

## Original research

## Explaining the Causal Relationships Between Attachment Styles and Attitudes Toward Infidelity in Women with Histrionic Personality Traits: The Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation

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### Extended Abstract

#### Introduction:

Although every human being desires attention from others, women with signs of histrionic personality disorder exhibit excessive attention-seeking behaviors (1). Histrionic personality disorder is one of the personality disorders that can seriously disrupt marital relationships (2) and influence an individual's attitude toward infidelity (3). One of the variables involved in attitudes toward infidelity is individuals' attachment styles, particularly avoidant and ambivalent styles (4). Another variable influencing attitudes toward infidelity is emotion regulation (5). It appears that individuals experiencing extramarital relationships utilize more negative emotion regulation strategies (6). Since this issue has not yet been modeled, the present study aims to explain the causal relationships between attachment styles and attitudes toward infidelity in women with histrionic personality traits, considering the mediating role of emotion regulation.

#### Method:

The research method was correlational, employing path analysis. The statistical population comprised female students with histrionic personality traits at Islamic Azad University, Tehran Central Branch, in 2024-2025, identified using the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Questionnaire. The research sample included 208 female students with histrionic personality traits, selected via convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria were: (1) at least two years of marital experience, (2) no psychotherapy treatment, (3) no medication use, (4) willingness to participate in the research, and (5) possession of a smartphone. Exclusion criteria included unwillingness to cooperate and incomplete questionnaire responses. Data collection tools included the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Questionnaire (7), Hazan and Shaver's Adult Attachment Questionnaire (8), the Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (9), and the Histrionic Personality Disorder Questionnaire (10). Path analysis using AMOS version 24 was employed for data analysis.

#### Findings:

A total of 208 female students with histrionic personality traits participated in the study. The mean age of participants was 25.91 years with a standard deviation of 6.31 years; 146 participants (70.2%)

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were single, and 62 (29.8%) were married. The findings indicated that the direction of correlations among variables was in line with expectations and consistent with the theories in this research domain. Furthermore, the results showed that the assumptions of univariate and multivariate normality and multicollinearity were satisfied. Table 1 presents the fit indices of the measurement and structural models.

**Table 1: Model Fit Indices**

<b>Fit Indices</b>	<b>Initial Model</b>	<b>Modified Model</b>	<b>Cut-off Point<sup>1</sup></b>
<b>Chi-square (<math>\chi^2</math>)</b>	14.39	1.07	-
<b>Degrees of Freedom</b>	1	2	-
<b><math>\chi^2/\text{df}^2</math></b>	14.39	0.54	Less than 3
<b>GFI<sup>3</sup></b>	0.978	0.998	0.90>
<b>AGFI<sup>4</sup></b>	0.540	0.982	0.85>
<b>CFI<sup>5</sup></b>	0.968	1.00	0.90>
<b>RMSEA<sup>6</sup></b>	0.254	0.003	0.08<

Table 1 shows that while two fit indices (GFI and CFI) and other indices did not support an acceptable fit for the initial model, by removing nonsignificant paths (direct path coefficients between avoidant attachment style and reappraisal strategy of emotion regulation, and between avoidant attachment style and attitude toward infidelity) and adding covariances between the error terms of two emotion regulation strategies, the model was modified. As shown in Table 3, after modification, the fit indices supported an acceptable model fit with the data ( $\chi^2/\text{df}$ =0.54, GFI=0.99, AGFI=0.98, CFI=1, RMSEA=0.00).

<sup>1</sup> Cut points based on Klein's perspective (2016)

<sup>2</sup> normed chi-square

<sup>3</sup> Goodness Fit Index

<sup>4</sup> Adjusted Goodness Fit Index

<sup>5</sup> Comparative Fit Index

<sup>6</sup> Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

**Conclusion:** Overall, attachment styles and emotion regulation play a significant role in attitudes toward infidelity among women with histrionic personality traits. Therefore, the findings of this study can be beneficial for counselors and family therapists.

**Keywords:** Emotion Regulation, Attachment Style, Histrionic Personality, Attitude Toward Infidelity

This study demonstrated that the indirect effect of emotion regulation on the relationship between attachment styles and attitudes toward infidelity in women with histrionic personality traits was significant. Individuals with secure attachments tend to have an optimistic view of life. When faced with life challenges, rather than seeking attention through decisions that harm marital relationships (as a result of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies and impulsive decision-making), they choose strategies that allow for a realistic assessment of problems within the secure context of the relationship and select solutions that reduce the desire for immediate gratification, such as extramarital infidelity (11). Early attachment experiences with primary caregivers lead to the development of emotional schemas that facilitate the formation and application of adaptive emotion regulation skills (12). Consequently, the use of adaptive strategies reduces the tendency toward extreme attention-seeking behaviors and the need for approval from others. Conversely, when attachment styles develop insecurely, and individuals cannot access their spouses during times of need, the use of maladaptive strategies leads to emotional and impulsive decision-making (13).

**Practical Implications:** It is recommended that psychologists and marriage counselors utilize the results of this study to design educational programs before and after marriage to prevent potential harm.

**Ethical Considerations:** In conducting this study, ethical principles were observed, including explaining the study objectives, ensuring freedom to enter or withdraw from the study, honesty, confidentiality, deletion of information after the study's completion, and obtaining informed consent electronically.

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