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**PREDICTING THE MARITAL ADJUSTMENT BASED ON THE EARLY
MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS IN WOMEN**

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ABSTRACT

This study predicts the marital adjustment based on the early maladaptive schemas. This research is descriptive and has the correlative type. The statistical population of this study consists of all 25-40 year-old married women in Tehran City in 2015. The research sample consists of 80 subjects who are selected by convenience sampling. The marital adjustment questionnaires and short form of early maladaptive schemas are utilized to collect data. Pearson correlation method and multiple regression analyses are used for data analysis. The data analysis indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between the early maladaptive schemas and marital adjustment. The results of multiple regression analysis indicate that the early maladaptive schemas significantly predict the marital adjustment. This finding has important implications for education and improvement of mental health in women.

Keywords: Marital adjustment, early maladaptive schemas (EMSs), women

INTRODUCTION

The marriage is one of the most important social, cultural and biological phenomena which are affected by the changes in society and also affect them [5], However, the differences in opinions, values, needs,

desires and life habits between spouses are normal according to their human nature and are not unexpected [13],but the close relationship is a key component for individual development because the social

competence is increased by it and it enhances the general physical and mental health [1]. In fact, numerous factors are involved in the continuation of marital life, and the adjustment to effects of stressful stimuli is the essential condition in this regard. Marital adjustment is one of these continuation factors which refer to the marriage in which the couples can communicate together without much conflict [8]. According to the epidemiology of studies, the marital adjustment is an important risk factor for morbidity and mortality and affects the hostile relations, and couples' mental and physical health [10], [2], [14].

In fact, the marriage has a widespread domain compared to other human communications and has the biological, economic, emotional, psychological, social and communicational consequences [5]. In this regard, the early maladaptive schemas as the emotional and psychological factors can be studied in the field of marital adjustment. The early maladaptive schemas are the models including the memories, emotions, and feelings, cognitions and the body feelings, which people have about themselves and the environment, and are normally originated from non-satisfaction of basic needs especially the emotional needs in childhood [17], and they find their ways to adulthood and are very inefficient

[12]. According to child's five development needs, the schemas are classified into five areas namely, the Disconnection and Rejection, Impaired Autonomy and Performance, Impaired Limits, Other-Directedness, and Over-vigilance/Inhibition. Several studies have investigated the relationship between the early maladaptive schemas and intimacy, closeness, marital strength and adjustment and have concluded that there is a correlation between the early maladaptive schemas and the intimacy and adjustment in romantic and marriage relationships [11], [7]. Gay, Harding, Jackson, Burns, & Baker (2013) have found in their study that the early maladaptive schemas play the important roles as a mediator in victimization of women in intimate relationships. In fact, the early maladaptive schemas are constant and persistent in life and create the basis of individual cognitive structures. Despite the fact that all schemas have no development roots in traumatic experiences, but all of them are detrimental to a healthy life [6]. Despite the fact that various studies have indicated the importance of relationship between different factors and marital adjustment, still different aspects of marital relations are uncertain. Therefore, this study seeks to answer this basic question whether the

early maladaptive schemas predict the marital adjustment?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study has a correlative- cross-sectional plan. The statistical population of this study consists of all 25-40-year-old married women referring to counseling centers in Tehran City in 2015. The sample size of this research is equal to 154 subjects who are selected on the basis of plant formula ($N > 50 + 8m$) and by available sampling among women referred for consultation, a number of questionnaires are excluded from the research due to being distorted and finally 80 ones are analyzed. The criteria for inclusion in this study are as follows: The age ranging from 25-40, at least the education degree of diploma, and not remarried; and the exclusion criteria include the previous experience of marital life, receiving the psychiatric and psychological intervention during the past year, the chronic illness, and drug addiction. The following tools are applied for data collection:

- Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT): This questionnaire is a short self-report questionnaire which was built in 1959 by Locke-Wallace and has 15 items. The low scores show the low adjustment, and the high scores show the high adjustment. Mazaheri has reported the reliability and validity higher than 0.90 in a

research by split half method, and has indicated the high creditability by clear distinction between the intertwined and non-intertwined spouses (Hosseininasab et al, 2009).

- Young Schema Questionnaire- Short Form: This scale is the short form of Young scale (1998). This questionnaire contains 75 items and, and based on the results of research by Schmidt et al (1995) fifteen schemas are put in 5 domains. The items are rated by six options (1= absolutely false; up to six= absolutely true). According to Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of YSQ-SF scale is equal to 0.96 for the whole test, and higher than 0.80 for all subscales [9], According to another study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is obtained from 0.5 to 0.82 for subscales of this questionnaire in non-clinical population, and its validity has also been reported desirable [16].

Implementation method: The field method is used for conducting the questionnaires. Afterwards, the questionnaire is given to subjects and they are asked to express their opinion carefully according to the summary of research objectives and fulfilling the subjects' satisfaction in order to involve them in research and observing the ethics. The research data is collected individually.

RESULTS

The female mean age was equal to 33.21 with standard deviation of 5.98; and 38.8% of them (n = 31) were housewives, 23.8% (n = 19) self-employed and 37.5% (n = 30) had governmental jobs. The mean scores and standard deviation of individual scores in studied variables are presented in Table 1. Furthermore, the results of Pearson correlation coefficient, shown in Table 1, indicate that all early maladaptive schemas have negative correlation with marital adjustment ($P < 0.05$).

The results of Table 2 indicate that the rate of observed F is significant ($F = 16.26$, $P < 0.001$) and among the early maladaptive schemas only the abandonment- instability and dependence- incompetence are able to explain almost 30 percent of marital adjustment variance among married women ($P < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.297$). According to the beta values, the abandonment-instability ($\beta = -0.452$) and the dependence- incompetence ($\beta = -0.311$) can significantly explain the marital adjustment in woman ($P < 0.01$).

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient of studied variables

Variable	Marital adjustment	
	M±SD	R
Marital adjustment	92.82±16.57	1
Emotional deprivation	14.16±3.56	-0.31***
Abandonment - instability	11.72±3.56	-0.45***
Distrust - mistreatment	11.34±2.99	-0.42***
Social isolation- Alienation	13.74±2.42	-0.26*
Imperfection - shame	21/12 ± 39/3	-0.30**
The total score of disconnection and rejection	63.17±13.80	-0.43***
Dependence- incompetence	11.76±3.75	-0.39***
Vulnerability to illness	9.86±2.27	-0.28*
Non self-developed- get caught	11.60±3.20	-0.24*
Failure	12.17±2.95	-0.34**
Total score of autonomy	45.40±8.19	-0.47***
Merit- Magnanimity	13.41±3.44	-0.28*
Insufficient self-discipline, Continenence	13.17±3.57	-0.29**
Total scope of Impaired Limits	26.59±5.68	-0.35**
Obedience	11.26±3.49	-0.28*
Dedication	11.79±3.20	-0.26*
Total score of Other- Directedness	23.05±5.01	-0.36**
Emotional inhibition	12.56±3.88	-0.37**
Strict criteria - reproach	12.22±3.53	-0.34**
The total score of Over-vigilance/Inhibition	24.79±6.08	-0.43***

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

Table 2: Results of multivariate regression analysis by stepwise method for predicting the marital adjustment through early maladaptive schemas

Variable	B	SE	β	T
Constant	130.207	6.75	-	19.28***
Abandonment- instability	-2.103	0.0470	-0.452	-4.47***
Dependence- incompetence	-1.376	0.432	-0.311	-3.19**

$R = 0.545$, $R^2 = 0.297$, $F_{(2,77)} = 16.26$, $P < 0.001$

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$

CONCLUSION

This study aims at predicting the marital adjustment based on the early maladaptive schemas. The research results indicate that there is significant negative relationship between the marital adjustment and early maladaptive schemas. Furthermore, the results of multiple regression analysis indicate that the early maladaptive schemas significantly explain the marital adjustment; and the role of these variables in predicting the marital adjustment has been 0.297 percent). Furthermore, the results of regression analysis indicate that the abandonment - instability ($\beta=-0.452$) is as the strongest predictor of marital adjustment among married women. These findings are consistent with research findings by McDermott [7], Gay et al [3], and Manzari et al (2014) based on the role of early maladaptive schemas in predicting the marital adjustment. In this regard, Stiles [11], McDermott [7], and Bradbury et al (2008) have found in separate studies that there is a negative relationship between the early maladaptive schemas with intimacy, closeness, and marital strength and adjustment.

According to the possible explanation of this finding, it can be concluded that each new development stage requires the roles, responsibilities, cognitive expectations, and behavioral adjustment, thus the former

schemas and coping strategies will be challenged. People, who have grown up in inefficient families, are likely to use the rigid cognitive styles and constant and frightening coping strategies. Therefore, such these people in are faced with more problems while passing the life stages (e.g. the romantic relationships and marriage) [19]. The schemes, which have been used in dealing with the events in early life, are inefficient in dealing with subsequent life events and sometimes conflicting. Therefore, they may affect the later relationships in life and prevent the individual ability to feel satisfaction in marital relationship. The early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) will basically lead to the bias in the interpretation of events. These biases in psychopathology are created as misunderstanding, distorted attitudes, false assumptions, unrealistic goals and unrealistic expectations in spouses, and these misperceptions affect the subsequent perceptions and evaluations (marriage) because the schemas continue during the life and affect the quality of one's relationship with himself and others (especially the partner). Since the unadjusted EMSs are inefficient, they lead to the unhappiness in marital relations and reduce the marital adjustment, create the pointlessness and ultimately the separation (Yousefi, 2010; quoted by Rafiei et al[9]).

More precisely, those, who develop the abandonment/instability schemas in themselves, develop the negative perceptions and always fear for being rejected by others. In this case, if the family and spouse deny them rather than affirming, they will be psychologically at risk [18], [15], and are exposed to the emotional and psychological helplessness. However, because of non-accepted by spouses and families in terms of merit, these people believe that what they have gained from the life in the world, does not have much in common with them and this plays the decisive role in decline of adjustment between couples. In line with the results of this research, Gay et al [3], have concluded that the early maladaptive schemas play the important roles as a mediator in victimizing the women in intimate relationships.

Finally, it should be concluded that the small sample size due to the numerous defaced questionnaires, the subjects' characteristics such as the number of children, education, etc. and the sample exclusive to women are among the limitations of this study. It is suggested conducting this research in other cities and on more numbers with higher equality and longer in order to enhance the generalizability of results.

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