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Predicting Emotional Maturity Based on Family Emotional Atmosphere, Perfectionism and Perceived Stress in Young Couples

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Citation:

Abstract

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the prediction of emotional maturity based on the emotional atmosphere of the family and perceived perfectionism and stress in young couples, which in terms of practical purpose; it was descriptive in nature and correlational in terms of research method. The statistical population of the present study includes all young couples who have passed one year of marriage and visited the counseling clinics of Tunkabon city in the spring and summer of 2023, and their number is 230 couples, 140 of them according to Morgan's table, using a simple random sampling method. As an example of the current research, the selection and questionnaires of emotional maturity or Singh and Bhargava [1], Hillburn's emotional atmosphere in the family [2], Hill's perfectionism [3] and perceived stress was answered by Cohen et al. [4]. After collecting the data, the data was analyzed using the step-by-step multivariate regression analysis method with the help of SPSS version 27 software. The results showed that there is a significant negative relationship between negative perfectionism and perceived stress with emotional maturity, and there is a positive relationship between positive perfectionism and emotional family atmosphere with emotional maturity.

Keywords: Emotional maturity, Family emotional atmosphere, Perfectionism, Perceived stress, Young couples.

1|Introduction

Marriage and family formation is one of the most critical stages in life and is recognized as the first emotional commitment and legal bond between a man and a woman [5], [6]. This bond encompasses three essential pillars: 1) attraction, 2) commitment, and 3) understanding [7]. According to research findings, love and affection, having a partner and companion in life, fulfilling emotional and psychological expectations, and increasing happiness and contentment are the main reasons for marriage [8]. One of the components that

plays a crucial role in marital life is emotional maturity [9]. Emotional maturity is defined as an individual's ability to manage their emotions and evaluate the emotional states of others in interpersonal relationships to make appropriate decisions and actions [10]. Research findings suggest that the emotional maturity variable is significantly related to all marital variables, including spousal understanding and acceptance, marital communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure, sexual relationships, relationships with children, relatives, and friends, and religious orientation [11]. Furthermore, emotional maturity is an important predictor of individuals' success and adjustment in life. Several factors influence the level of emotional maturity in individuals, with one of the most significant being the family emotional atmosphere [12]. Some researchers have concluded that an ideal family provides a sense of worth, belonging, and being loved and cherished. In such families, individuals have more opportunities to gain independence and responsibility [13].

Therefore, the family emotional atmosphere refers to the overall emotional interactions and relationships among family members, such as the expression of feelings and interests, communication styles, and the way individuals treat each other [14]. Certainly, there are factors in life that cause stress and ultimately have negative effects on both mental and physical health. Undoubtedly, perfectionism, due to its characteristics, plays an important role in the creation and persistence of stress [15]. Perceived stress is a psychological state or process in which an individual perceives their physical and psychological well-being as being threatened. In fact, the creation of stress depends on how an individual perceives and interprets a situation and events [16]. Research today views perfectionism as an influential factor in high levels of stress [17]. Perfectionism refers to a set of behaviors accompanied by negative self-evaluation, criticism, and self-blame [18]. Bandura's [19] belief is that harsh standards for continuous self-evaluation and extreme forms of self-criticism lead to abnormal reactions and feelings of worthlessness and purposelessness, which can, in turn, provide a foundation for stress in the individual [11]. In fact, negative perfectionism is a constant source of stress because such individuals always feel obligated to be flawless [20]. Thus, this expectation impacts their coping strategies in stressful situations and often leads to failure [21]. Furthermore, given that young couples have a strong motivation for perfection, unrealistic high standards, compulsive effort, and an all-or-nothing thinking approach regarding outcomes as total successes or total failures, these conditions can affect their emotional maturity [16]. Ultimately, considering that stress in relationships can be very destructive and harmful, both in relationships between spouses and in the mental health of individuals, it is essential to examine them through research and studies [22]. Therefore, given the importance of emotional maturity and its impact on coping with life's stresses, social adjustment, and the formation of healthy emotional relationships in individual and marital life, and to prevent the negative consequences of not achieving emotional growth, it is critical and necessary to investigate this important variable and the factors related to it [23]. Additionally, the results of this study could be highly useful and beneficial for psychologists, couples therapists, and family therapists. Given the above considerations, the hypothesis of the present research is whether there is a relationship between the family emotional atmosphere, perfectionism, perceived stress, and emotional maturity in young couples in the district.

2 | Method

In terms of its purpose, this research is applied, and in terms of data collection and analysis, it follows a non-experimental method and correlational design, with a quantitative data collection approach. The statistical population of this study includes all young couples who had been married for one year and visited the counseling clinics in Tonekabon during the spring and summer of 2023. The total number of couples was 230, and according to Morgan's table, 140 participants were selected as the sample using simple random sampling. They completed the emotional maturity questionnaire by Singh and Bhargava [1], the family emotional atmosphere scale by Hilburn [2], the perfectionism scale by Hill et al. [3], and the perceived stress scale by Cohen et al. [4].

2.1 | Measurement Tools

Emotional maturity questionnaire by Singh and Bhargava

This questionnaire was developed by Singh and Bhargava in 1991 [1]. It consists of 48 questions and aims to assess various dimensions of emotional maturity. Scoring is based on a Likert scale, with measurement ranging from "never" to "very much." The score range is between 50 and 140, where lower scores indicate higher emotional stability, and higher scores indicate lower emotional stability. The validity of this questionnaire has been reported with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67, and it is commonly used in research studies [24].

Family emotional atmosphere questionnaire by Hilburn

This questionnaire was developed by Hilburn in 1964 and consists of 16 questions aimed at evaluating the emotional atmosphere of the family, specifically the father-child relationship and the family-child relationship [2]. Scoring is based on a five-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "very low" to "very high," corresponding to scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Each question measures one of the subcomponents of the emotional atmosphere. Higher overall scores indicate a higher and better emotional atmosphere in the respondent's family, and vice versa. Nahidi [25] calculated the reliability of the family emotional atmosphere questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha and test-retest methods, reporting values of 0.87 and 0.83, respectively.

Perfectionism questionnaire by Hill et al.

This questionnaire was developed by Hill et al. [3] in 2004 and is designed to assess the level of perfectionism in individuals. It consists of 59 questions, with each question answered on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The lower score range is 58, the medium range is 174, and the higher range is 232. Hill et al. [26] reported that the internal consistency of the perfectionism questionnaire was high, with a range of 0.83 to 0.98 for all subscales. In the study by Nahidi [25], the overall reliability of the Hill's perfectionism [3] was found to be 0.89 using Cronbach's alpha, and factor analysis with the principal components method and Varimax rotation was used to assess its validity.

Perceived stress scale by Cohen et al.

The perceived stress scale was developed in 1983 by Cohen et al. [4]. Each item is answered based on a five-point Likert scale (none, low, moderate, high, very high), with scores of 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 assigned to the respective options. the internal consistency coefficients were calculated using Cronbach's alpha for the components of positive perception of stress (0.71) and negative perception of stress (0.75). Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total scores of the questionnaire was found to be 0.84.

3|Findings and Research

The data were analyzed at two levels: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. At the descriptive level, frequency tables, means, and standard deviations were used. At the inferential level, Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were utilized. In the analysis phase, the emotional maturity scale was used as the criterion variable, while the perfectionism scale (with two subscales), family emotional climate, and perceived stress were entered as independent (predictor) variables. Data processing and analysis were conducted using SPSS27 software.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' frequencies by demographic characteristics.

Variable	Response Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group	20-30 years	66	47.1
	31-40 years	49	35.0
	41 years and older	25	17.9
Education level	High school and below	41	29.3
	Bachelor's degree	72	51.4
	Master's degree and higher	27	19.3
Marital status	Less than 2 years	37	26.4
	2 to 10 years	67	47.9
	11 to 20 years	25	17.9
	21 years and more	11	7.9
Total for each variable		140	100

The table above presents the frequency distribution of the demographic characteristics of the sample population. In the age group, the highest frequency of 47.1% belongs to the 20-30 years age group, and the age group "41 years and older" has the lowest frequency at 17.9%. In the education section, the highest frequency of respondents belongs to the Bachelor's degree category, which constitutes 51.4% (72 individuals) of the sample. The lowest frequency, 19.3% (27 individuals), corresponds to the master's degree category. The 2-10 years marital duration group accounts for the highest frequency at 47.9% in the marital duration section of the respondents.

Table 2. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality of data.

Scale	Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	Sig
Emotional maturity	0.071	140	0.076
Family emotional climate	0.073	140	0.068
Positive perfectionism	0.057	140	0.2
Negative perfectionism	0.07	140	0.08
Perceived stress	0.048	140	0.2

The significance values for this test across the variables are greater than 0.05. As a result, the assumption of normality for the distribution of these variables is not rejected. Thus, parametric tests are valid and appropriate for hypothesis testing (sig > 0.05).

Table 3. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient between research variables.

Variable	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional maturity	105.3 ± 16.4	1				
2. Family emotional climate	70.7 ± 9.8	0.537**	1			
3. Positive perfectionism	80.21 ± 17.5	0.293**	0.425**	1		
4. Negative perfectionism	123.4 ± 17.9	-00.388**	-0.396**	-0.405	1	
5. Perceived stress	46.6 ± 11.2	0.202**	-0.273**	-0.339	0.341**	1

** Significance level at 0.01.

Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation indices (M±SD) and Pearson correlations between variables. As observed, the mean score for emotional maturity, based on a range of 48–240, is calculated as 105.3. The mean score for the family emotional atmosphere, based on a range of 16–90, is calculated as 70.7. The mean score for positive perfectionism, based on a range of 22–110, is 80.21, while for negative perfectionism, based on a range of 36–180, it is 123.4. The perceived stress score, based on a range of 0–56, is calculated as 46.6. Among the relationships between variables and emotional maturity, the highest correlation, amounting to 0.537, belongs to the variable "family emotional atmosphere". The direction of the relationship is positive, indicating that an increase in one variable leads to an increase in the other.

Main Hypothesis: There is a relationship between family emotional atmosphere, perfectionism, and perceived stress with emotional maturity in young couples in Tonekabon.

To assess the above hypothesis, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used. The results of the final regression model are reported in the table below.

Table 4. Statistical indices of multivariate analysis of emotional maturity in the final regression model.

Model	R	R²	F	B	SE	β	t	sig
Final	0.599	0.358	25.31					0.000
Constant				24.89	9.6		2.5	0.01
Family emotional atmosphere				0.703	0.12	0.422	5.57	0.000
Perceived stress				-0.287	0.108	-0.197	-2.66	0.009
Negative perfectionism				-0.141	0.071	-0.154	-1.98	0.04

In *Table 4*, the summary of the regression analysis of emotional maturity based on predictor variables in the final model is observed. As the results indicate, among the four entered components, positive perfectionism was removed from the model. The predictor variables were able to explain 35.8% of the changes in emotional maturity. Given the values (F = 31.25) and (sig = 0.000), this model is statistically significant (sig < 0.01), meaning that the entered variables have the ability to explain a percentage of the changes in emotional maturity, and there is a significant relationship between these variables and emotional maturity. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) of the model is calculated to be 0.599, indicating a moderate correlation with the criterion variable. The unstandardized coefficients (B) show that the emotional climate of the family has a positive impact, while the two variables of perfectionism and perceived stress have a negative impact. In line with this coefficient, the regression equation can be formed as follows:

emotional maturity $= 24.89 + 0.703$ (family emotional climate) $-$
0.287 (perceived stress) $- 0.141$ (negative perfectionism).

In terms of the standardized coefficient, for every one standard deviation change in the family emotional climate, emotional maturity increases by 0.422. Similarly, based on the coefficients for perceived stress and negative perfectionism, emotional maturity decreases by 0.197 and 0.154, respectively. These values represent the net effect of the predictor variables on the changes in emotional maturity. A graphical representation of the relationships is provided in the chart below, which illustrates a linear type of relationship.
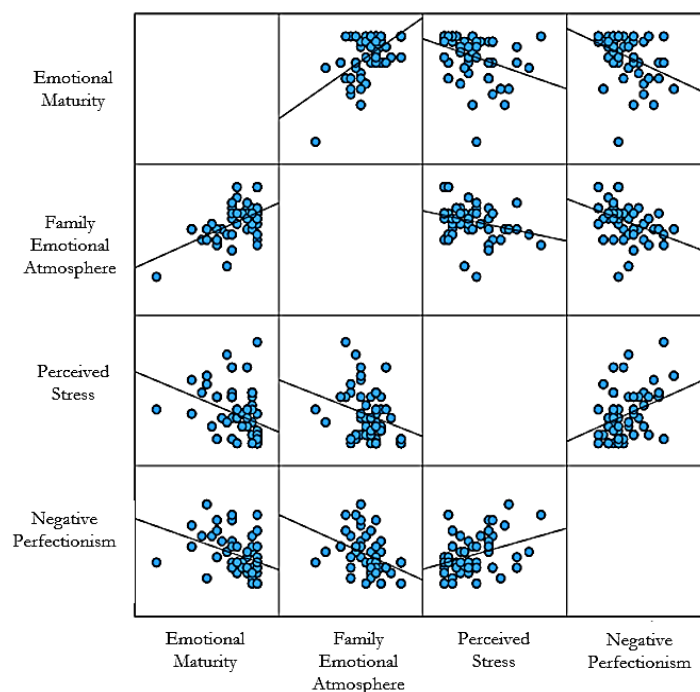

Fig. 1. Scatter of predictor variables in relation to emotional blunting.

Table 5. Distribution of Pearson correlation coefficient between predictor variables and emotional maturity.

Variables	Emotional Maturity	d.f	R²	t	sig
Family emotional climate	0.537	138	0.288	7.47	0.000
Positive perfectionism	0.293	138	0.086	3.6	0.000
Negative perfectionism	-0.388	138	0.151	-4.94	0.000
Perceived stress	-0.365	138	0.133	-4.6	0.000

Table 6. Sub-Hypothesis test.

Hypothesis	R	R²	t	sig
There is a relationship between family emotional climate and emotional maturity in young couples.	0.537	0.288	7.47	0.000
There is a relationship between positive perfectionism and emotional maturity in young couples.	0.293	0.086	3.6	0.000
There is a relationship between negative perfectionism and emotional maturity in young couples.	-0.388	0.151	-4.94	0.000
There is a relationship between perceived stress and emotional maturity in young couples.	-0.365	0.133	-4.6	0.000

Hypothesis 1. There is a relationship between the emotional atmosphere of the family and emotional maturity in young couples.

The results of the Pearson correlation test between the family's emotional atmosphere and emotional maturity are shown. The correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.537. Given the t-value of 7.47 and the significance level (sig) of 0.000, the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, with 99% confidence. (sig < 0.01). The relationship is positive, indicating that improving the family's emotional atmosphere has a positive impact on emotional maturity. The calculated coefficient of determination of 0.288 shows that the two variables explain 28.8% of each other's variations.

Sub-Hypothesis 2. There is a relationship between positive perfectionism and emotional maturity in young couples.
The results of the Pearson correlation test between positive perfectionism and emotional maturity are shown. The correlation coefficient is calculated as 0.293. Given the values $t = 3.6$ and $sig = 0.000$, the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and with 99% confidence ($sig < 0.01$). The direction of the relationship is positive. Thus, it can be said that an increase in positive perfectionism leads to improved emotional maturity. The calculated coefficient of determination, 0.086, indicates that the two variables explain 8.6% of each other's variations.

Sub-Hypothesis 3. There is a relationship between negative perfectionism and emotional maturity in young couples.
The results of the Pearson correlation test between negative perfectionism and emotional maturity are shown. The correlation coefficient is calculated as -0.388. Given the values $t = -4.94$ and $sig = 0.000$, the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and with 99% confidence ($sig < 0.01$). The direction of the relationship is negative. Thus, it can be said that an increase in negative perfectionism leads to a decrease in emotional maturity. The calculated coefficient of determination, 0.151, indicates that the two variables explain 15.1% of each other's variations.

Sub-Hypothesis 4. There is a relationship between perceived stress and emotional maturity in young couples.
The results of the Pearson correlation test between perceived stress and emotional maturity are shown. The correlation coefficient is calculated as -0.365. Given the values $t = -4.6$ and $sig = 0.000$, the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level and with 99% confidence ($sig < 0.01$). The direction of the relationship is negative. Thus, it can be said that an increase in perceived stress leads to a decrease in emotional maturity.

The calculated coefficient of determination, 0.133, indicates that the two variables explain 13.3% of each other's variations.

4 | Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between family emotional atmosphere, perfectionism, and perceived stress with emotional maturity in young couples in Tonekabon county. The results showed that among the four entered variables, positive perfectionism was excluded from the model. The predictor variables were able to explain 35.8% of the variations in emotional maturity. Given the values $F = 25.31$ and $sig = 0.000$, this model is statistically significant ($sig < 0.01$). This means that the variables included in the model can explain a percentage of the variations in emotional maturity, and there is a significant relationship between these variables and emotional maturity. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) of the model was calculated to be 0.599, indicating a moderate correlation with the criterion variable.

The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate that the family emotional atmosphere has a positive effect, while the variables of negative perfectionism and perceived stress have negative effects. The family, as the first social institution, plays a lasting and decisive role in shaping individuals' behaviors, thoughts, and personalities [27]. The family emotional atmosphere includes the style and type of family relationships, the overall sense and mood of the family, and emotional support [28]. Emotional maturity is a developmental process in which individuals not only enhance their understanding of their own emotions and express them in a healthy and constructive way but also form deeper and more compassionate relationships with others, such as their spouse [29]. Emotionally mature individuals control their emotions, are not easily provoked by feelings, and express their emotions at the appropriate time. The ability to express emotions at the right moment is, therefore, a hallmark of emotional maturity [30].

Researchers view perfectionism as a multidimensional trait, emphasizing its healthy dimension [31]. The healthy dimension includes having high-performance standards and prioritizing order in life [32]. Perceived stress refers to how individuals interpret and perceive the level and intensity of stress in their lives. Based on their personal styles and constructive or maladaptive interpretations of life events, individuals perceive different levels of stress [33].

Thus, this hypothesis can state that family emotional atmosphere, perfectionism, and perceived stress have the ability to predict emotional maturity in young couples. In other words, the influence of these three factors can impact the ability of young couples to predict and change their emotional maturity, particularly those young couples who are in the process of forming their identity and independence.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this article.

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