attachment system in the child resulting in developing either anxious attachment or avoidant attachment.

Ainsworth and others' notion on the importance of the level of sensitivity and responsiveness of the mother to her child's needs was well connected to Bowlby's notions on the construction of an internal working model in a child due to the responsiveness of the mother which later becomes a significant mark in the personality of the child which is claimed by several longitudinal studies in this line (Dontas, Maratos, Fafoutis and Karangelis 1985). According to Bowlby (1973), individuals develop two ways of perceiving themselves as well as the others around them which he referred to as internal mental models; a) a model of self and b) a model of others. The model of self refers to how an individual feels about him or herself as a worthy person to be loved and cared due to the attachment related responses from the caregivers. The model of others is developed based on how responsive and available the attachment figure had been. As children, if they believe that they are worthy of love and if their expectations of the relationship with the caregiver is congruent with that belief, it leads to develop a positive model of self and a positive model of others in the child which later results in positive adult relationships (Bowlby 1980).

The conceptualization and assessment of adult attachment is organized around two basic dimensions. On the "avoidance" dimension, the extent to which individuals being distrustful of others' friendliness and how they are trying to be independent in an interpersonal relationship is reflected. The anxiety dimension refers to the extent to which people worry about their partner's availability during the times needed. Low scores on both anxiety and avoidant dimensions would be referred to as individuals having secure attachment with a positive history in their early attachments (Brennan, Clark and Shaver 1998).

In this context, attachment security becomes an influential factor in directing a person towards his or her psychological wellbeing, forming and regulating emotions effectively, developing positive models of self and others and being explorative and friendly (Bowlby 1973). Those who maintain a sense of attachment security would display lower levels of distress in stressful events, have more coping strategies based on relying on seeking support from others, hold more positive self – views, be more likely to be explorative and be more sensitive and responsive to the partner's needs than individuals who score high on the other two dimensions (Feeney and Kirkpatrick 1996; Collins 1996; Fraley and Shaver 1998; Mikulincer and Selinger 2001). The meaningful interactions with the significant attachment figures throughout an individual's life may result in different perceptions of others' support and availability in times of need and these general beliefs may develop into relationship – specific

beliefs at a later point around the person's actual experiences with a specific partner. (Bowlby 1988; Collins and Read 1994).

These two attachment dimensions have given rise to a four – category approach of attachment style which is similar to Ainsworth's attachment styles (Bartholomew 1990; Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991). These four attachment styles include a) *secure* attachment indicated by low anxiety and low avoidance which produces a positive model of self and others b) *preoccupied* defined by high anxiety and low avoidance in which individuals would have a negative model of self and positive model of others c) *dismissing* identified by low anxiety and high avoidance resulting in a positive model of self and a negative model of others and d) *fearful – avoidant* which is characterized by high in both anxiety and avoidance highlighting a negative model of self and others (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991).

Attachment style and marital satisfaction

Many previous studies have revealed significant associations between an individual's attachment style and relationship satisfaction and quality especially focusing on marital satisfaction and marital quality. The significant association between secure attachment and partner's relationship quality was reported in a series of studies (Collins and Read 1990; Kirkpatrick and Davis 1994; Shaver and Brennan 1992; Feeney 1994; Feeney, Noller and Callan 1994). Furthermore, Meyers and Landsberger (2002) found among a set of married women in a community based sample the existence of a direct relationship between adult attachment style and marital satisfaction. In all the studies, it was evident that secure attachment is positively associated with marital satisfaction always resulting in higher marital satisfaction in couples whereas insecure attachment styles, especially the anxious attachment predicts a negative correlation between attachment style and marital satisfaction. Mikulincer and Florian (1999) observed the prevalence of significant associations between spouses' attachment style in determining their marital cohesion and adaptability in which securely attached individuals reported high marital cohesion and adaptability while anxiously attached individuals reported high marital cohesion but low adaptability.

As a result of the positive or negative view of the self and the partner, the attachment security of the spouses lead to different levels of marital satisfaction . Attachment security indicates an association between the following factors; (a) positive beliefs an individual has about couple relationships, (b) forming stable couple relationships, (c) satisfaction with dating relationships and marriage, (d) high levels of intimacy, commitment and emotional involvement within the relationship and (e) positive patterns of communication and interactions in both dating and married couples (Mikulincer et al. 2002:416). Due to the positive

experiences in the past and learning that proximity maintenance is rewarding, securely attached individuals would always be more focused on the benefits of being with a partner and often organize interaction goals around intimacy. This motivates an individual to engage in a long lasting romantic relationship (Sümer and Cozzarelli 2004).

In contrast, as a result of the experiences with non – responsive others, anxiously attached and avoidantly attached individuals learn to see attachment behaviors as painful and they would develop their goals of interactions around a hyper-activation of the attachment system. Through these means they achieve attachment security through clinging and hyper-vigilant responses (Bowlby 1988). Avoidant individuals develop their interaction goals by deactivating the attachment system by searching for autonomy and control so that they seek distance from the partners. According to Mikulincer (1998) both anxious and avoidant individuals tend to make more unreceptive attributions for their partners' behaviors.

Model of self is reported to have a strong effect on the way that individuals process information about negative self and partner behaviors and their perceptions of relationship satisfaction (Sümer and Cozzarelli 2004). Securely attached individuals are able to deal with interpersonal or relationship conflicts in a positive way than the insecure individuals and they do not evaluate the cost and benefits of the conflicts which would worsen the conflicts. It is revealed that securely attached individuals make attributions which would be relationship enhancing for their own and partners' negative behaviors so that they would be less distressed.

Bradbury and Fincham (1990) and Fincham (2001) indicate the association between attribution patterns and relationship distress. Dissatisfied couples have been making more negative attributions about their partner's behaviors which ultimately leads to low relationship satisfaction. Scott and Cordova (2002) highlighted the adult attachment styles as a decisive factor in moderating marital adjustment and depressive symptoms. In a study investigating marital dysfunction, insecure people tend to experience more depressive symptoms. During the study by Scott and Cordova (2002), a negative association was found between marital adjustment and depressive symptoms only for individuals who scored high on anxious –ambivalent attachment (Scott and Cordova 2002). Scott and Cordova's study (2002) reported no interaction between avoidant attachment style and dyadic adjustment when predicting depressing symptoms.

It was viewed that adult attachment style is associated with an individual's seeking of support from a partner as well the social support received from other sources than the partner. According to McGonagle, Kessler and Schilling

(1992), the way wives perceive social support from spouses predicts fewer marital disagreements. On the other hand an individual's level of marital distress is related to the level of social support received from other sources such as family and friends (Julien and Markman 1991). As per Meyers and Landsberger (2002), psychological distress mediated the relationship between secure attachment and marital satisfaction while the relationship between avoidant attachment and marital satisfaction was moderated by the same distress. Social support received by the individuals mediated the association between avoidant attachment and marital satisfaction. It was reported that individuals' level of psychological support and their perceptions of support became important mediators of marital satisfaction (Meyers and Landsberger 2002).

In the Indian context, several studies have revealed the reasons for divorce among Indian couples as unnecessary involvement of in – laws, extra – marital relationships, husband's inability to meet financial obligations and inability satisfy each other's' sexual needs (Surendra and Ramadevi 2012). Yelsma and Athappilly (1988) have also explored the similarities and differences in the nature of marital satisfaction among a sample of Indian couples and American couples in which they found verbal, non – verbal and sexual communication among Indian couples who have got married through arranged marriage were less influential in marital satisfaction while love marriages in both Indian and American sample were similar in their marital satisfaction.

Previous studies have revealed several associations between adult attachment style and marital satisfaction. The present study aims to find whether the established relationships between different attachment styles and marital satisfaction is the same in the Sri Lankan context. The research hypothesis of this study is that attachment styles influence the marital satisfaction of the spouses. Therefore the present study predicts that secure individuals may report relatively higher levels of marital satisfaction than the anxiously or the avoidantly attached individuals. It is assumed in the present study that the partner's attachment style and other socio – economic and cultural factors such as social support extended by the parents or the in – laws, having children in the family and the financial security will moderate the relations between an individual's attachment style and his or her marital satisfaction.

Method

Design

The present study was carried out as a correlational research in which the relationship between the adult attachment styles and marital satisfaction is discovered. This is aimed to establish any existence of a systematic pattern

between these variables. In this study the predictor variable is the attachment style of the participant and the dependent variable is marital satisfaction. A survey was conducted among married couples to assess the marital satisfaction determined by one's attachment style.

Participants

The participants for this study were 68 married couples ($N = 136$) who have been married for more than one year. Sample size was decided considering the limited time frame and the accessibility to the married couples. The condition 'married for more than one year' was set on the assumption that it will give a realistic picture of their marital satisfaction than the couples who have got married recently. The participants were mainly from in and around Colombo. The sample was limited to the town areas in Colombo and around due to a few reasons such as feasibility and the English language abilities since the study was carried in English. The participants were recruited through contacts and also via an advertisement on social media sites and through flyers sent via e-mails. The age of the participants ranged from 20 years to 62 years ($M = 37.9$, $SD = 9.5$). Demographic information for the participants included the following: With regard to ethnicity, participants consisted of 66.9% Sinhalese, 10.3% Tamils, 19.1% Muslims and 3.7% others. Among the 136 individuals 59.6% were Buddhists, 1.5% Christians, 8.8% Catholics, 9.6% Hindu and 20.6% were Islam in their religion. Therefore the sample could represent the ethnic and religious diversity in the Colombo district and in the country to a greater extent. 90.4% of them has completed high school (Advanced Level) or above education in which 29.4% were graduates. With regard to the number of years being married, 27.2% of them have been married for 1 – 3 years, 18.4% for 3 – 7 years, 20.6% for 7 – 15 years, 27.9% for 15 – 25 years and 5.9% for more than 25 years. 72% of them had children in the family and among the couples, only 40.4% were living with their parents or parents –in –laws. Majority of the participants (76.5%) were employed.

Material

Two separate standardized scales were used to measure the attachment style and marital satisfaction of the individuals in the study.

Attachment style. Each couple member completed 36 – item questionnaire of Experience in Close Relationships Scale – ECR (Brennan, Clark and Shaver 1998) which is a validated measure for assessing adult attachment. It measures the anxiety dimension and the avoidant dimension of an individual through the anxiety subscale which assesses the person for being how much worrying over being abandoned, rejected or not loved by significant others and avoidant subscale which measures how comfortable the person when he or she has to be

with an intimate person. The participants responded to each item reflecting how they generally feel in close relationships (not specifically in marriage) and they rated on a scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) for each statement. ECR scale is widely used in studies of human attachment and has been translated into many languages.

Marital Satisfaction. Participants' marital satisfaction was assessed by a 14 – item questionnaire of Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale – RDAS (Crane, Bean and Middleton 2000). The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they would agree or disagree with their spouse with the statements provided in the questionnaire and also statements in which they were asked how often certain events occur between them such as “Have a stimulating exchange of ideas”. Overall marital satisfaction was assessed by adding the scores of consensus, satisfaction and cohesion. Items reflecting the consensus among the spouses include statements such as “Demonstration of affection”, “sex relations”, “making major decisions”, etc in which the participants had to tick the correct column varying from “Always agree” to “always disagree”.

Procedure

Participants were collected to the study via different methods such as through the responses for the adverts on social media networks such as Facebook, and responses to the flyers distributed via e – mail and the flyers displayed in private places such as office areas. In majority of the cases, the questionnaires were administered at their houses or offices. Both the spouses were informed of the nature of the study and they were given participant information sheet which either the researcher or the assistant briefed about the nature of the study and clarified any further details. Then the participants were given consent forms to be signed and were well informed that their identities are kept confidential and they are able to withdraw from the study at any point they wish at no cost. Each couple was provided with a code which distinguishes one couple from one another (ex: 4034A for husband and 4034B for the wife). Once they filled the consent forms, they were provided with a battery of questionnaires which included demographic information sheet, ECR scale questionnaire and RDAS questionnaire to be filled. Each spouse filled these questionnaires individually without discussing with each other at the presence of the researcher or the research assistant. Once they completed the questionnaires they were handed over to the researcher or the assistant in a sealed envelope which was provided to them on which their participant code was mentioned. When both the spouses handed over their envelopes containing the answered questionnaires, they were debriefed about the study and any further questions from the participants were answered.

The data in each questionnaire set were entered to a sheet on the computer and the scores in each questionnaires were computed according to the relevant scoring instructions along with the necessary reverse scores. Multiple regression analysis and correlation analysis was then carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to test the hypotheses of the study.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are shown in the table 1. The difference between husbands' and wives' responses was examined using paired sample *t* tests. As correlation tables depicts there is no significance difference were found in how the husbands' and wives' rated the secure, anxious and avoidant adult attachment styles. Moreover, there is no difference in total dyadic adjustment symptoms. These bivariate inter-correlations between the three attachment styles and dyadic adjustment were reported in Table 2. As husbands' and wives' responses were not independent, separate rigorous analyses was employed later.

Table 1 :

Mean and standard deviations of attachment style and Dyadic adjustment

Measure	Husbands (n=68)		Wives (n=68)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attachment style				
Sec	7.5	1.2	7.4	1.2
Avoid	3.6	0.7	3.5	0.8
Anx	3.8	0.9	3.9	0.9
TTRDAS	48.1	9.9	47.4	9.4

Note: Sec=Secure ; Avoid= Avoidant ; Anx = Anxiety ; TTRDAS = Total of Reversed Dyadic Adjustment Scale

For the output that was given in table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient between Secure and two attachment scores is statistically significant. ($p^{**}<.01$). The value of *r* allows to determine the strength and direction of a relationship between secure and avoidance attachment and secure and anxiety attachment styles. ($r=0.665$ and $r=0.810$ for wives while $r=0.699$ and $r=0.770$ for husbands respectively) Hence, there is a strong, positive relationship between Secure and the other two attachment styles. This correlation merely tells that there is an association between the three aforementioned variables.

Table 2:

Pearson product-moment correlations for Self-reporting ratings of attachment styles and Marital adjustment styles for Husbands (n=68) and wives (n=68)

Variable	1	2	3	4
Attachment style				
1. Sec	-	.665**	.810**	.084
2. Avoid	.699**	-	.101	.068
3. Anx	.770**	.082	-	.058
4. TTRDAS	-.062	.059	-.139	-

Note: Husbands' correlations are presented above the diagonal, and wives' correlation are presented below the diagonal. Sec=Secure; Avoid= Avoidant; Anx = Anxiety; TTRDAS = Total of Reversed Dyadic Adjustment Scale.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Do attachment styles influence the marital satisfaction among adult groups?

The analyses were conducted separately for husbands and wives. For each regression, attachment styles were used along with demographic controls of respondents (husbands' and wives') namely years of marriage, number of children, education status and whether the respondent is living with parents or not etc. Summaries of the analyses are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3

Regression analysis predicting marital satisfaction for husbands (n=68)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Avoidant	.792	1.859	.055
Anxiety	.145	1.503	.013
Children	-.318	1.865	-.031
Lvnparent	-3.655	2.909	-.181
Education	1.074	.972	.143
Yrsmarried	.305	1.488	.040

Note: $R^2 = 0.237$; R^2 change = -0.037; Avoidant =

Avoidant attachment style; Anxiety = Anxiety attachment style; Children = No. of children; Lvnparent=Living with parents or otherwise; Education= Years of education ; Yrsmarried= No. of years married. * $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$, $p^{***} < .01$.

According to Table 3, though R^2 value shows 0.237, coefficient of determination is insignificant thus tells model's fit is not statistically significant. Apart of the intercept, all the other independent variables are statistically insignificant which depicts that they are not influential in determining the husbands' marital satisfaction. Though two attachment styles show positive signs in their respective coefficients, values are not statistically significant in the above model.

Table 4

Regression analysis predicting marital satisfaction for wives (n=68)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Avoidant	1.251	1.421	.105
Anxiety	-1.388	1.293	-.130
Children	-1.565	1.693	-.162
Lvnparent	-6.224	2.402	-.332**
Education	-1.592	.956	-.204
Yrsmarried	.446	1.320	.063

Note: $R^2=0.404$; R^2 change=-0.163; Avoidant= Avoidant attachment style; Anxiety = Anxiety attachment style; Children = No. of children; Lvnparent=Living with parents or otherwise; Education= Years of education; Yrsmarried= No. of years married. * $p < .1$ ** $p < .05$, $p^{***} < .01$

In contrast to the previous table 3, R^2 of the model in table 4 is statistically significant at $p < .1$ level. Correspondingly the binary variable "Living with parents or otherwise" is statistically significant at $p < .05$ and explained that living with parents effect marital satisfaction of the wives group negatively (0.332). Apart from that, here also the two attachment styles namely avoidant and anxiety scores are not statistically significant in determining the results while anxiety level depicts a negative sign in this model.

Discussion

Although there is ample research findings on the influence of attachment styles on marital satisfaction or relationship distress, the present study did not indicate such a significant association between these two variables. The individual scores for both one's attachment style and his or her marital satisfaction scores indicated that there is no significant difference in the scores between wives and husbands in the scores for the two scales. However, no significant association was found either among husbands or wives between attachment styles and their marital satisfaction. Based on the findings from previous research, it was predicted that secure individuals would report higher marital satisfaction while anxiously attached individuals would suggest low marital satisfaction. But in the present study no such association was found.

As assumed, the other factors such as the number of years married, having children, education level and living with parents did not show a significant impact in moderating the effects on marital satisfaction. Only living with parents had a significant negative relationship for wives in determining their marital satisfaction indicating that living independently, being away from the extended family system which was in the past has indicated some positive influence over marital satisfaction.

It is assumed from the results of the present study, that there could be other strong variables than one's attachment style which predicts his or her marital satisfaction. In a study with 20 distressed and 20 non distressed Indian couples, it was revealed a link between androgyny and marital adjustment suggesting that more non distressed individuals show high androgyny (Issac and Shah 2004). Other factors such as the belief in quality in the relationship and empathetic understanding had influenced an individual's marital satisfaction particularly with South Asians (Ahmed and Reid 2008).

Considering the dynamics observed in the present study and in other studies on marital satisfaction, it is assumed that many relationship dynamics exist in a Sri Lankan context in which the factors affecting marital satisfaction cannot be easily quantified and generalized to the entire population. It has been observed that the factors influencing an individual's marital satisfaction is not straightforward as shown in the previous literature. It is further observed that a considerable number of individuals who are anxiously attached showing higher marital satisfaction scores which is contradictory to the previous findings (Scott and Cordova 2002). In this light, how culture becomes a determinant for marital satisfaction is significant. As Koenigsberg (1989) mentioned, '*culture becomes an omnipotent extension of the self*' in which he blends his or her personal identity to the cultural components and feels him/herself connected to this omnipotent body. It is further mentioned how repression is linked with the

concept of sacrifice that the individuals have a tendency to repress (sacrifice) their psychic energies in the name of the sustaining his or her bond to the culture (Koenigsberg 1989). This could be explained as a way of how individuals in a cultural context like Sri Lanka perceives such institutions as marriage. There can be several cultural reasons for the results of this study which was referred to in Table 4 not to have a significant effect on any of the variables on marital satisfaction. Within Sri Lankan culture, many individuals hesitate to talk about their marriage or marital satisfaction openly since it is perceived to be highly judgmental of a person. As Koenigsberg identified, Sri Lankans grown up in a collectivist society, combines their represses with the concept of sacrifice in which they begin to perceive staying in a marriage equals to making sacrifices towards the significant other that the person is attached to. In this light, the influence of one's religion plays a considerable impact. Every religion talks about how to be a faithful, loyal spouse and would lead to not to have unbearable expectations from the other party which would eventually lead to anxieties leading to relationship distress. Therefore these are some of the dynamics which exist in a society like Sri Lanka influencing marital satisfaction among individuals. Another dynamic among the participants was that they tend to report of higher marital satisfaction regardless of their attachment style. Many of them tend to have higher marital satisfaction scores even when their anxiety scores remained high. These observations led to an assumption that individuals despite of the fact that their identities are kept confidential, they had a fear of being judged for their actual marital satisfaction.

The findings of this study would be useful for marriage and family therapists involved in pre – marital, marital and family therapy with special reference to Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). The findings would be useful for therapists who are using EFT or any other form of couple therapy, to adopt a therapeutic approach which addresses the cultural differences among the Sri Lankan couples. A special attention is drawn to understand the nature of how couples identify and study the roles assigned to them in the relationship and how the deterministic thinking of the couples lead to marital dissatisfaction. In couple therapy based on attachment, the therapist helps the couples to realize the origin of their problems and it helps to develop a more secure attachment between the spouses. This model of attachment based couple therapy can be used as one component in pre – marital counselling in which the couples develop an insight into one's own and the partner's attachment style and the strategies to maintain relationship distress in advance. The present study would also lay the base for future research in the area of adult attachment styles determining marital satisfaction in the Sri Lankan context in a broader perspective, searching for more qualitative information on the psychological and social factors affecting marital satisfaction among individuals.

Conclusion

Other factors which might have restricted the dynamics of the results of the study would be relatively small sample which is not representative of the entire country and individuals of all educational and socio – economic levels. If this had been carried out with a larger sample than in the present study, and included more items in the RDAS to find more culture – appropriate items of marital satisfaction, the results might have been different.

Despite the drawbacks of the present study and it indicating a non - significant relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction, the present study shed a light upon the field of relationship studies. This was supposed to be a base to identify the nature of marital quality among individuals and the potential dynamics within individuals related to relationship satisfaction in a specific cultural context. The results of the present study suggests the need of more in depth qualitative research into the field of relationship studies as an effective way of discovering the insights of individuals rather than quantifying the complex relationship patterns.

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