

The Structural Model of Family Performance Based on Attachment Styles with the Mediating Role of Differentiation

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Abstract--- Family has a structure of power whereby it manifests various forms of communication. Every family has its own specific way of dealing with problems. The members of this system have a deep and multi-layered relationship with each other. Family members to a large extent also have a shared background, shared internalized perceptions, assumptions and views about the world, and shared perception of life's goals. The aim of the present research is to compile a structural model of family performance based on the attachment styles of the mediating role of differentiation, that with a sample size of 500 couples selected by the rule of thumb from the offices of Khoy city as available from the normal (military and cultural) families of employees, that by distributing the questionnaire of attachment styles, differentiation and family performance were collected and analyzed, which according to descriptive indicators, the main variables as well as the goodness indices and the fitness of the model, the direct and indirect effects of the variables and the covariance correlation matrix were used, and the findings show that the mean of family performance evaluation in the whole sample is equal to 31.79. The highest direct effect on the structure of family performance is through differentiation being affected by 0.369. The results show that the mediating role of differentiation is effective in a positive relationship between attachment styles and family performance and can also prevent marital conflicts that reduce family performance.

Keywords--- Family Performance, Attachment Styles, Differentiation

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of man's life, marriage and family formation have always been with him (Cacciapaglia, Cai, Flacke, Lee, Parolini, and Serôdio, 2015). To put it more clearly, without marriage, the human race would not have been able to continue (James and Wilson, 2002). From a long time ago researchers and writers have considered marriage as an emotional connection that follows the specific social and cultural rules of any society (Cheng, 2010). The family is considered as the main social institution and the first system affecting the growth of children and adolescents (Ahmadi, 2017). Each one of the various factors existing in the family by a different amount and method affects on the development process of children as the product of the family (Gashti, 2016). Among these factors are cases like the number of family members, the level of education and the income of parents, and the role of each member, the relationship existing in the family, the ratio of solidarity among family members, and so on (Minuchin, 2000, quoted from Sanaei, 2011). Family structure includes all organizational duties that are used by family members throughout the life to change emotional, cognitive, and social events (Ahmad Doust, Asadi, Bakhshpour, Shir Alipour and Kiani, 2012). Communication skills, coping strategies, decision making, problem

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solving skill, flexibility, parenting, parenting behavior styles, tolerance and patience, planning, leadership and management, expressing opinions, applying view, self-reporting are a number of roles that compose the structure of the family process (Samani, 2005). Marriage and family formation, regardless of its quality and process, is considered as an important goal for many people. It can almost be said that every human being in the course of his life will inevitably face the choice of a spouse and the establishment of a stable marital relationship with the opposite sex (Conway, 2019). However, not every marriage can meet the needs and demands of its members (Najafloouie, 2013). In many times, a marriage may face failure, and couples may end up the relationship with despair and frustration after enduring many hardships. The concept of successful marriage makes sense when couples have achieved their goals from the marriage (Fakhri, 2017), goals such as satisfying mental and physical needs, forming a stable and permanent family institution, stable and satisfying relationships, and ultimately achieving a sense of happiness (Fuchs and Taubner, 2019). During growth, family members achieve their own unique and specific identity (Momeni and Alikhani, 2013), but they still have attachment to the family group and therefore will retain their own identity or collective image. These members do not live in isolation, but are interdependent, not only because of money, food, and shelter, but also because of the need for love and affection, cooperation and collaboration, socialization, and other tangible needs. In order to achieve successful performance, these people must adapt to the changing needs and demands of other members, as well as the changing expectations of the larger network of kinship, neighborhood, and ultimately the whole society (Tarverdizadeh, 2017). In other words, to what extent is a person able to avoid expressing behaviors that are automatically resulted from excitement (Goodarzi, Mohsenzadeh and Shahrarai, 2009)? McMaster's model concerning the evaluation of family performance is based on a systemic approach in which the structure, how it is organized, and the exchange models of the family are investigated. The fundamental principles of this model are: the relationship between the parts and components of the family, the incomprehensibility of a separate component from other family components, the important role of family structure and interactive models in determining and shaping the behavior of family members and the point that the family function is something more than the sum of the function of its components (Ahmad Doust et al., 2012). McMaster's model classifies family performance in the three categories of fundamental duties (including innate and inherent cases such as food preparation and shelter, kindness, affection, and so on) growth duties (including issues related to personal growth such as infancy, childhood, and so on) and issues related to family stages (such as first marriage, first pregnancy, first child birth) and risky events (including crises related to illness, accident, unemployment, and so on) (Latifian and Fakhari, 2014). According to McMaster's model, important dimensions of family performance are: problem solving, communication, roles, emotional responding, emotional intercourse and behavior control (Bakhshipour; Asadi; Kiani; Shir Alipoor; Ahmad Doust, 2012). All families with poor performance have difficulty in the field of emotional issues and are often unable to go through the problem-solving process. In these families, communication is overlooked or unqualified. Role assignment and accountability are not clear and specified, the scope of emotional reactions is limited, and the quantity and quality of these reactions, in proportion to the context and environment are unusual. At the same time, family members are not interested in each other and do not invest in each other emotionally, what Minuchin calls "broken families" (Tarverdizadeh, 2017). Another important criterion that should be investigated during marriage and parity with the

aim of becoming a couple is the safe and secure feeling that couples get from each other and seek to get; this criterion in scientific sources from the level of attachment and its investigation can be understood and explained. Attachment style is one of the most important factors affecting interpersonal interactions formed in one's childhood period and continues in later ages according to the environment in which he/she has evolved (Hartmann, 2019). Regarding the society, current culture and structure of the family, does each person have the ability to choose and stay in the choice and to continue the independent and constructive relationship with his choice, or will the intertwined family structure give this permission to him/her, and in general has one achieved a level of differentiation to enter into a parity with a sense of security and with secure attachment? Differentiation means the individual's ability to separate him/herself from his/her original family on an emotional and cognitive level and to create balance at intra-psychological and interpersonal level of his/her existence. There are always two opposing forces in human life that are in balance with each other: togetherness and individuality (Jaberi, 2015). Intrapersonal differentiation refers to an individual's ability to create balance between thoughts and emotions, while interpersonal differentiation refers to the ability to experience deep intimacy without endangering one's sense of individual independence (Johansson and Aldo, 1998, quoting from Goodarzi, 2009). According to the statistics of the Organization for Civil Registration, the number of marriages registered in 2017 has decreased compared to the previous year (15 thousand cases). According to the same statistics, in 2016, over 609 thousand cases of marriages and 175 thousand divorces registered in one year has reached 29 percent; it is the highest statistic in the history of Iranian civil registration since 1965 (Javanmard, 2016). Increasing the number of divorces and their effects on families makes it necessary to provide solutions to prevent divorce (Maeva and Pauw, 2016). Finding methods to prevent divorce is worth considering. Instead of interventions resulted from divorce problems, researchers and therapists should emphasize on preventing problems in the marriage (James, 2011). As divorce has severe negative effects on human relationships, all researchers have mostly addressed the reasons for divorce, but the root of divorce is the marital bond and this bond is also formed through the choice of a boy and a girl for marriage, which seems to have not been coherently addressed (Ameri and Amoei, 2017). In a study, Sun Rock (2015) investigated self-differentiation, spouse selection, and marital adjustment: Bowen's theory validation in the Spanish sample (Melchionna, Marchesan, Prato, and Fornasiero, 2015), that 118 incompatible couples participated in this research; the results of researches have shown that there is a positive relationship between differentiation and marital adjustment relationship (Rezapour, Aeini, Aeinparast and Heshmati, 2014). Also in Iran, Nokabadi (2016) in a study investigated the effectiveness of communication skills training on self-differentiation among Masjed Soleiman couples, that in this research, 4 couples, a total of 8 men and women, participated and the results show that the indicators of stable change also indicate the significance of change and increasing differentiation. This training relatively increased the differentiation of couples and separated the feeling from the wisdom (Salahi, Fallahi and Rahimi, 2016), and it has a significant role before marriage, meaning that as long as the couples have information about the level of differentiation between themselves and the other party before marriage, they will definitely ensure the stability of the family with this recognition. Also Najafloouie (2013) in a study investigated the relationship between one's differentiation and couples' satisfaction and aggression that in this research 120 couples participated. The results show that satisfied couples have a high level of differentiation compared to couples with

marital conflict, and this factor has increased marital satisfaction among them. Another case about attachment styles can also be mentioned. Attenburger (2016) in a study investigated romantic bonding and adjustment to divorce and separation in an adult sample in Chile, that this research had 190 participants in Chile. The results indicate that an unbalanced or inconsistent attachment style leads to divorce (Kawamoto, 2019). As these researches have also proven, those who have a romantic (lovely) attachment style are incompatible to divorce, but those who have an anxious or avoidant attachment style are more compatible to divorce (Ismailei, Rafiei and Sanaei, 2010). The problem solving dimension of family performance with attachment in the researches that Keyvani and Saadati have performed in 2013, or Mousavi and Baradaran performed in 2017, or Shahani Ebrahimi performed in 2015, or Rahimi and Fatehzadeh performed in 2018 can be mentioned that can be used in order to increase marital compatibility, attachment improvement and teaching effective problem-solving styles and adjusting marital expectations. In the communication dimension of family performance with differentiation, the researches results that Barmi and Keshavarz performed in 2018, Shahbazi performed in 2014, Ebrahimi performed in 2018, Fakhari performed in 2012, or Mirzadeh and Tajrobehkar performed in 2016 showed that the causal model of family communication patterns, self-differentiation and the quality of life have acceptable fitness. This means that self-differentiation in relation to family communication models plays a mediating role in predicting the quality of life. Because in the family performance, direct and clear communication styles are the most effective, covert and indirect, and the least effective type of communication styles. In the dimension of family performance roles with attachment styles individuals like Bakhshayesh Barzegar and Zare in 2016, or Rasouli and Zeidi in 2017 along with Mossadegh and Amini in 2015 performed researches, that when all the necessary family functions were clearly assigned to the proper person(s), and there has been responsibility, the results also indicate that when roles are not assigned to the proper persons, the essential functions of the family are not addressed or assigning the roles and responsibility are not maintained. The emotional fusion dimension, itself is composed of six types, which are: 1- Lack of fusion 2- Emotionless fusion 3- Fascinated self-fusion 4- Excessive fusion 5- Coexisting species fusion, and finally 6- Empathetic fusion. In researches conducted by Pour Shahsavari in 2011 or Mahdavi, Tardast and Jahromi in 2014, the results of multivariate regression indicate the predictive role of the areas of independence, defective performance and altered orientation of the early incompatible psychological foundations for couples' differentiation, the areas of disconnection and rejection and damaging restrictions for couples' conflict and the components of emotional reactivity, emotional escape, and fusion with others were differentiation for couples' marital conflict. The results of path analysis also showed that differentiation can play a balancing role for the effect of early incompatible psychological foundations on marital conflict. Considering the results, it seems that if couples have a good level of differentiation, they can decrease the destructive effect of early incompatible psychological foundations in the marital life. In general, some researches have been performed about family performance on differentiation, and people like Asgari and Ashrafi in 2017, and also Ghaffari and Rahimi in 2014 conducted researches in this field, that the research results showed that differentiation predicts the positive strategies of cognitive emotion regulation and mental health directly and the negative strategies of cognitive emotion regulation predict family performance in reverse. Conclusion: According to the research findings, it can be acknowledged that differentiation, cognitive emotion regulation and mental health have an important and applied role in the family institution. As distinction

between emotional and rational performance gives this possibility to individuals to properly manage their emotions, and also the health of the family is affected by the health of all its members, thus the ability to use emotions and thoughts properly leads to the use of compatible models of emotion regulation and family performance improvement. Therefore, the results of this research can be used in intervention planning to empower families. Now, regarding all of the above stated points, are we pursuing the point that whether the attachment styles of the mediate role of differentiation can affect the structural model of family performance?

II. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This research is a fundamental study with the covariance correlation matrix method that the data was quantitative and its time was in 2018 for one year. The method of present research is of correlation researches type using structural equations. The statistical population of this research included a sample size equal to 500 couples from Khoy city offices, selected by the rule of thumb as available from the normal employee families (military and cultural). The data collection was in such a way that all three questionnaires were presented together to the subjects and they were asked to complete them with patience and tolerance in a suitable time interval. To analyze the collected data, we used two categories of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. In the descriptive statistics section, we used central indicators including mean and dispersion indicators such as standard deviation and Pearson correlation matrix to investigate the relationship between variables. In the inferential section, the data obtained from the questionnaires was investigated using statistical tests of one-way multivariate analysis of covariance and structural equations modeling approach by AMOS and SPSS 22 software. After investigating and confirming the existence of structural equations modeling assumptions, the assumed research model was fitted.

III. RESEARCH TOOL

A 60-item questionnaire has been compiled to measure family performance by Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishab in 1983 based on McMaster's model (Sanaei, 2011). The test has six subscales: problem solving, communication, role, emotional responsiveness, emotional fusion, and behavior control, and one score is as a total function. All seven of its internal scales have significant internal homology (Cronbach's alpha from 0.72 to 0.92). Its validity and retesting during one week was satisfactory (0.66 to 0.76). In the research of Malek Khosravi (2003), Cronbach's alpha from 0.51 to 0.94 was obtained between its subscales, and also between all subscales and the overall family performance the correlation was obtained from 0.47 to 0.97 (Katon, 2012). In the present research, only the overall family function assessment scale was used. This scale has 12 questions in the Likert's four-option spectrum (completely agree, agree, disagree, completely disagree), and scoring each question is performed respectively from 1 to 4. The minimum score is 12 and the maximum score of the questionnaire is 48. Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the overall family assessment scale. Cronbach's alpha result became equal to 0.708, and since it is higher than the required criterion, that is 0.70, so the reliability of the questionnaire is confirmed. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine the validity of the family assessment scale. The following figure shows the measurement model associated with this scale.

The differentiation questionnaire has been prepared by Scorn and Dundee in 1998 and provides an estimate of a person's differentiation ratio or a person's ability ratio to separate rational and emotional processes from each other. This questionnaire has 45 questions, which has been graded on the Likert's 6-degree scale from "I completely

disagree" to "I completely agree". The minimum possible score for a person is equal to 45 and the maximum possible score for a person is equal to 270.

Attachment Questionnaire: This scale consists of 36 items that is measured through marking on a 5-degree scale (of Likert type) that is formed from "It does not correspond to my characteristics in any way = 1", to "It completely corresponds to my characteristics = 5". It has two subscales of avoidance and anxiety. In the present research, Cronbach's alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained 0.729 for the whole questionnaire, and was obtained 0.733 for the avoidance subscale, and was obtained 0.758 for the anxiety subscale, which are considered acceptable values and the reliability of the attachment questionnaire is confirmed. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine the validity of the structure.

IV. RESULTS

According to the data of Figure 1, most coefficients are significant except the direct effect of anxiety on differentiation as well as the direct effect of anxiety and avoidance on family performance. The table below shows the path coefficients and their significance for direct, indirect and total effects. Direct coefficients indicate the impact ratio of one structure on another structure. Indirect coefficients show the impact ratio of one structure on another structure through a third structure, and total coefficients are also composed of the sum of direct and indirect coefficients and indicate the overall effect coefficient of one structure on another structure in the model. Direct coefficients on the arrows mark have been presented in the Figure 1 of the research model.

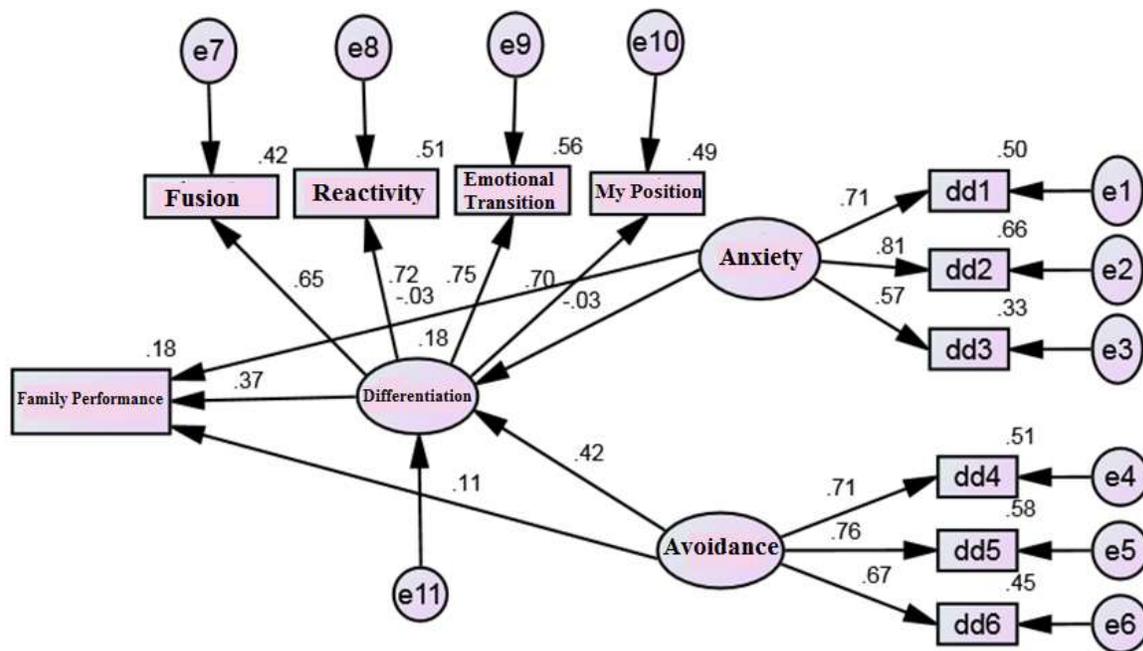


Figure 1: Research Hypothetical Model

Table 1: Direct, Indirect, and Overall Standard Effects of the Research Main Variables.

From Structure	To Structure	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Overall Effect	Explained Variance
Anxiety	Differentiation	-0.032	Does Not Have	-0.032	0.50

Avoidance		0.422**	Does Not Have	0.422**	
Anxiety	Family	-0.031	-0.012*	-0.043**	0.34
Avoidance	Performance	-0.107	0.156	-0.049	
Differentiation	Family Performance	0.369**	Does Not Have	0.369**	

**p<0.001

As it can be observed in Table (1), the direct effect of the two styles of avoidance and anxiety attachment on differentiation is significant avoidance. Also, the indirect effect of attachment, avoidance and anxiety styles on family performance through differentiation is significant, but the direct effect of avoidance structure and anxiety on family performance is not significant. It should be mentioned that bootstrapping method was used to investigate the significance of the indirect effects. The explained variance ratio of the main endogenous variable of the structure, that is family performance through the structures of attachment and differentiation styles, is equal to 0.34, that is about 34% of the variance of the main dependent variable is explained by model variables, and 66% of its variance are related to the external variables of the model. Also, 0.50 of the variance of the differentiation structure has been explained through the main endogenous structures of the structure that is attachment (avoidance and anxiety structures).

Table 2: Indexes of goodness of fit of the measurement model related to the marital satisfaction questionnaire

Fitness Indicators	DF	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	CMIN	RMSEA
Primary Model	40	1.768	0.987	0.989	0.989	0.985	0.987	70.703	0.030
Acceptable Value	-	-	>0.90	>0.80	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	-

According to the data of Table (2) all the fitness indicators are located in the acceptable range and for this reason the fitness of the measurement model of the overall evaluation scale of family is confirmed.

Table 3: Descriptive Indicators of Family Performance (n=500)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Family Performance	31.79	6.43	-0.41	-0.11	14	48

As it is observed from the data of Table (3), according to the table above the mean of family performance assessment in the whole sample is equal to 31.79. The distribution normality of the scores of this variable regarding the value of skewness and kurtosis indicators is also confirmed. In Table (3), the descriptive indicators of the independent variable of attachment styles (including the two components of anxiety and avoidance) and also the mediating variable of the model that is differentiation have respectively been presented.

Table 4: Direct Effect of Attachment Components (Avoidance and Anxiety) on Differentiation

	Standardized Parameter β	Path Coefficient (Non-Standardized)	Standard Error of Estimation	t	Sig.
Anxiety \Rightarrow Differentiation	0.048	-0.041	-0.031	-0.848	0.352
Avoidance \Rightarrow Differentiation	0.055	0.525	-0.107	2.764	0.006

According to Table (4), the direct effect of the two components of attachment on differentiation is significant. The statistic corresponding to this effect for the component of anxiety is equal to -0.848, and for the component of avoidance is equal to 2.764, that anxiety is not significant, but avoidance is not significant at 0.05 level. Thus, with regard to this result, attachment has a direct effect on differentiation.

Table 5: Direct Effect of the Components of Attachment Including Anxiety and Avoidance on Family Performance

	Standardized Parameter β	Path Coefficient (Non-Standardized)	Standard Error of Estimation	t	Sig.
Anxiety Family Performance	0.045	-0.042	-0.031	-0.930	0.352
Avoidance \Rightarrow Family Performance	0.052	0.145	-0.107	2.764	0.006

According to Table (5) the direct effect of the component of anxiety on family performance is equal to -0.042. The statistic corresponding to this effect is also equal to 1.54, and its significance level is -0.930. Since its significance level is higher than 0.05, so regarding this result, the component of anxiety does not have a direct effect on family performance. But the component of avoidance has a significant direct effect on family performance.

Table 6: Direct Effect of Differentiation on Family Performance

	Standardized Parameter β	Path Coefficient (Non-Standardized)	Standard Error of Estimation	t	Sig.
Differentiation \Rightarrow Family Performance	0.044	0.400	0.369	9.098	0.001

According to Table (5), the direct effect of differentiation on family performance is equal to 0.044. The statistic corresponding to this effect is also equal to 9.098 and its significance level is 0.001. Since its significance level is lower than 0.05, so regarding this result, differentiation has a significant direct effect on family performance.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research show that the components of attachment styles directly and indirectly affect family performance. The two components of insecure attachment style, which are avoidance and anxiety, affect family performance in such a way that both are negative, which means that having this feature and this type of attachment style in individuals has a reverse effect on family performance. That is, whatever the person is, for example, avoiding or anxious; he/she will act weakly in family performance. The results obtained from the investigation showed that both predictor variables (anxiety attachment, avoidance attachment) explain a part of the family performance variance. To explain the mentioned result, the most important features of each one of the predictor

variables that can create the context of family performance can be mentioned. The pervasive fear of being rejected and over-dependence on spouse in anxious individuals, the avoidance of intimacy, and the excessive avoidance from the spouse in people with avoidance attachment style, the excessive focus on negative behaviors all affect family performance. The results of this statement can also be observed in a research conducted by Akhondi in 2016 entitled "Investigating the Relationship between Attachment Styles and Marital Satisfaction in the Employees of Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences", that means there is a significant relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction. In most families, conflict like an entity exists in the family environment, because well-differentiated families are rare, and people mainly marry with those who have the same level of differentiation similar to themselves (Nadi, 2018). According to Bowen, family as a social system must be unstable unless its members are well differentiated. According to Bowen, differentiation is the individual's ability to separate him/herself emotionally and physically from the original family, as well as the ability to achieve emotional growth and independence without losing the capacity for emotional connection with the family. A person is differentiated when his/her emotional and security needs do not force him/her to lose or limit his/her individuality in order to obtain confidence in the love and accepting others. On the other hand, a differentiated person has safety regarding his/her identity (Namoran, 2018), and can freely enter into intimate communications. As he pursues meaningful goals, he is more likely to succeed in all aspects of his life (Lotfi, 2006). In the present research, the findings also indicate that unsafe anxiety attachment has a negative effect on direct relationship with family performance, but through mediating differentiation it has shown a positive effect on family performance. Also, unsafe avoidance attachment through mediating differentiation has a positive effect on family performance. It can be find out that differentiation as a basic factor in removing issues related to people's insecurity in family performance can be very successful and important (Prinsen, Deschepper, Maes, and Alaerts, 2019). The findings of this research are in line with the findings of Pineo (2012) that in a research investigated the effect of self-differentiating training on reducing anxiety (general, overt and covert). He found out that individual, situational, and communication variables, such as differentiation have significant relationship with a person's ability to reduce anxiety, and that self-differentiating training reduces anxiety and improves psychological compatibility. Also, according to the finding of Gabelman (2012), that in a research investigated the relationship between differentiation and anxiety, it showed that there is a significant relationship between the two structures and that not differentiated people experience high chronic anxiety. The finding of this research is in line with the research results of Hooper and DePuy (2010). Their research investigates the relationship between differentiation and stress and anxiety and health and shows a significant relationship between differentiation and stress and anxiety and health. According to the finding of Tuason and Friedlander (2000), the relationship between differentiation, anxiety and psychological symptoms in a Philippine sample also indicates that differentiation is inversely related to psychological distress. The findings are in line with the opinion of Prochaska and No KRAS (2000) who believed that emotional illness is created when people are unable to properly make themselves distinct from their original family. These findings also confirm the view of Thorberg and Lyvers (2006) indicating that the level of differentiation of each individual can be best observed in the stressful situations of the family and where a person, despite severe anxiety in the family, is able to control his behavior in accordance with explicit and thoughtful principles; it shows the ratio of his differentiation. The findings of this research are consistent with the view of Peleg and Zoabi (2014) indicating that undifferentiated individuals who do not have a defined identity of themselves and move in the existing interpersonal roles and issues along with the emotional wave of the family, experience high chronic anxiety and are prone to psychological problems and the

emergence of illness symptoms. Fisher (2000) proposes that differentiated people in order to share in anxiety are not easily influenced by others and do not show the symptom of harm. Peleg, Maissara, and Zoabi (2014) stated that as a result of reduced autonomy, chronic anxiety increases in the individual. In line with the interpretation of the findings, it can be said that optimal growth occurs when family members are distinct from each other, so in these conditions, anxiety is low among children. Researches results have shown that the consequence of mothers' differentiation is the reduction of anxiety and many psychological problems in the families, because differentiated individuals distinguish between emotional and rational processes and are not affected by the thoughts and behavior of others. As in the present research, the direct, effective and positive relationship between differentiation and performance has also been well explained and demonstrated. Now, according to the findings of this research, the direct effect of anxiety on differentiation and avoidance of differentiation is -0.032 and 0.422, respectively, which can be said that the effect of avoidance on differentiation is significant. Also, the direct effect of anxiety and avoidance on family performance is -0.031 and 0.011, respectively, but the effect of anxiety and avoidance on family performance is indirectly -0.012 and 0.156, respectively, that ultimately the effect of differentiation on family performance is also 0.369.

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