



Predicting marital satisfaction on the basis of early maladaptive schema in married women, Tehran, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Early maladaptive schemes are cognitive, emotional and self-injurious patterns repeated throughout the life. Family is a natural social system in which couples have major role in the all of stages of its development, and many factors play a role in their marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction is adopting expectations of couples of marital life. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between early maladaptive scheme with marital satisfaction and identification of predicting factors on marital satisfaction. This was a correlational cross-sectional method study. The population includes all married female persons referring to Tehran municipal regions. We used early maladaptive schemas questionnaire and Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire for evaluation in participants. Descriptive tests, Pearson correlation test, T-Test, One Way ANOVA Test and Multivariate Regression Test were used for description and analysis of data. The mean age of samples in this study was 31.60 ± 5.12 years old. There was significant relationship between age with Dependence/Incompetence ($P=0.033$), Self-sacrifice ($P=0.010$), Entitlement/Grandiosity ($P=0.042$), Impaired autonomy and performance ($P=0.019$), Abandonment/Instability ($P=0.007$). Linear regression analysis showed emotional deprivation and unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness subscales can predict marital satisfaction adversely. They can predict significantly 26% of marital satisfaction changes ($P<0.001$). we concluded that early maladaptive schema can predict the marital satisfaction negatively and of important role in its improvement or regression.

Keywords: Early Maladaptive Scheme, Marital Satisfaction, Marriage, Female

INTRODUCTION

Young, early maladaptive schemas and cognitive-emotional patterns - which define harmful, are formed early in the evolution of mind and repeated on how to interpret life experiences and relationships with others influence [1, 2]. He suggested that maladaptive schemas are not the result of shocking events, but rather, they are probably the result of a continuing pattern of daily "poisoning experience" with family members, colleagues, or peers that increasingly reinforce schemas. Young assumes the developmental root of early maladaptive schemas rests in unpleasant experiences during childhood, i.e. the unpleasant childhood experiences may produce personality disorder in adulthood [1-7]. Young believes that early maladaptive schemas form due to unsatisfied basic needs during childhood. The interaction between child temperament and early environment may produce frustration instead of need satisfaction. This condition forms early maladaptive schemas [2]. Early maladaptive schemas fight for survival in human inclination toward "cognitive harmony." Individual knows that the schemas are disturbing, yet, feels

comfortable with them. This feeling makes individual to conclude about the rightfulness of schemas. People are attracted to the events that correspond to their schemas. This attraction makes schema alteration rather difficult. Schemas have vital roles in thinking, feeling, behaving, and communicating with others. Schemas form accurate reflections of surrounding environment from early childhood or adolescence. These schemas continue their development and impose themselves on the following life experiences [3].

Schemas are divided into five groups according to five child developmental needs: disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness, plus over vigilance and inhibition. Each group includes several sub-schemas [3]. According to Young' theory, these 18 early maladaptive scheme fall into 5 broad domains as follows: Group 1 (Disconnection and Rejection): Emotional Deprivation, Abandonment/Instability, Mistrust/ abuse, Social Isolation/alienation, Defectiveness/shame. Group 2 (Impaired Autonomy and Performance): Failure, Dependence/Incompetence, Vulnerability to Harm and Illness, Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline. Group 3 (restrictions impaired): Eligibility / hauteur and restraint / poor self-discipline. Group 4 (Other-Directedness): excessive focus on the needs, desires and feelings of others, Subjugation and Self-Sacrifice.

Group 5 (Over vigilance and Inhibition): Emotional Inhibition, Unrelenting Standards/ Hypocriticalness. Early Maladaptive Schemas are involved in the formation and development of many psychological problems such as personality disorders, chronic depression and anxiety disorders [4]. These schemas can influence on individual perception of the various positions, including sex positions influence [5]. The evolutionary schemas take their roots from unpleasant experiences of childhood. Ones created earlier are generally stronger and have their origin in nuclear families [6]. While a child is growing, schemas are being formed affected by his/her peers, school, and the culture. Four groups of bitter experiences cause schemas. The first one occurs when needs are not met and children do not have pleasant experience. The second group pertains to the situations in which children are hurt and sacrificed. In the third group, children experience good things, well-being, and comfort. However, in such state, the requirements for self-regulation and illogical limitation are not met. In the fourth group, children act in imitation of important people of their life. Based on which aspects of these important people' behavior are internalized, different schemas are formed [7]. Early maladaptive schemes are cognitive, emotional and self-injurious patterns that are formed in the mind of the person at the beginning of development and are repeated throughout the life. Early Maladaptive Schemas are created due to negative experiences in childhood that affect the style of thinking, feeling and behaviors of individuals in the subsequent intimate relationships and other aspects of life. Early Maladaptive Scheme fights for their existence. People tend to events that are consistent with their schemas. Therefore, the schema's changing is hard [8].

Family is considered as one of the main pillars of the community. Achieving a healthy society depends on the health of the family and achieves healthy family depends on the conditional mental health of individuals and having good relations with each other. So, making a healthy family relationship will have a positive impact on the community [4]. Family is a natural social system in which couples have major role in the all of stages of its development ,and many factors play a role in their marital satisfaction [8]. Marital satisfaction is adopting expectations of couples of marital life and what is they are experienced themselves. Winch had indicated that marital satisfaction is adoption of present status and expecting status [8]. Satisfaction and mental and physical health play an important role in the upbringing of children and can have an important role in maintaining the stability of the family. Due (2008) have been divided into two general categories factors influencing on marital satisfaction. Interpersonal processes that the marriage occur within and ecological and socio-cultural context and that the marriage occurs. Beliefs, expectations and attributions, sex, communication skills, conflict resolution and anger, intimacy and mutual support are the interpersonal processes that have contributed to marital satisfaction [4]. Demographic factors such as family background and personal experience mental disorders, couples' attachment styles and life events are the social –cultural factors that influence on the strength of the marital relationship [4]. Marital satisfaction is considered as a factor guaranteeing mental health of the family. The important issue in a marriage is marital satisfaction and compatibility. Marital satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that includes different factors such as personality features, financial matters, child rearing styles, and sexual relations [6]. Up to now, various studies have indicated significant association between Early Maladaptive Scheme/ Early Maladaptive Schemes-related constructs and social relationships [9-12]. So the aim of this study was to determine the relationship between early maladaptive scheme with marital satisfaction and identification of predicting factors on marital satisfaction in married women referred to centers of municipal of Tehran, Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research method

This was a correlational cross-sectional method study.

Population, samples and sampling method

The population includes all married female persons referring to Tehran municipal in 10th and 11th regions. Participants' marriage age was between 1 and 10 years. In this study, a total of 200 married women were selected using convenience cluster sampling and the questionnaires were given and distributed to them in health homes, cultural centers of Tehran municipal.

Research Measurement Tools

Early maladaptive schemas questionnaire: This questionnaire consists of 75 items made by Jeffrey Young (1999) to evaluate 15 early maladaptive schemas. Scoring is based on 6 rating scales. (1= strongly about me is untrue, 2= almost about me is false, 3= some right to be wrong, 4= a little about me is true, 5= almost about me is true, 6= strongly about me is true). In this way, the scores of the questionnaire obtained by adding the scores of each scale. The minimum and maximum score of early maladaptive schemas is between 1-6 that high scores indicate high levels of early maladaptive schemas in subjects. Standardization of Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ- SF) was conducted in Iran by Isfahanian and validity and reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha have been obtained 0.94 for overall scale and more than 0.82 for subscale. The face validity of the questionnaire is desirable and validated by consultation department of Tarbiat Modares University [14]. The psychometric properties of the questionnaire in the study of Smith et al., 1995 showed that alpha coefficient for any early maladaptive schemas was between 0.83 to 0.96 and test– retest coefficient in nonclinical population obtained between 0.5 to 0.82. The internal reliability was reported 0.94 by calculating the internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha coefficient [15].

Enrich marital satisfaction questionnaire: In this study, Enrich marital satisfaction scale the shortened questionnaire of 47 questions-was used to collect data associated with marital satisfaction. The scale consists of 13 subscales and a total of 47 items. The scales of this questionnaire consist of marital satisfaction, conflict resolution, idealistic distortion, personality problems, relationship, financial management, sexual contact, children training and leisure time activities, family and friends, equality-demand roles, religious distortion. A Five- theme Likert-type attitude questionnaire was used (Completely Agree, Agree, Not important, Disagree, Completely Disagree) which were valued in the range of 1 to 5. Iranian version of questionnaire was validated by Soleimanian [13]. Internal correlation of the scale was obtained and reported by Soleimanian and Navabinejad as 0.93. Chronbach's alpha for marital satisfaction obtained 0.92. Answers of questions were added together and primary score was calculated. Then this score put in T-Score table and status of marital satisfaction of person was calculated.

Enrich Marital Satisfaction subscales: Marital Satisfaction. This scale provides a global measure of satisfaction by surveying ten areas of the couple's marriage. One global item was derived to tap ten of the clinical scales of ENRICH. It was not used in the analyses due to this measurement overlap. Personality Issues: This scale examines an individual's perception of his or her partner with regard to behavioral issues and the level of satisfaction felt on those issues. Conflict Resolution: This scale assesses the partner's perception of the existence and resolution of conflict in the relation-ship. Items focus on the openness of partners to recognize and resolve issues and the strategies used to end arguments. Financial Management: This scale focuses on attitudes and concerns about the way economic issues are managed within the relationship. Items assess spending patterns and the care with which financial decisions are made. Leisure Activities: This scale assesses preferences for spending free time. Items reflect social versus personal activities, shared versus individual preferences, and expectations about spend-ing leisure time as a couple. Sexual Relationship: This scale examines the partner's feelings about the affection and sexual relationship. Items reflect attitudes about sexual issues, sexual behavior, birth control, and sexual fidelity. Children and Parenting: This scale assesses attitudes and feelings about having and raising children. Items focus on decisions regarding discipline, goals for the children and the impact of children on the couple's relationship. Family and Friends: This scale assesses feelings and concerns about relationships with relatives, in-laws, and friends. Items reflect expectations for and comfort with spending time with family and friends. Religious Orientation: This scale examines the meaning of religious beliefs and practice within the marriage. Higher scores indicate that religion is an important part of the marriage.

Ethics

Before enrolling the participants, purpose and information about fulfilling questionnaire was given to them.

Statistics

Questionnaires were collected and data were entered in SPSS software ver 18 and analyzed. Descriptive tests, Pearson correlation test, T-Test, One Way ANOVA Test and Multivariate Regression Test were used for description and analysis of data.

RESULTS

The mean age of samples in this study was 31.60 years old with standard deviation of 5.12 years old (Ranged between 20- 44 years). Other demographic data of participants was showed in Table1. Demographic data had normal distribution (P<0.05). The average of marital lifespan was 7.26 years old with standard deviation of 2.87 years old (Ranged between 1-10 years).

Table1- Demographic data of participants

Characteristics			
Age (Mean ± S.D) (year)	31.60 ± 5.12		
Marital Lifespan (Mean ± S.D) (year)	7.27 ± 2.87		
Occupation (Frequency, Percent)	Housewife	147	73.5
	Occupier	53	26.5
Literacy (Frequency, Percent)	Lower Diploma	23	11.5
	Diploma	97	48.5
	Bachelor	76	38
	Master	4	2

One way ANOVA analysis showed that there was significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction (P= 0.10) and demonstrated that by increasing age, mean of marital satisfaction score slowly got decreased. There was no significant correlation between marital lifespan and marital satisfaction (P=0.085). Univariate Linear Model showed that there were no significant correlation between literacy (P=0.908) and occupation (P=0.629) with marital satisfaction. There was significant relationship between age with Dependence/Incompetence (P=0.033), Self-sacrifice (P=0.010), Entitlement/Grandiosity (P=0.042), Impaired autonomy and performance (P=0.019), Abandonment/Instability (P=0.007).

Table 2 showed the scores of early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction in participants of the study. Mean score of marital satisfaction scale was 140.69±16.66 (Ranged 92-177).

Table2- Marital satisfaction and early maladaptive schemas scores in participants

Characteristics	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	P-Value
Marital Satisfaction	92.00	177.00	140.69	16.66	0.001
Emotional deprivation	5.00	30.00	13.46	7.04	0.001
Mistrust/Abuse	5.00	28.00	13.09	5.19	0.001
Social Isolation/Alienation	5.00	30.00	11.57	5.69	0.001
Defectiveness/Shame	5.00	30.00	10.92	6.02	0.001
Failure	5.00	30.00	11.84	5.88	0.001
Dependence/Incompetence	5.00	30.00	11.03	5.87	0.001
Vulnerability to harm ad illness	5.00	30.00	12.25	6.25	0.001
Enmeshment/Undeveloped self	5.00	28.00	11.37	5.35	0.001
Subjugation	5.00	29.00	11.99	6.34	0.001
Self-sacrifice	5.00	30.00	16.18	5.72	0.001
Emotional Inhibition	5.00	30.00	12.98	5.39	0.001
Unrelenting standards/Hypocriticalness	5.00	30.00	16.02	5.20	0.001
Entitlement/Grandiosity	5.00	30.00	14.33	5.32	0.001
Impaired autonomy and performance	5.00	28.00	14.23	5.68	0.001
Abandonment/Instability	5.00	30.00	14.65	6.02	0.001

Table 3 showed Pearson’s correlation between early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction. There was no significant positive correlation between marital satisfaction scales with any of subscales of early maladaptive schemas. There were negative correlation between marital satisfaction with all of early maladaptive schemas scales

($P < 0.05$) except self-sacrifice ($P = 0.542$), unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness ($P = 0.543$), entitlement/grandiosity ($P = 0.990$) (Figure 1). Increasing score of early maladaptive schemas in all of significant relations, decrease marital satisfaction scores of participants. One way ANOVA analysis demonstrated that significant relation between total mean of early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction ($P = 0.0001$). Figure 2 showed this relationship in which increasing total mean of early maladaptive schemas, decreased marital satisfaction.

Table3- Correlation between early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction

Characteristics	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P-Value
Emotional deprivation	-0.346**	0.001
Mistrust/Abuse	-0.221**	0.002
Social Isolation/Alienation	-0.317**	0.001
Defectiveness/Shame	-0.331**	0.001
Failure	-0.354**	0.001
Dependence/Incompetence	-0.391**	0.001
Vulnerability to harm ad illness	-0.240**	0.001
Enmeshment/Undeveloped self	-0.258**	0.001
Subjugation	-0.403**	0.001
Self-sacrifice	0.043	0.542
Emotional Inhibition	-0.273**	0.001
Unrelenting standards/Hypocriticalness	0.043	0.543
Entitlement/Grandiosity	-0.001	0.990
Impaired autonomy and performance	-0.239**	0.001
Abandonment/Instability	-0.193**	0.006

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
 * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

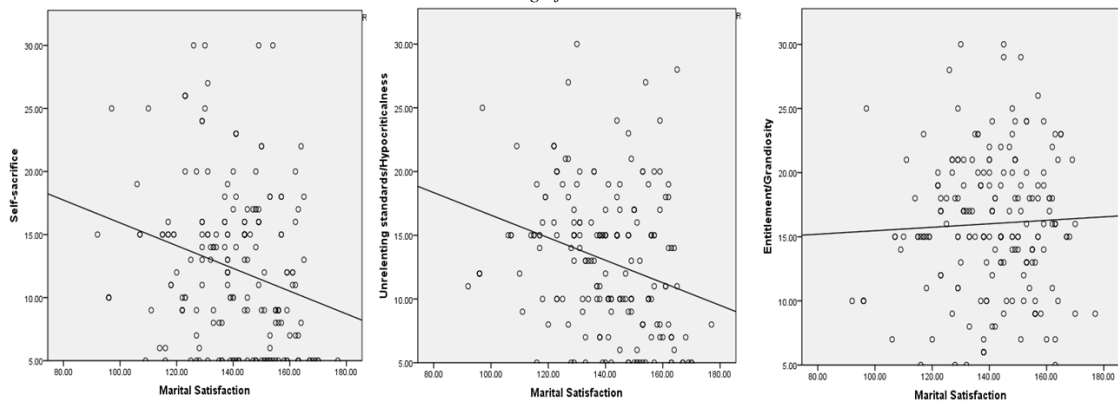


Fig.1- Marital Satisfaction relationship with early maladaptive schemas

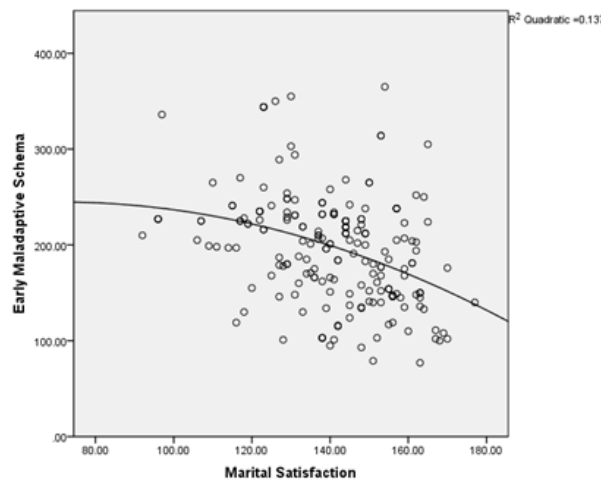


Fig.2- Marital Satisfaction relationship with total mean of early maladaptive schemas

Linear regression analysis showed in step 1 that only subjugation subscale can predict marital satisfaction adversely. It can predict significantly 16.2% of marital satisfaction changes ($P < 0.001$).

Linear regression analysis showed in step 2 that subjugation and emotional deprivation subscales can predict marital satisfaction adversely. They can predict significantly 21.3% of marital satisfaction changes ($P < 0.001$) that predicting power of subjugation scale is more than emotional deprivation scale.

Linear regression analysis showed in step 3 that subjugation, emotional deprivation and unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness subscales can predict marital satisfaction adversely. They can predict significantly 26% of marital satisfaction changes ($P < 0.001$) that predicting power of unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness scale is more than emotional deprivation and subjugation scales. Other subscales could not predict the marital satisfaction and were removed from regression analysis.

Table 4- Predictors of Marital Satisfaction from regression analysis based on early maladaptive schemas

Steps	Variable	F	P-Value	r	R ²	B	β	T	P-Value
1	Subjugation	38.36	0.001	0.403	0.162	-1.05	-1.05	-6.1	0.001
2	Subjugation	26.66	0.001	0.462	0.213	-0.851	-0.851	-4.84	0.001
	Emotional deprivation					-0.564	-0.56	-56	0.001
3	Subjugation	22.94	0.001	0.510	0.260	-0.474	-0.474	-2.34	0.002
	Emotional deprivation					-0.591	-0.591	-3.83	0.001
	Dependence/Incompetence					-0.732	-0.732	3.52	0.001

DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to answer that is there a relationship between marital satisfaction and early maladaptive schemas? The results Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated that there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction. These findings are in line with the principles of cognitive theory and the schema. The results of correlation coefficient showed that there are significant and negative relationships between all of early maladaptive schemas scales except self-sacrifice, unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness, and entitlement/grandiosity. There was no significant positive correlation between marital satisfaction scales with any of subscales of early maladaptive schemas.

The results of our study showed that Abandonment/Instability, Impaired autonomy and performance, Emotional Inhibition, Defectiveness/Shame, Failure, Dependence/Incompetence, Vulnerability to harm and illness, Enmeshment/Undeveloped self, Subjugation, Social Isolation/Alienation, Mistrust/Abuse and Emotional deprivation subscales of early maladaptive schemas have a negative relationship with marital satisfaction significantly. Also total mean of early maladaptive schemas decreased marital satisfaction significantly. These results can be because of important roles of EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEME in the life and marital life of couples. For example; distrust seems to be the foundation of any satisfied relationship. To be satisfied with living with each other, couples should get pleasure from a mutual trust. People entering a marital life with a distrust background may not enjoy a pleasant marital satisfaction. Emotional deprivation refers to lack of emotional bonds. Clearly, a person experiencing such condition cannot grow or slip into a deep and lasting relationship. Emotional inhibition is another schema having a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction. The accuracy of this schema defines that people with emotional inhibition suffer from a boring and inert life. As inhibit their emotions, these people cannot enjoy their life and relationship with others. Undoubtedly, a life without emotions cannot create marital satisfaction [2].

Results of this study is in line with Falah chay et al study in which they showed that there were significant and negative relationships between maladaptive schema of disconnection and rejection and the scales of marital satisfaction including marital satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution [16]. The results obtained from this study are in line with those obtained by previous studies [17, 18]. In all of these studies, it is shown that if the maladaptation of the scheme increases, marital satisfaction decreases. Zolfagari et al. showed that there is a negative and significant relationship between early maladaptive schemas and dimensions of marital intimacy [7]. In order to initial description of Beck and Freeman of psychopathology, each of the mental disorders associated with maladaptive schemas and habitual thought patterns are very popular and versatile, which specify the type of vulnerability to that disorder [19]. Early maladaptive schemas as maladaptive cognitive foundations influence on the perception of the phenomena and the formation of schemas, and can create social and psychological injuries; thus, the crime perpetration is one of the major damages that is organized and formed based on inefficient foundations [4].

Our results showed that there was significant relationship between age with Dependence/Incompetence, Self-sacrifice, Entitlement/Grandiosity, Impaired autonomy and performance and Abandonment/Instability subscales of early maladaptive schemas and showed that there was significant relationship between age and marital satisfaction positively. This showed that these early maladaptive schemas scores decreases with elevating age and this subject can affect the marital satisfaction and based on Erikson theory by changing the stage of life. Also we showed that level of literacy and marital lifespan did not affect the marital satisfaction ($P>0.05$) which indicated that identity and marital satisfaction are not related to the marital satisfaction or predicting it.

Linear regression analysis showed that subjugation, emotional deprivation and unrelenting standards/hypocriticalness subscales can significantly predict marital satisfaction adversely. Similar to our study, some studies showed this predicting value for early maladaptive scheme. Rahimpour and et al showed that early maladaptive scheme can significantly predict the marital satisfaction [20]. Stiles and et al [17], Andooz and et al [21], Zolfaghari and et al [7] had the same results as we showed in this study in different populations. These results showed while early maladaptive scheme had an important role in dissatisfaction of couples and they can affect the marital relationship behaviors. Fincham and Bitch these factors are associated with marital satisfaction: cognitive factors, emotional factors, physiological, behavioral patterns, social support, violence, existing child, stress, communication skills and sexual contact [22]. Styles [17] conducted a study and showed that early maladaptive schemas of disconnection and rejection areas (emotional deprivation) predict less intimate and romantic relationships between the couples. Yousefi [5] showed that maladaptive schemas lead to biases in the interpretation of the events. These misunderstandings affect marital satisfaction. Soleymani explained that emotional deprivation, emotional inhibition and inhibition can significantly predict the marital satisfaction [2]. These results match up with findings of research conducted by Chatav and Wishman [23], Zafary and Mohammadzade [6], Young [3]. Survival of a family is the result of the networking that is created by its members. In the family system communication is crucial. Thriving families have learned how to communicate and send messages well, and therefore have healthy patterns. Happiness, vitality, love, value each other, silent tranquilizers and not the silence of fear, humor, flexibility, and parents with a friendly features, the characteristics of such families. All those who believe in love at first marriage supports them, unfortunately, sometimes there are issues that can be caused get sprinkled the common life. The above results should be said that marital satisfaction is one of the most important factors in maintaining a happy life. Thus it can be said that the ability to deal with others often leads to a sense of relief, increased self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy and lack of ears are ringing. Early maladaptive scheme can biases in interpretation of events. These biases occurs in psychological pathology as misunderstanding, distorted attitudes, inappropriate assumptions, non-realistic purposes in partners and these misunderstandings affected the perceptions and future evaluations in marital life. Schemas continue in the line of life and had an important effect on interpersonal and other relationships. Despite early maladaptive scheme are not efficient, it can lead to dissatisfaction in marital relation. On the other hand, psychological pathology can be the reflection of her/his unhealthy schemas. So, negative and incompatible schemas can be the main core of personality disorders and most of first axis disorders in couples.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that a person with abandonment/instability schema will choose an unreliable partner and a person with mistrust/abuse schema choose a disincentive partner or partner who had over-request or needed to him/her. A person with subjugation schema will choose an aggressive or controller partner and a person with dependence/incompetence schema will choose a partner who could not him/her anyway. A person with emotional deprivation, feel that he/she should retire others because had difference with them and he/she is not belongs to a certain partner. So, it can lead to reject from her/his partner and family. Finally we concluded that these early maladaptive schema can predict the marital satisfaction negatively and of important role in its improvement or regression. So, based on effects of culture on schemas it is recommended that study with high sample size is done in vaster geographic region to distribute the results of study in subcultural difference. Each of early maladaptive schemas can make problems in marital life and improving treatment of them can help to have a better community and family. Performing workshops about recognition of self for selecting partner based on the existence of early maladaptive scheme before marriage can be helpful. Our study had some limitations such as: Tiring of participants was not controllable and can affect the results; controlling all variables was not possible which can confound the results; large number of questions in standardized questionnaires was wearying which can affect the accuracy of participants.

Competing interests

All authors declare any interests.

Authors' contributions

Saeed Seyed Esmaili planned the study, designed the survey, collected the data, doing methodological stage and wrote the article.

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