

Relationship characteristics, adult attachment and patterns of religiousness in relationships

PhD thesis

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INTRODUCTION

A romantic relationship can be characterized as successful if it is lasting and stable, meets social expectations and its participants are satisfied with it and they consider it to be of good quality and this is reflected in their behavior as well (Glenn 1990). The stability of marriages and domestic partnerships, as well as the frequency of divorces and separations are closely tied to the quality of relationships (Pilinszki 2014, Shafer et al. 2014). In order to understand long-term romantic relationships, it is imperative to examine quality; not only because it is one of the key determinants of stability, but because the analysis of stability – by itself – does not provide an authentic and complete image with regards to disintegrating relationships, even less with regards to persisting marital and domestic relationships, including those that may not have broken down but they have become devoid of purpose and value and no longer satisfy the needs of their participants (Gödri 2001).

The quality of romantic relationships, the subjective perception of the partners about the relationship itself, certain parts of it, and the attitude of the partners towards each other (Gödri 2001, Horváth-Szabó 2007). It is an undisputable fact that the quality of romantic relationships, primarily its subjective aspect affects every field of life. It may be associated with such key constructs as self-esteem, sexual satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al. 2010, Martos et al. 2014, Yoo et al. 2014) and it is also related to satisfaction with life itself (Carr et al. 2014, Luhmann et al. 2012). It is essential in achieving life goals, in self-fulfillment, in increasing the ability to fight and adapt, and in creating and maintaining outer-inner balance (Skrabski and Koop 2009).

In recent decades, professionals – using different approaches – attempted to ascertain the workings of relationships, which predict satisfaction in said relationship which – in turn – influences the development of the partnership. In the dissertation I use the most commonly quoted Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation model to showcase predictors of satisfaction in a romantic relationship (VSA, Karney and Bradbury 1995, Keizer 2014, Prolux et al. 2017). The correlation of relationship satisfaction with other factors shall be described using the logic of Lavner and Bradbury (2019a). As per the VSA model the quality and stability of a relationship is dependent on three interrelated factors: the personal characteristics of the partners (vulnerability, permanent vulnerabilities), life events (stress events) experienced in the relationship and the communication and coping strategies (adaptive processes) applied while experiencing hardships in the relationship. These factors are dynamically linked and affect each other (Lavner and Bradbury 2019a). Therefore, relationship satisfaction is affected by the quality of interaction between the partners, which are jointly determined by individual charac-

teristics and relationship experience brought into the relationship and by response to stress experienced in the relationship. Constructive response to stress increases relationship satisfaction, while an inadequate adaptive response to stress decreases the level of relationship satisfaction (Keizer 2014). Couples that are vulnerable in their adaptive processes are more likely to be vulnerable in other fields as well (Bradbury and Lavner 2020, Lavner and Bradbury 2019b).

In my work I study relationship dynamics and satisfaction within the framework of three theoretical approaches – the style of adult attachment (Hazan and Shaver 1987, Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991), Olson’s model of family dynamics (Olson 1989), and religious attitudes (Wulff 1997).

The interrelationships between adult attachment and the quality of a romantic relationship have been proven by several studies in recent decades (Feeney 2016). In the terminology of attachment theory, satisfaction is likely to occur when the partners mean safety and support to each other, they are available to each other and provide such a safe haven for each other from which they can explore and develop (Collins and Feeney 2010). When comparing individuals with secure and insecure attachment styles, several studies found higher levels of relationship satisfaction on securely attached people than those that were insecure (Mikulincer and Shaver 2016a, Hadden et al. 2014, Li and Chan 2012, Siegel et al. 2018). This correlation remains strong even if the probable effects of personal characteristics were controlled (e.g.: depression, self-assessment, personality traits) (Pietromonaco and Beck 2015), which manifested either in their own or in the couple’s level of satisfaction, i.e. the partners of those with insecure attachment also noted lower levels of satisfaction than those with securely attached partners (Butzer and Campbell 2008). On the other hand, when studying insecurely attached people, a difference was observed between those with avoiding or anxious attachment. Avoiding bonders were characterized by a weaker aptitude for connection, less support for their partner and a lower relationship satisfaction compared to anxious bonders; furthermore, in case of anxious bonders, a higher tendency for conflict was observed (Candel and Turliuc 2019).

The family structure concept of David H. Olson (1989) called “Circumplex model” makes dynamic events taking place in the family and romantic relationships measurable, representable and researchable. The most notable terms of the model: polarity, balance, dynamics, dimension. Olson defines two important polarities; two conflicting, contradictory intentions: one pair is attachment and dissolution and the other is perpetuity (stability) and change (flexi-

bility). Healthy functioning of families and romantic relationships is provided by the balance between these tensions (Olson 2000, South 2007).

Based on the rest results of Olson (2011), couples and families with balanced attachment (cohesion) and flexibility are generally working better in various lifecycles of a family compared to those showing extreme values. Balanced couples and families possess a wider repertoire of behavior and compared to extreme families they were more inclined to change. If the normative expectations of the family show extreme patterns of behavior in either the dimension of cohesion or flexibility, then the good functioning of the family is warranted as long as everyone accepts these expectations. Balanced couples and families possess better communication styles than extreme families and couples. Positive communication skills make balanced couples and families more capable of changing the degree of cohesion and flexibility, compared to couples and families with impaired balance. In order to deal with situational stress and the changes necessitated by the lifecycle of the couple/family, balanced couples are willing to change cohesion and flexibility, while families with impaired balance resist change (Olson 2008).

In recent years, several religion and family related psychology studies proved that religiousness has a significant effect on the workings of close relationships and it usually shows a positive correlation with the quality of the life of romantic relationships and families (Pargament and Mahoney 2005). Studies examining the correlation between religiousness and romantic relationships generally come to the conclusion that among couples with strong religious beliefs generally have somewhat greater commitment towards each other, more stable marriages and greater satisfaction with their marriage compared to non-religious people and in conjunction with this, the marriage also works better (Mahoney 2010). Therefore, religious commitment has a positive effect on the quality of the romantic relationship directly (Wolfinger and Wilcox 2008) by, for example, amplifying values, faith and behavior that are beneficial for the marriage (e.g.: empathy, experiencing altruism, and the lack of aggression) (Saroglou et al. 2005).

In order to grasp religiousness, I used the approach of David M. Wulff (1997) in the psychology of religion, in which the attitude of an individual towards religion may be described. In the model, various forms of attitude towards religiousness may fundamentally be traced back to two, conceptually independent dimensions: the involvement or exclusion of a transcendent and the symbolic or literal method of interpretation. The first dimension pertains to stance regarding the being of transcendent reality and the other one pertains to the interpretation of religious events and proclamations.

In my study – having taken the above scientific results into consideration – I examine the relationship patterns of adult attachment, of the operation of relationships and religiousness within the framework of the VSA concept. Three, two-dimensional models provide a solid theoretical framework for the description of patterns found in the test sample and the correlation between them.

AIMS

The study is focused on the primary research question as to what characteristics may be used to describe relationship that work well and are consequently expected to be stable. Because the relationship-focused approach (exploration of relationship patterns) used to answer this question is more suitable for exploratory examinations and are less suitable for testing hypotheses (Bergman and El-Khoury 2003; Martos et al. 2019), these question related to relationship patterns shall facilitate the interpretation of the research result and a deeper understanding of connections between the various factors.

1. The couples appearing in the research conform into which relationship patterns, what relationship type do they constitute based on attachment style (anxiety, avoidance), the family characteristics of the Olson-model (cohesion, flexibility, communication and satisfaction with the family), and the dimensions of religiousness after Criticism (involvement of the transcendent and symbolic interpretation)?

2. Following the identification of relationship patterns and profiles I wish to learn what connection these complex patterns have to satisfaction in the relationship, with sexual satisfaction and with subjective state of health?

3. In the researched sample what characteristics may be used to describe couples applying for therapy? What individual and relationship-level vulnerabilities manifest in this subsample and what individual and relationship-level strength may set the course of therapeutic work? In relation to the examined variables, is there a difference between couples going to therapy and those who do not; and if there is, how does it manifest in their satisfaction in the relationship?

4. Do similarities or differences between the characteristics of the partners influence satisfaction in the relationship, and if so, in what manner? Can symmetries and asymmetries in the relationship be linked to satisfaction in the relationship and what asymmetries allow the couple to stay together?

5. In relation to the examined variables, is there a difference between couples living in marriages or outside of marriage, in domestic partnerships?

6. What correlation is there between the duration of the romantic partnership, presence of children in the family and a potential previous divorce and between the individual profiles and the satisfaction in the relationship?

7. What conjunction do the patterns emerging from the perspective of adult attachment, Olson's family dynamics and religious attitudes show, what interrelationship manifests between them and how does it all relate to satisfaction?

METHODS

In the sample of the cross-sectional questionnaire survey there was a total of 350 couples having married or living together for at least a year, as a unit. One of the groups of the research sample consisted of couples living in or near Budapest (n = 270 couples). The other group constituted couples living in Budapest or at the countryside who were attending couples' therapy at the time of filling out the questionnaire (n = 80 couples).

During data collection, in addition to socio-demographic data I also queried the status of cohabitation, the duration of the relationship, the number of children, the degree of subjective satisfaction with regards to financial status and one question measured the respondents' evaluation regarding their own state of health. For the determination of satisfaction in the romantic relationship I used the Relationship Assessment Scale, RAS-H (Hendrick 1988, Martos et al. 2014), for adult attachment I used the Relationship Scale Questionnaire, RSQ (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991, Griffin and Bartholomew 1994, Csóka et al. 2007, Sándor et al. 2018), for Olson's circumplex family dynamics I used the fourth version of Olson's Family Test (FACES IV, Olson et al. 2006; OCST-4, Mirnics et al. 2010), and for grasping personal approaches towards faith and religious contents, I used the Post-Critical Belief Scale (PCBS) (Hutsebaut 1996; Post Critical Belief Scale, PCBS, Martos et al. 2009), and the Religious Self-rating Scale (Tomka 1998).

Using baseline variables extracted from the individual scales of the questionnaires I performed a cluster analysis. I performed it separately for the variables of RSQ, the variables of the Olson model and the variables of Post-Critical Belief Scale as well, thus performing a total of three cluster analyses during data analysis. Finally, I compared the key topics of the study using correspondence analysis, examining how group memberships observed on the field of adult attachment, Olson's family model and Post-critical belief relate to each other (within the couples as units) and how these relate to male and female satisfaction in a relationship. Processing and analysis of data was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 program. For the exploration of distinctive patterns emerging in couples' family dynamics,

adult attachment and in the manner of their religiousness I used the statistics software called ROPstat.

RESULTS

The average age of the male participants of the sample's 350 couples was 39.56 years (variance: 10.28 years; scope: 18–68 years), while the number for women was 37.23 (variance: 9.51 years, scope: 19–63 years). In terms of marital status, 59.1% of the couples was married, while 39.5% was living in domestic partnerships (this data was missing at 1.4% of couples). The average length of the relationship of the couples at the time of data collection was 13.13 years (variance: 9.41 years, scope: 1–42 years). 66.9% of male members of the couples had children, in case of women this was 65.5% (the presence of a child does not necessarily imply that both members of the couple are the child's biological parents). 5% of male and 4% of female members of the couples had divorces prior to their current relationships.

In the relationship-oriented analysis the object of cluster analysis was the couple as a unit. By doing so, it became possible for the couples' characteristics that belong together to be examined jointly, as one system, thus contributing to a more detailed image of the inner workings of relationships. To my knowledge, no one has performed a relationship-oriented analysis of the correlation between adult attachment, Olson's variables and religious attitudes yet. Another unique characteristic of the research is that I was able to jointly analyze couples seeking and not seeking therapeutic help at the time of filling out the questionnaire, thus shedding light on a larger variance of operational modes romantic relationships.

Sixteen relationship profiles were identified in the researched sample. There were six and five profiles in the dimensions of adult attachment and religious attitude and these profiles present partners' individual characteristics manifesting in their current romantic relationship. The five clusters describing the workings of family showcase dynamics manifesting on the level of the romantic relationship.

I compared groups formed based on adult attachment using a one-way variance analysis (One-Way ANOVA) in order to check whether they are actually significantly different from each other statistically in the context of the variables serving as a basis of separation (the Anxiety and Separation values on the male and female side). In all variables, the test showed a significant difference of clusters. Males in different cluster memberships differed from each other in their level of anxiety ($F(5) = 96.528$; $p < 0.001$) and in their degree of avoidance ($F(5) = 51.616$; $p < 0.001$) as well. This difference of clusters was also present in women ei-

ther in anxiety ($F(5) = 102.575; p < 0.001$) or avoidance ($F(5) = 55.188; p < 0.001$). The profiles of each cluster are shown on Fig. 1 using z-points.

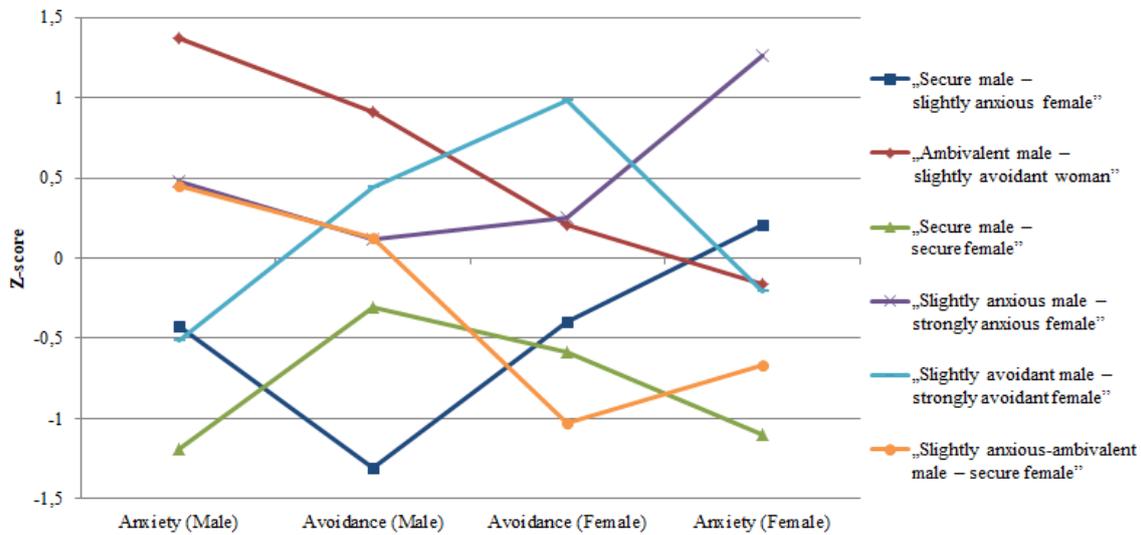


Fig 1. Average points of each cluster on the subscale of Anxiety and Avoidance, expressed in z-points

When comparing satisfaction in a romantic relationship, the results of the variance analysis showed that that in terms of satisfaction in a romantic relationship, the averages of the clusters are statistically significantly different in both male ($F(4) = 6.139; p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0,086$) and female ($F(4) = 5.970; p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0,083$) partners, With respect to sexual satisfaction, I examined differences between clusters using the Kruskal-Wallis test. The test showed a difference in male members of the couples ($H(5) = 12.748, p = 0.026, \eta^2_H = 0,023$), while women did not show any significant difference ($H(5) = 10.466, p = 0.063$). To test whether there is a difference in the clusters regarding the assessment of the couples' own state of health, I also performed the Kruskal-Wallis test. The test showed no difference between the clusters in the male members of the couples ($H(5) = 6.052, p = 0.372$) but showed significant difference in female members ($H(5) = 14.570, p = 0.012$).

Using a One-Way variance analysis (One-Way ANOVA) I compared groups formed based on the functioning of the family in order to check whether they are actually significantly different from each other statistically in the context of the variables serving as a basis of separation (Cohesion Index, Flexibility Index, Family Communication). In all variables, the test showed a significant difference of clusters. The difference between clusters manifested in the cohesion ($F(4) = 90.926; p < 0.001$), flexibility ($F(4) = 100.788; p < 0.001$) and communica-

tion ($F(4) = 102.303$; $p < 0.001$) experienced by male members of the couples. Likewise, female partners have also showed significant differences between the groups in terms of cohesion ($F(4) = 110.642$; $p < 0.001$), flexibility ($F(4) = 103.300$; $p < 0.001$) and communication ($F(4) = 75.320$; $p < 0.001$). The profiles of each cluster are shown on *Fig. 2* using z-points.

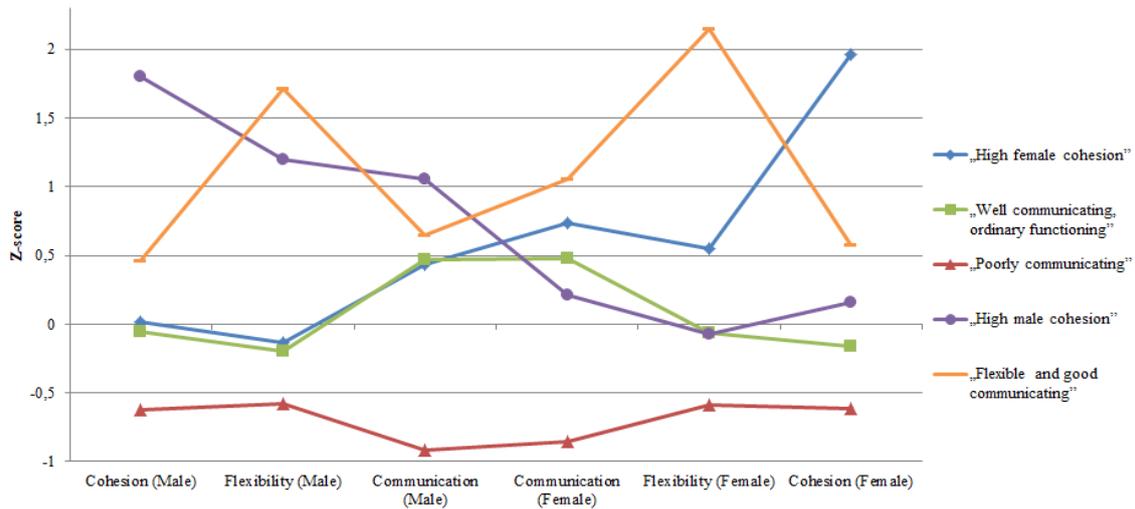


Fig 2. Average points of each cluster on the scale of Cohesion, Flexibility and Family Communication, expressed in z-points

The results of variance analysis taken to comparison based on satisfaction in the romantic relationship show that the averages of the clusters are statistically significantly differ in terms of satisfaction with the relationship both in male ($F(4) = 11.072$; $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0,139$) and female ($F(4) = 9.481$; $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0,121$) partners. When analyzing inter-cluster differences in terms of sexual satisfaction, the difference between groups was significant in both sexes (male side: $H(4) = 26.187$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_H = 0,023$; female side: $H(4) = 25.293$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2_H = 0,077$). Comparison from the aspect of subjective state of health showed no significant difference between clusters in either of the sexes (male side: $H(4) = 1.565$, $p = 0.815$; female side: $H(4) = 5.079$, $p = 0.279$).

I compared groups formed based on religious attitudes based on the variables serving as the basis of separation (the inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic interpretation on both male and female side). The test showed a significant difference between the average points of the clusters in all variables. The difference between clusters manifested in the transcendence values ($F(4) = 80.252$; $p < 0.001$) and interpretation methods ($F(4) = 64.000$; $p < 0.001$) of male members of the couples. Likewise, the difference between groups in inclusion of transcendence ($F(4) = 92.199$; $p < 0.001$) and symbolical interpretation ($F(4) = 62.443$; $p < 0.001$)

may be observed in females as well. The profiles of each cluster are shown on *Fig. 3* using z-points.

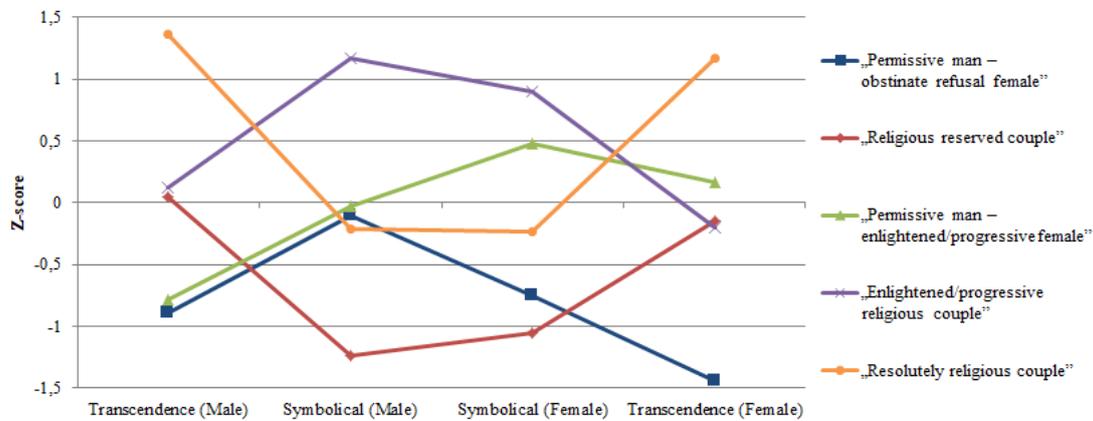


Fig 3: The Average points of each cluster on the scale of Inclusion of Transcendence and Symbolic interpretation, expressed in z-points

The results of the variance analysis show that the clusters’ averages do not differ statistically from each other in terms of satisfaction in the romantic relationship in either male ($F(4) = 1.178; p = 0.322$) or female ($F(4) = 0.978; p = 0.421$) partners. Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, clusters formed based on Post-critical Belief do not differ from each other in terms of sexual satisfaction in either the male ($H(4) = 6.700, p = 0.153$) or the female ($H(4) = 8.476, p = 0.076$) side. The examination of inter-cluster differences in the assessment of personal state of health did not show differences between male members of the couples ($H(4) = 5.754, p = 0.218$) but showed a significant difference between clusters on the female side ($H(4) = 10.588, p = 0.032, \eta^2_H = 0,033$)

I performed multiple correspondence analyses in a two-dimensional space: the first dimension possessed good internal reliability in terms of its variables (Cronbach- α : 0.72), the second dimension showed less consistency (Cronbach- α : 0.46) but contributed greatly to the interpretability of the model. The two-dimensional layout and distinct conjunctions of the various variable categories are shown on *Fig 4*.

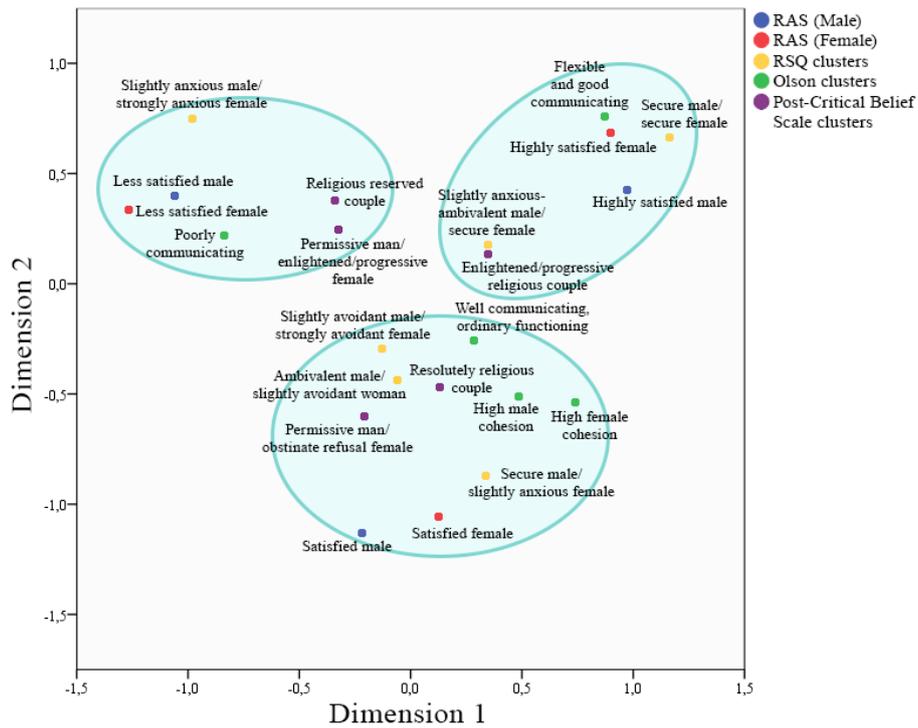


Fig 4: The multiple correspondence map of the examined variables. The figure shows distinctive category groupings that are visually distinctive from each other.

In order to examine the extent of close connection between the patterns of the three cluster analyses and satisfaction in the relationship, I used a multi-variable cross-table analysis. Overall, it may be stated that while satisfaction in the relationship shows a correlation with patterns of attachment and the workings of the family (significant Chi-square test and effect size showing a moderate connection of fields), it does not show a similarly significant connection with patterns of interpretation of religiousness, based on the test.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the research that forms the basis of the dissertation is the exploration of characteristics of attachment, the workings of relationships and religious attitudes in long-term romantic relationships and the understanding and showcasing of correlations between these characteristics and the couples' satisfaction in the relationship and on the field of sexuality and the subjective experiencing of health. The analysis showcased relationship clusters formed based on the family model of Olson and based on Post-critical belief, which were reviewed from the aspect of relationship and sexual satisfaction, emphasizing cluster features showing some sort of connection with satisfaction and the subjective assessment of the state

of health. Furthermore, sampling provided an opportunity for the differentiation between cluster features based on whether the couple currently attended couples' therapy or not.

Using the relationship-focused approach used in the research regarding the tested sample the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. In romantic relationships, the joint analysis of the partners' related characteristics allowed us to have a firmer grasp on relationship patterns and to describe them. This methodological procedure helps enforce the principle, which has been widely accepted and applied in family therapy for a long time, that the couple must be considered one, and one of the most important subsystems of the family system. The proper operation of every relationship, primarily in the family system, but even those outside of it, depends on the workings of this subsystem. A total of sixteen romantic relationship profiles were identified in the tested sample. Six and five profiles along the dimensions of adult attachment and religious attitude, which profiles showcase the individual characteristics of the partners manifesting in the current romantic relationship. The five clusters describing the workings of the family grasp and showcase dynamics manifesting on the level of the romantic relationship. Based on the results, the examined clusters were statistically different from each other.

2. When examining the correlations between the cluster features and satisfaction in the relationship, sexual satisfaction and subjective evaluation of state of health, it was shown that in case of couples participating in the study, those partners are most satisfied with their romantic relationship, where both partners or at least one member had safe patterns of attachment. The greatest degree of satisfaction was shown by the partners of the "secure male-secure female" profile. Ergo, a secure attachment style usually goes together with a higher satisfaction in the relationship. From the aspect of attachment style, the most dissatisfaction – in both partners – was caused by their partner's heightened anxiety. At the same time, women experienced high levels of dissatisfaction in case of avoidant attachment be it either their own, or their partner's attachment style.

With regards to the workings of a family, it was proven that in the tested sample, the most satisfied ones are the partners living in balanced romantic relationships. Based on the results it may be stated that balance mostly depends on the quality of communication, because even couples who were on the edge of unbalanced operation reported high levels of satisfaction in the relationship if communication in the relationship was satisfactory for them. When examining the connection between religious attitude and satisfaction in the relationship, I have only found tendency-like correlations, so only careful conclusions may be drawn from these. In case of males, I found the greatest satisfaction in the relationship in the "enlight-

ened/progressive religious couple” profile, I have found no such tendency in females. On the male side, a strong, tendency-like connection manifested between the “religious reserved couple” and dissatisfaction in the relationship. It could be established that sexual satisfaction of the partners is strongly tied to the degree of satisfaction in the romantic relationship, since this was the field where most profiles showed correlations with satisfaction with the relationship, all of which has previously been showcased.

In relation to the subjective evaluation of state of health, it can be stated that in the examined romantic relationships the males’ state of health was negatively impacted by their own anxiety, while females were affected by their own and their male partner’s anxiety. There was no measureable correlation between the workings of a relationship and the subjective state of health. The connection between religious attitude and subjective state of health appeared most prominently on the female side, where we could observe a negative correlation between the woman partner’s externally critical religiousness and subjective evaluation of their state of health.

3. Analyses conducted from the perspective of going to therapy uncovered differences between the relationship characteristics of those going or not going to couples’ therapy. In the examined sample it can be observed that if insecure attachment manifests either in anxiety or avoidance, then it results in such a state of relationship that necessitates the involvement of professional help. This correlation is also supported by the result according to which securely attachment pairs constitute the smallest percentage of couples’ therapy attendees, at least in the examined sample. Furthermore, in the subsample of therapy goers, there was a higher number of inadequately communicating pairs. This result may be related to the correlation described above, that the inadequate nature of the quality of communication is associated with imbalance and dissatisfaction in the relationship. Finally, therapy goer couples at least one, if not both partners were characterized by religious progressive or orthodox religious attitude, but these correlations only manifested on the level of tendencies, targeted studies may contribute to a more accurate understanding.

4. When analyzing correlations between the symmetry-asymmetry of the romantic relationship profiles and satisfaction in the relationship, it was discovered that relationship symmetry manifesting from the aspect of adult attachment style and religious attitude results in greater satisfaction in females than in asymmetric relationships.

In the examined sample, profiles formed based on adult attachment style did not show a correlation with the status of the relationships, i.e. neither relationship patterns featured married or unmarried couples more prominently. Among the clusters formed based on the Olson-

valuables, a difference emerged on the field of relationship status. The difference was mainly caused by the deviation of the “poorly communicating” and the “flexible and good communicator” clusters from expectations. While the “poorly communicating” cluster consisted of much less married couples, the “flexible and good communicator” group had a higher rate of married couples. Having examined the connection between religious attitude and relationship status I found that the “resolutely religious pair” profile had a much higher rate of married couples than unmarried couples. The “enlightened/progressive religious couple” cluster had a smaller number of married, and a larger number of cohabiting couples than expected.

5. I found the following correlations between relationship patterns, duration of the relationship, number of children, history of divorce, education and the age of the partners. The age and education of the members of the couples showed no correlation with the characteristics of the couples in either of the fields. There was no correlation between the duration of the romantic relationship and the attachment patterns of the couples, but it had one with the workings of family and religious attitude. The longest romantic relationships were in the “flexible and good communicator” and “resolutely religious couple” profiles. The shortest-running romantic relationships could be found in the “poorly communicating couple”, the “religious reserved couple” and the “permissive man–enlightened/progressive female” profiles. The number of children showed correlation with the workings of the family in a manner that “flexible and good communicator” couples raised more children, while the “poorly communicating” couples had the least number of children. Patterns of attachment and religious attitude showed no correlation with the number of children. The history of divorce showed a correlation with patterns of attachment: with males, the “ambivalent male – slightly avoidant woman” cluster had the most history of divorce, there was no such connection with females. The workings of family and religious attitudes showed no connection to potential history of divorce in either case.

6. Having taken the conjunction of the examined characteristics into consideration, it can be stated with a large degree of certainty that among the couples in the sample, the most satisfying relationships were those where both the male and the female bond securely; where the moderately anxious male’s partner is a securely attachment female; where the couple works flexibly and communicates well; where both partners involve a transcendent, and there is symbolical mode of interpretation present. Another characteristic of the couples with the most satisfied profiles is that they are homogenous in terms of their operation, i.e.: the partners’ characteristics are similar or very close to each other. Even not completely homogenous profiles had only moderate differences between the attachment styles of the partners. The fact is

that in the examined sample the profiles of these couples appear in the smallest proportion in therapy, which proves the satisfaction in the relationship and their success.

7. Based on the results of multiple correspondence analyses the least satisfied pairs from the examined sample are where both partners, especially the woman has an anxious attachment style; who communicate poorly; who are religious in their own way, i.e.: the inclusion of transcendence goes together with literal interpretation; and where on the male side both the inclusion of transcendence and symbolic interpretation are rejected, while both are accepted on the female side. These profiles lack safe attachment, good communication, the inclusion of transcendence and its symbolical interpretation, which facilitate good operation of a relationship and provide satisfaction. In the examined sample, the couples of these profiles were attending couples' therapy in the highest rate.

Although the results presented in the dissertation are not representative of Hungarian partnerships, the conclusions based on them, can be well used in the practice of couples' therapy. It is an important conjecture that there are many ways to be satisfied in a romantic relationship, even if the members of the couple have different attachment styles, they work differently in terms of cohesion and flexibility or differ in their religious attitude. However, it can be stated with a great degree of certainty that in all manners of operation, the thing that provides balance and satisfaction in the relationship is the secure style of attachment and communication. The mapping and understanding of attachment style and the preventive development of communication skills must have a large role during the time of commitment and in the first years of the relationship, as well as in the couples' therapy process aiming to strengthen the relationship. These are responsibilities of psychologists and pastors working with a systemic approach. I also consider the relationship-level examination of religious attitude an important achievement because this approach has – according to my knowledge – never been explored before. Questions with regards to the role of patterns of religious attitudes in romantic relationships are inspiring for professional researching the topic of religiousness and they may raise the awareness of psychologists, pastors and counselors working with couples.

Overall, it may be stated that the information provided by adult attachment theory, the Olson-model and the Post-critical belief may be utilized well in preventative and clinical settings, they may be incorporated into couples' therapists' way of thinking, then in accordance with their own methodology, they would lay out and implement the therapeutic process, thus contributing to the increase in satisfaction and stability in the relationship.

LIST OF OWN PUBLICATIONS

Publications related to the thesis

- Lakatos Cs**, Martos J, Mányai A, Martos T. (2020) Párkapcsolati mintázatok és kapcsolati elégedettség együtt élő pároknál: az Olson-modell ellenőrzése. *Mentálhigiéné és Pszichoszomatika*, 21(1): 56–85.
- Lakatos Cs**, Martos T. (2019) The Role of Religiosity in Intimate Relationships. *European Journal of Mental Health*, 14(2): 260–279.
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- Désfalvi J, **Lakatos Cs**, Csuka S, Filep O, Dank M, Martos T. (2020) Kötődési stílus, kapcsolati és szexuális elégedettség: emlőrákos és egészséges nők összehasonlító vizsgálata. *Orvosi Hetilap*, 168(13): 518–526.
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