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Relationship between Parental Bonding and the Impaired Autonomy and Performance Domain of Early Maladaptive Schemas with the Mediating Role of Emotion Regulation

Mohadeseh Akbari^{1*} , Ahmad Borjali² , Mahdi Khanjani³ 

1. Corresponding Author, Department of Clinical and General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science, University of Allameh-Tabataba'i, Tehran, Iran. Email: mohadesehakbari500@gmail.com
2. Department of Clinical and General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science, University of Allameh-Tabataba'i, Tehran, Iran. Email: borjali@atu.ac.ir
3. Department of Clinical and General Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Science, University of Allameh-Tabataba'i, Tehran, Iran. Email: khanjani_m@atu.ac.ir

Extended Abstract

Aim

Over the past several decades, the deep connection between parental bonding and the formation of early maladaptive schemas (EMS) has been a primary focus of research in psychology. This study proposes that the quality of parental bonding, including parental care and overprotection, significantly impacts the formation of an individual's early maladaptive schemas. These schemas are enduring and pervasive patterns of thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations created during childhood, which can be dysfunctional to varying degrees (Young, 1994). Young, Klosko, and Weishaar (2003) originally theorized these schemas. This research investigates the role of emotion regulation strategies, specifically cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression, in mediating the connection between parental bonding and early maladaptive schemas. The study posits that these strategies influence the relationship between the two.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational methodology, focusing on a specific population: university students in Tehran aged 18 to 35 during the academic year 2020-2021. This age range represents a crucial developmental stage where the effects of childhood schemas and emotion regulation strategies become especially apparent in academic and social settings. To enhance the study's generalizability, the sample consisted of 316 students (190 females and 126 males) from Allameh Tabataba'i University and Shahid Beheshti University, selected through the available sampling method.

The instruments utilized in the research included the Parker Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) (Parker et al., 1979), which measures perceived parental care and overprotection; the Young Schema Questionnaire Short Form (YSQ-SF) (Young, 1998), which assesses impaired autonomy and performance domains; and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) (Gross & John, 2002), which evaluates individuals' tendencies toward cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling with SPSS software version 25 and LISREL software version 9.2.

Findings

The results showed a significant relationship between parental bonding and the impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas. Expressive suppression, an inappropriate emotion regulation strategy, played a mediating role in this relationship ($p < 0.05$). However, cognitive reappraisal, an appropriate emotion regulation strategy, did not mediate this relationship. A weak bond between mother and child, both directly and through the mediation of expressive suppression, is

associated with the use of early maladaptive schemas in the autonomy and performance domain in adulthood.

Conclusion

These findings align with previous research that highlights the significant influence of early interactions between parents and children on the development of psychological traits. Specifically, the results are consistent with those of Gunty & Buri (2008) and Lunding & Hoffart (2016), who confirmed the relationship between parenting styles and the impaired autonomy and performance domain of early maladaptive schemas. The findings also align with research by Herbert et al. (2018), which suggests that childhood traumas, particularly interpersonal traumas between the child and caregiver, hinder the acquisition of appropriate emotion regulation skills.

There was no evidence of a mediating effect for cognitive reappraisal, suggesting that the path from parental bonding to EMS may be less amenable to alteration by positive emotion regulation measures than previously believed. This new understanding paves the way for further investigation into the processes by which parental bonding affects psychological outcomes and the potential for therapies that target these mechanisms.

The findings of this study significantly contribute to our understanding of the connections between parental bonding, emotion regulation, and the formation of early maladaptive schemas associated with autonomy and performance. Future research should investigate the longitudinal impact of parental bonding and emotion regulation strategies on the development of early maladaptive schemas and the effectiveness of tailored interventions in mitigating the negative impacts of these tactics. This study lays the groundwork for more effective and nuanced approaches to mental health intervention, marking a significant contribution to the field.

Keywords: Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotion Regulation, Impaired Autonomy and Performance, Parental Bonding.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered to in this study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the procedures involved. Their information was kept confidential, and they were given the option to withdraw from the study at any stage. All participants provided informed consent, and they will be informed of the research results.

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Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest associated with this study.

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