



The Relationship between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Emotional Schemas with Emotional States of Women Filing For Divorce

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ABSTRACT

The extant study addresses the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas with the emotional states of women filing for divorce. To do so, a survey study with a fundamental objective is designed in which, the statistical society of study comprises women filing for divorce referring to consultation centers in west of Tehran City. The required sample size equaled 382 subjects based on the Green Method. Questionnaires were distributed among women filing for divorce referred to consultation centers west of Tehran City based on the convenient sampling method attending this center. The objective of the study has been pursued by employing the standard 232-item Early Maladaptive Schema Questionnaire by Young (1995), 28-item Emotional Schemas Questionnaire by Leahy (2009), and 23-item Emotional State Questionnaire by Aluoja et al. (1999). To test the normality of statistical society, the Kolmogorov and Smirnov test was used, and correlation and regression tests were used to test research hypotheses. The results show that early maladaptive and emotional schemas can predict emotional states. Moreover, there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states with a correlation coefficient of 0.492, which is significant with a probability of 95%. Furthermore, there is a relationship between emotional schemas and emotional states with a correlation coefficient of 0.528, which is significant with a probability of 99%.

Keywords: Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Schemas, Emotional States, Women Filing for Divorce.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a complex phenomenon in today's changing society (Hicks, 2023). People get married for many different reasons. In addition to sexual desires that are primary issues, love, security, protection, economic security, emotional security, partnership, escape from loneliness, having a child or children, and common hobbies are among the causes and factors that can make a person get married (Sharma, 2011). However, other reasons may direct marriage towards divorce. Emotional states are among the factors affecting the process of marital relationships. Emotional states are interpretations of complex states composed of many chemical and hormonal actions and interactions that create some changes in our neural system, which in turn, result in a kind of internal or external movement (Aluja et al., 1999). In the opinion of Meier (2019), being aware of the emotional state of our inner and being smarter would enable our mind and body reaction to situations to manage stress better so could improve emotional regulation, and also lower levels of anxiety. After the cognitive theories about mental vulnerability and borrowing from Piaget's perspective, Jeffrey Young developed a theory about early maladaptive schemas (Bauer, 1993). He believes that the schemas considered as a framework or structure are stable and durable structures serving as lenses that affect the person's perception of the world of self and others, and these schemas are shaped during childhood experiences (which mostly have played the role of an internal impact in the life of a child) and control the person's response to the environmental incidents (Beck, 1991). He explains that though the factors about society, school, and peers are effective in the formation of these schemas, their effects do not provide the extent and stability of the familial effect (Martin, 2019). The origin of these schemas is rooted in main emotional needs, including secure attachment to others, autonomy, competition, sense of identity, early life experiences, and emotional mood (Rafi, 2017).

Emotional schemas are one of the considerable schemas that Leahy defines as patterns, methods, and strategies used in response to an emotion. Emotional schemas (Leahy, 2002) are based on the principle that



emotional disorders originate from the beliefs, assumptions, and strategies used to cope with emotions. Emotional schemas refer to beliefs/ assumptions/ concepts, plans, and strategies used when experiencing an emotion (Leahy, 2019). Although emotions have been grown through evolutionary adaptation, they may be public experiences. Assumptions, evaluations, and responses of persons have been socially structured. Emotional schemas express that individuals are different in evaluating themselves about legitimacy/feeling shame, about emotion/ their assumptions about emotion reasons/ need to control emotion, expectations about duration and risk of emotion, and their standards about emotional appropriateness (Leahy, 2009/2022).

Early Maladaptive Schema introduced by Young is defined as an extensive subject or pattern consisting of memories, feelings, cognitions, and body feelings about self and relationships with others during childhood or adolescence, and is explained during the life of a person and is considerably inefficient. According to the theory of schema, early maladaptive schemas are underlying constructive blocks for individuals' personalities so early maladaptive schemas are developed during childhood, are developed during the life of a person, and are considerably inefficient (Yakin et al., 2019). Young et al. (2006) have listed five early childhood emotional needs: A) security and nurturing (including secure attachment), B) autonomy, competence, and sense of identity, C) freedom to express needs, emotions, and opinions, D) spontaneity and play, H) realistic limits and self-control. In the opinion of Young et al. (2003) when these underlying emotional needs are violated, early maladaptive schemas are formed. In this case, two important points must be considered. According to Young, schemas do not consist of special behaviors because behaviors are considered as a response to schemas not as a part of schemas. Moreover, schemas have various types, and according to the available studies, schemas provide the field for experiencing many failures and problems in life and even are effective in the creation and stability of some mental disorders such as personality disorders, mood disorders, eating disorders, and anxiety disorders (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2023). In the case of early maladaptive schemas, the importance of examining the effect of these schemas in the field of divorce is bold based on the results of a metanalysis conducted by Janovsky et al. (2020) indicating that these schemas are correlated to interpersonal problems. More importantly, findings of the metanalysis show that early maladaptive schemas have a negative effect on the interpersonal problems and wife and husband or create such problems. In addition to the topic of early maladaptive schemas, the subject of emotional schemas and their potential effects on divorce is also highly substantial. According to Gibbons et al. (2019). Emotional schemas identify a set of assumptive processes and strategies that become activated when experiencing an unpleasant feeling. From their viewpoints, emotional processing problems may be related to disorders in the regulation of mental needs even due to activation of early maladaptive schemas. In the field of couples, a lack of proper control over emotional schemas may lead to many problems, such as divorce.

However, many studies conducted by some researchers such as Angioni et al. (2019), Lim et al. (2016), and Yousefi et al. (2010) have confirmed the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and divorce, while others like Zhu et al. (2019) and Yousefi (2010) have confirmed the relationship between emotional schemas and divorce; nevertheless, author's reviews show that attention to emotional states among divorce applicants and especially the effect of two early maladaptive and emotional schemas on this component is a topic, which has been neglected in Iranian studies. In addition to this gap, examinations also reveal that no Iranian study has examined the relationships between three variables of early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states, especially among women filing for divorce. Regarding these gaps, thus, this study tends to answer the main question of research:

Is there any relationship between early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states of women filing for divorce?

The results of such a study can be important and practical to three groups: the first group is divorce applicants who are pursuing the divorce application process and can get familiar with the concepts of early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states, and more importantly the relationships between these three variables in case of divorce. The second group includes couples that are living with each other who can get familiar with these concepts, their relationships, and the importance it has in preventing divorce. The third group consists of influential and important institutes such as families, and social and governmental institutions that are in charge of divorce cases shaping the features related to the mentioned schemas and also forming emotional states among individuals. All of these three groups can benefit from the results of this study since the research gap is filled.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The extant study is descriptive-survey and correlational in terms of method and is fundamental research in terms of objective. To collect data, library studies, and field methods were used. Statistical society of study



comprises women filing for divorce referring to the consultation centers in wets of Tehran City (Neday-e-Daroon Consultation Center, Ravanban Iran Consultation Clinic, and Pender-e-Nik Consultation Center). The green method was used to measure the sample size regarding the correlation method used in this study:

$$n \geq 8m + 50$$

where m represents the number of predictor variables (number of subscales of two variables: early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas):

$$14 + 18 = 32$$

Ultimately, an adequate sample size equaled 382 by adding 25% of drop probability in questionnaires. Moreover, the sampling method was convenient through which, the questionnaires were distributed among women filing for divorce referring to consultation centers in wets of Tehran by being present in these centers.

Data collection tools

Early Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire by Young (1995)

The standard Early Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire by Young (1990) was used in this study to examine early maladaptive schemas among women filing for divorce referring to consultation centers in the west of Tehran. Young evaluates the early maladaptive schemas among individuals within 232 items by constructing a test called Young's early maladaptive schemas which is known as life traps or personality traps test. Some kinds of schemas evaluated in this test include schema of abandonment, defectiveness and shame, mistrust, social isolation, dependence, vulnerability, failure, entitlement, subjugation, insufficient self-control, etc. The Young's maladaptive schemas test is used for self-knowledge and evaluating inefficient patterns in life, career consultation, academic consultation, pre-marriage consultation, and doing scientific studies and research. This test is used in many consultation and research centers. To test answers on this scale, the five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree (score=1), disagree (2), moderate (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5)). In the study conducted by Agha Yousefi and Amirpour (2012), the validity of this questionnaire and its reliability were confirmed based on the measured Cronbach's alpha of 0.81.

Emotional Schema Scale by Leahy (2009)

To assess emotional schemas among women filing for divorce referring to consolation centers in the West of Tehran, the Standard Emotional Schema Scale by Leahy (2009) was used. This questionnaire has 14 dimensions (validation, comprehensibility, guilt, looking at emotions clearly, high values, not being controlled, feeling of numbness, desire to be rational, duration, consensus, acceptance of feelings, rumination, expression, and blaming). To examine the answers to this 28-item scale, a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree (score=1), disagree (2), moderate (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5)) was used. The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed in the study conducted by Beyranvand (2014), and also its reliability was approved regarding the calculated Cronbach's alpha of 0.84.

Emotional State Questionnaire by Aluoja et al. (1999)

To examine the emotional states among women filing for divorce referring to consultation centers in the west of Tehran, the Emotional State Questionnaire by Aluoja et al. (1999) was used in this study. This dimensionless questionnaire consists of 33 items used to measure answers on a five-point Likert Scale (very high=5, high=4, moderate=3, low=2, and very low=1). The validity of this questionnaire was confirmed in the study conducted by Aluoja et al. (1999), and its reliability was also confirmed based on the measured Cronbach's alpha of 0.88. To examine the reliability of questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha measurement method was used. The results of this method reported in Table 1 indicate that the reliability of the questionnaire is confirmed based on Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.7 for all variables.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha of research variables

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Early maladaptive schemas	0.928
Emotional schemas	0.917
Emotional states	0.895

Data analysis was done through SPSS (29.0.2 version) software. First, the Kolmogorov and Smirnov test was used to test the normal or nonnormal distribution of variables, and then correlation and regression tests were employed to examine hypotheses/

RESULTS

The results showed that among subjects, 30 members (about 7.8%) were younger than 20, 140 members



(about 36.6%) were 21-30 years old, 105 members (about 27.5%) were 31-40 years old, 66 members (about 17.3%) were 41-50 years old, and 27 members (about 7.1%) were older than 51. The rest of the subjects did not answer. Of them, 32 members (about 8.4%) were undergraduates, 54 members (about 14.1%) had diploma degrees, and 76 members (about 19.9%) had associate degrees. 98 members (about 25.7%) had BA degrees, 66 members (about 17.3%) had MA degrees, and 40 members (about 10.5%) had Ph.D. degrees. The rest did not answer. Among subjects, 134 members (about 35.1%) were married for five years, 114 members (about 29.9%) were married for 6-10 years, 82 members (about 21.5%) were married for 11-15 years, 20 members (about 5.2%) were married for 16-20 years, and 22 members (about 5.7%) were married more than 21 years. The rest did not answer.

Table 2. Beta test (line slope) related to two variables of early maladaptive schemas and emotional states

Model	Nonstandard beta		Standard beta	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	B		
Constant	0.530	0.148		3.009	0.001
Early maladaptive schemas	0.124	0.042	0.144	3.485	0.000

According to Table 2, the *t*-value confirms the power of early maladaptive schemas for predicting emotional states.

Table 3. Beta test (line slope) related to two variables of emotional schemas and emotional states

Model	Nonstandard beta		Standard beta	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	B		
Constant	0.802	0.238		2.198	0.000
Emotional schemas	0.324	0.068	0.208	2.903	0.000

According to Table 3, the *t*-value confirms the power of emotional schemas for predicting emotional states.

Table 4. Regression coefficient related to two variables of early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas and emotional states

	Regression coefficient	Coefficient of determination (R^2)	Adjusted determination coefficient (\bar{R}^2)	Estimate standard error
Early maladaptive schemas and emotional states	0.220	0.451	0.503	0.2802
Emotional schemas and emotional states	0.389	0.380	0.293	0.3929

According to Table 4, R^2 equals 0.451; it means that 45.1% of variations in emotional states depend on early maladaptive schemas. Also, R^2 equals 0.380, implying 38.0% of variations in emotional states depend on the emotional schemas.

Table 5. F test of regression related to two variables of early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas



and emotional states				
	Model	Sum of squares	F	Sig.
Early maladaptive schemas and emotional states	Regression	23.456	46.003	0.000
	Residual	43.920		
	Total	66.420		
Emotional schemas and emotional states	Regression	15.290	44.289	0.000
	Residual	22.834		
	Total	33.338		

According to the results reported in Table 5, the observed *F*-value is significant at a significance level of 0.05; therefore, the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states is confirmed. The results indicate that the observed *F* is significant at a significance level of 0.05; thus, the relationship between emotional schemas and emotional states is confirmed.

Table 6. Test of correlation between early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas and emotional states

Variables	Coefficient of correlation	Sig.	Test result
Early maladaptive schemas	0.492	0.012	They are correlated
Emotional states			
Emotional schemas	0.528	0.008	They are correlated
Emotional states			

According to Table 6, the significance level equals 0.012 and is less than the error level ($\alpha=0.05$) so there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states. The coefficient of correlation equals 0.492, which is significant with a probability of 95%. Since the significance value equals 0.008 and is less than the error level ($\alpha=0.01$), there is a relationship between emotional schemas and emotional states. The coefficient of correlation equals 0.528 and is significant with a probability of 99%.

DISCUSSION

According to the obtained results, both early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas can predict emotional states. This result is matched with findings obtained by De Vos et al. (2024) and Edwards et al. (2021). Thus, it is concluded that examination of two components of early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas among women filing for divorce helps to have an estimation of their emotional states, so this potential can be used to prevent or treat divorce. According to the result of this hypothesis, it can be indeed suggested to therapists and consultants to pay attention to two components of early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas, as well as their predictor potential for emotional states of women filing for divorce when providing consultative and therapeutic services for these women. They also can improve the emotional states of women filing for divorce by focusing on solving, and challenges caused by the two mentioned schemas.

The results confirm that about 45.1% of variations in emotional states depend on the variable of early maladaptive schemas. The relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states is at the significance level of 0.05; therefore, there is a relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states. The coefficient of correlation between early maladaptive schemas and emotional states equals 0.492 and is significant with a probability of 95%. This finding is consistent with results obtained by Edwards et al. (2021) and Meier (2019). This result shows that the worse the early maladaptive schemas among women filing for divorce, the more improper their emotional states. Thus, it is recommended for therapists and consultants focusing on solving challenges and disorders caused by early maladaptive schemas to improve the emotional states of women filing for divorce and use this potential to help them with their regrets for divorce application. The results indicate that about 38.0% of variations in emotional states depend on the variable of emotional schemas. The relationship between emotional schemas and emotional states is confirmed at a significance level of 0.05; therefore, there is a relationship between emotional schemas and emotional states. The



coefficient of correlation between emotional schemas and emotional states equals 0.528 and is significant with a probability of 99%. This result is matched with the results obtained by De Vos et al. (2024), Edwards et al. (2021), and Reeves et al. (2007). This result confirms that when emotional schemas get worse among women filing for divorce, there will be an increased incidence of negative emotional states among them. Thus, improvement of emotional schemas of women filing for divorce can pave the way for improving emotional states in women and convincing them to continue their marital lives.

Both early maladaptive and emotional schemas not only can predict emotional states among women filing for divorce, but also a direct relationship exists between them. , descriptive results of this study are also important because demographic characteristics analysis indicates three points: firstly, women filing for divorce have mainly BA degrees; secondly, around three-quarters of studied statistical sample in this research comprises women younger than 40 who have referred to similar centers as divorce applicants; thirdly, around two-thirds of women filing for divorce are married for less than 10 years. These findings reveal brutal realities. According to the results of this study, it seems that three important components (early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states) can be considered at least among women to pay more attention to divorce which is generally a devastating and negative phenomenon. The reason is that these three components can be examined among women either for preventing or solving the divorce issue after they come to consultation centers and use the results of this survey in addition to other effective factors and components that cannot be all considered in one thesis to help these individuals.

The results of this study particularly determine that two early maladaptive and emotional schemas can be good predictors for emotional states among women, so emotional states can be a significant component in divorce cases. The results of this study are practical in terms of some aspects; firstly, in terms of divorce consultation centers and advisors for divorce cases, the results show that consultants can consider three variables of early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states when facing a client applying for divorce. Secondly, the results can be practical to practitioner institutions working in different social and cultural areas, including the government or some organizations such as the Ministry of Sport and Youth, Ministry of Culture, Presidential Vice President for Women's Affairs, Ministry of Education, and even Ministry of Science that deal with women and the youth in a direct relationship. The results can help the mentioned organizations to determine some rules and plans in a way to improve the variables considered in this study that affect individuals either personally or socially and in familial cases.

Thirdly, the results of this study can be helpful for the targeted statistical society of women filing for divorce, providing them with an insight into the importance of changing the studied variables and the relationships between them in case of divorce. It is hoped that divorce requests will be reduced after being aware of these variables, so the clients can pay more attention to these variables and improve their situations paving the way for back together and canceling the divorce. Fourthly, the research gap existing in this field makes the results academically useful because there is not any Iranian study in this field as mentioned in the section on comparison between results of this study and previous ones. This study tried to fill the research gap in the field of the relationships between three variables of early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states regarding divorce by considering at least one certain statistical society that comprises women filing for divorce in Tehran. It should be emphasized that indicators and criteria determined in this study are totally academic and authenticate literature-based for all concepts of early maladaptive schemas, emotional schemas, and emotional states, so they can be practical to a wide range of audiences some examples were mentioned above.

This study examines the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and emotional schemas with the emotional states of women filing for divorce, so the results may be different for the opposite sex; thus, the generalization of results to men filing for divorce must be done cautiously.

Emotional techniques include using feelings to cope with schemas. In this technique, the person is asked to completely perceive and express their feelings. Directed imaging and role-playing are a part of emotional schema therapy. Interpersonal techniques help a person to assess his/her relationships. Thus, one can find those techniques and components affected by the schemas. However, it is suggested that individuals attend therapy sessions in this technique with a friend or another person. The cognitive techniques contribute to detecting and challenging harmful thought patterns originating from schemas. The structured dialogues through which, individuals talk both in favor and against a certain schema are among examples of cognitive techniques in schema therapy.

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