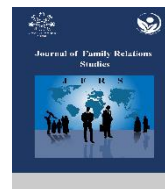




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Research Paper

Intergenerational Transmission Disconnection and Rejection Domain of Early Maladaptive Schemas in Mother and Daughter Relationships: The Mediating Role of Perceived Maternal Attention



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ABSTRACT

Objective: Intergenerational transmission of schemas has received more attention in recent years. Then the aim of this study was to investigate Intergenerational transmission disconnection and rejection domain of maladaptive schema in mother-daughter relationships: the mediating role of the perceived Maternal Attention.

Methods: The method of research was correlation-structural equation modeling, and the research population was all mothers and their daughters in city of Mashhad, of which 207 groups of mothers (30-69) and daughters (16-30) were selected using the convenience sampling method. The sample group filled out the questionnaires, including Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form Version 3 (YSQ-S3) (2005) and Parental Bonding Instrument of Parker's et al., (PBI) (1979). The data was analyzed using amose-24 and spss-24 software.

Results: The findings showed that the Perceived Maternal Attention can mediate the relationship between disconnection and rejection domains schemas in mothers and daughters.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the schemas of disconnection and rejection can affect the formation of these schemas in the daughter by transferring the perceived Maternal Attention to the daughter.

1. Introduction

Early maladaptive schemas refer to wide-ranging themes about self and others, created during childhood and expanded across the individual's life, though they are also considerably ineffective (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). These schemas are mainly formed in childhood and continue to grow during adolescence and throughout a person's life, and if left untreated, they can lead to significant functional disorders (Gong & Chan, 2018). Various reasons have been raised for the formation of these schemas as a cognitive

structure, the most important of which may be a failure to meet the main needs in different ways such as the family's toxic climate, the repetitive frequency of small-damage events that may lead to larger damages, the occurrence of trauma, parental neglect of children, and parental overprotectiveness of children in parenting styles. In this connection, family, parents, and the type of interaction and behavior with children have a considerable role (Bach, Lockwood, & Young, 2017).

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In general, Young et al. (2003) acknowledged that the schemas of 1) secure attachment, 2) autonomy, 3) freedom to express valid emotions and needs, 4) spontaneity, and 5) realistic limitations could be developed during childhood due to failure to meet basic emotional needs. On the other hand, early maladaptive schemas developed because of failure to meet these needs are divided into five distinct categories, called schema domains. These domains include 1) Disconnection and rejection, 2) Insufficient autonomy/performance, 3) Impaired limits 4) Other directedness, 5) Over vigilance /Inhibition. Schemas can be about others, such as the schema of abandonment, suggesting that support from and relationship with others is unstable and unreliable; or schemas may be about the individual him/herself, such as the schema of unrelenting criteria, suggesting that the individual should behave according to his/her high-level standards (Gibson & Francis, 2019). The domain of disconnection and rejection which is discussed in this research refers to the child's experience of being deprived of emotional or physical resources from their primary caregiver (Bricker, Young, & Flanagan, 1993). People with this schema cannot establish a secure and satisfying emotional attachment and relationship with others. Schemas within the domain of disconnection and rejection are formed because of not meeting the basic needs of security, stability, and secure attachment (Calvete, Orue, Hankin, 2015). These schemas are formed in families that are callous, cold, harassing, isolated, hot-tempered, unpredictable, or misbehaving (Young et al., 2003). Then, in adulthood a person with this schema believes that the expected need for security and stability, love, and nurturing from important people in life will not be met in a predictable manner (Couvrette, & Lancôt, 2017; Ostovar, Bagheri, Griffiths, Mohd Hasima, 2021).

On the other hand, the topic of perceived parental bond indicates how children perceive the type of relationship with their parents (Parker, 1990), which in this research only focused on the bond with the mother and attention means the amount of warmth, intimacy, love, support and care that the caregiver provides to the child.

The mother's communication manner is significant due to the child's copying of her behavior. As a result, the child assimilates with and internalizes her/his mother's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, thus preparing to form his/her schemas (Erfan, 2011). Gunty and Buri (2008) found that parental practices are a significant predictor for some domains of schemas like rejection and disconnection. In this connection, Parker, Tupling, Brown (1979) investigated this type of early interaction between parents and children from a reverse angle, i.e.,

from the view of children, and regarded their perception of parental behavior to be a major element in the incidence of their mental health problems. He also described this situation by examining two aspects of care or attention and control or excessive support. According to Bowlby (1973), the main individual who meets the needs of newborn and takes after him/her is usually a mother or a caregiver in some special cases. A mother with many maladaptive schemas such as rejection and abandonment may suffer from problems satisfying her children's emotional needs and fail to provide responsible parenting styles towards them. When the newborn's somatic and emotional needs are not satisfactorily met, s/he becomes insecurely attached to his/her mother, thus paving the way for the transfer of the mother's early maladaptive schemas to the child. The inter-familial transfer of schemas can produce various consequences for a family because, compared to other vulnerable cognitions, schemas are created automatically and can produce higher levels of negative emotions (Schmidt, Joiner, Young, & Telch, 1995). A child understands his/her parents' feelings and internalizes their thoughts, behavior, and experiences like a model (Young et al., 2003). Therefore, a mother with the defective schema of mistrust may make her child believe that s/he is an unworthy person and internalize this belief in him/her. Several studies have shown that the formation of schemas in people is associated with perceiving undesirable parenting components (e.g., rejection, control, anxious parenting, and the lack of emotional warmth) (Jalali, Zargar, Salavati, & Kakavand, 2011; Khajouei Nia, Sovani, & Sarami Forooshani, 2014; Muris, 2006). According to the past literature, the significance of the mother-child relationship in forming the child's mental structure can be examined. In this regard, however, the relationship between mother and daughter is missing. The selection of the mother-daughter relationship is because the mother has initially closer contact with the child, and according to Sayer, Bianchi, and Robinson (2004), and consistent with the Social Learning Theory, children are said to spend more time with their mothers than with their fathers, and thus have more situations for being with each other and interact. Second, as stated above, gender is assumed to be an effective factor in the children's assimilation process and modeling of their parents; in the end, it is concluded it is highly likely to have a significant relationship between mothers' and daughters' maladaptive schemas (Ghasemi, 2016). Because the one-way child-parent relationship (especially daughters' perception of their relationship with their mother) was not dealt with, and gender was not focused as a major element in the relationship,

attempts were made to provide a valid answer to the question “Does the daughter’s motherly attention play a mediating role in the relationship between disconnection and rejection domains schemas?” Also, the reason why the domain of disconnection and rejection was chosen for this research is that among the areas presented by [Young et al., \(2003\)](#), this area causes many problems and serious trauma in interpersonal relationships ([Janovsky, Rock, Thorsteinsson, Clark, & Murray, 2020](#)) and it causes the most emotional damage to a person in adulthood ([Bishop, Younan, Low, & Pilkington, 2022](#)). Therefore, this shows that research on this field is particularly important.

2. Materials and Methods

The study used correlation-structural equation modeling as the research method, and the study population consisted of mothers and daughters in the city of Mashhad, who were selected via the convenience sampling method. The sample group filled the research questionnaires through a link sent to them by the researchers on virtual social networks. At first, a sample of 223 pairs of mother and daughter were gathered. Then, the Mahalanobis test was used to determine outliers, and in the end, 207 pairs of mothers (30-69) and daughters (16-39) were remained.

The level of education in girls, 23.7% were student, 9.2% diploma, 2.4% post-diploma, 42.5% bachelor, 20.3% post-graduate and 1.9% PhD, and among the studied mothers, 5.5 13% were high school, 37.2% diploma, 2.4% postgraduate, 35.7% bachelor's degree, 9.7% master's degree and 1.4% doctorate. The employment status of girls, 23.7% were students, 37.2% were students, 14.5% were employees, 12.5% were housewives, and 12.1% were self-employed. Among the studied mothers, 2% were students, 26.1% were employees, 63.7% were housewives, and 8.2% were self-employed.

Later, data were analyzed by SPSS-24 and AMOS-24 software using structural equation modeling. To analyze the data fit indices such as CFI, TLI, GFI and IFI were used.

Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form Version 3 (YSQ-S3): The self-report Early Maladaptive Schema Questionnaire have three form (205-items, 90-items, and 75-items) and in this research was used 90-items form ([YSQ-S3; Young, 2005](#)) with 5 domains of early maladaptive schemas. To measure

items about disconnection and rejection domain schemas were used from 5 subscales: emotional deprivation (Items 1, 19, 37, 55, 73), abandonment/instability (Items 2, 20, 38, 56, 74), mistrust/abuse (Items 3, 21, 39, 57, 75), social isolation/alienation (Items 2,22,40,58,76), defectiveness and shame (Items 5, 23, 41, 59, 77). This questionnaire is on a 6-degree Likert scale (1=completely untrue of me, 6=describes me perfectly). Each scale has 5 items that measure the type of early maladaptive schema. In Various research such as [Stumblingbear, Klibert, and Winterowd \(2007\)](#) and [Marengo, Klibert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Warren, and Smalley \(2019\)](#) the reliability of this questionnaire has been confirmed. In this research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of rejection domain schema was obtained for mother 0.95 and for daughter 0.96. Also, The reliability in daughters for emotional deprivation (0.76), abandonment/instability (0.77), mistrust/abuse (0.72), social isolation/alienation (0.82), defectiveness and shame (0.81) and in mothers for emotional deprivation (0.73), abandonment/instability (0.64), mistrust/abuse (0.65), social isolation/alienation (0.65), defectiveness and shame (0.62).

Perceived Partner Bonding Instrument (PBI): The Perceived Partner Bonding Instrument is a 25-item and was developed by [Parker et al., \(1979\)](#) to measure two aspects of parents’ 'care' and 'protection from the view of Children over 16 years old. This study used the subscale care/attention of this instrument to measure perceived maternal attention. In this instrument, the subject is required to recall the first 16 years of his/her life, and thus, rate the behaviors and attitudes of this of the parents (father or mother) in this period separately. As for “care”, there are compassion, emotional warmth, empathy, and closeness, on the one hand, and emotional coldness, indifference, and neglect, on the other hand. [Parker et al., \(1979\)](#) obtained a reliability of 0.88 for the care dimension and 0.74 for the 'protection dimension. In this research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was obtained 0.87 for the dimension of care.

3. Results

In this section, descriptive findings and then inferential findings are presented first. The mean and standard deviation of measured variables are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of measured variable scores

| Dependent variable | Maker | Daughters | Mothers |
|--|-----------|---------------|---------------|
| | | M ± SD | M ± SD |
| Disconnection and rejection domain schemas | DR | 20.84 ± 58.60 | 15.66 ± 50.38 |
| Emotional deprivation schema | ED | 5.27 ± 11.41 | 5.55 ± 12.32 |
| Abandonment/instability schema | AB | 5.67 ± 13.98 | 4.54 ± 11.63 |
| Mistrust/abuse schema | MA | 4.92 ± 12.12 | 4.44 ± 10.77 |
| Social isolation/alienation schema | SI | 5.60 ± 11.98 | 3.59 ± 8.48 |
| Defectiveness/shame schema | DS | 4.48 ± 9.11 | 2.78 ± 7.17 |
| Perceived Maternal Attention | Attention | 7.14 ± 38.60 | ----- |

As noted in Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the total score of the rejection and disconnection schema was 58.60 (20.84) in daughters and 50.38 (15.66) in mothers. In daughters, the highest mean (and standard deviation) pertained to the abandonment/instability schema (13.98 (5.67)), and the lowest to the defectiveness and shame schema

(9.11 (4.48)). In mothers, the highest mean (and standard deviation) pertained to the schema of emotional deprivation (12.32 (5.55)), and the lowest to the schema of shame/defectiveness (7.17(2.78)). The matrix of study variable correlation is given in the table 2.

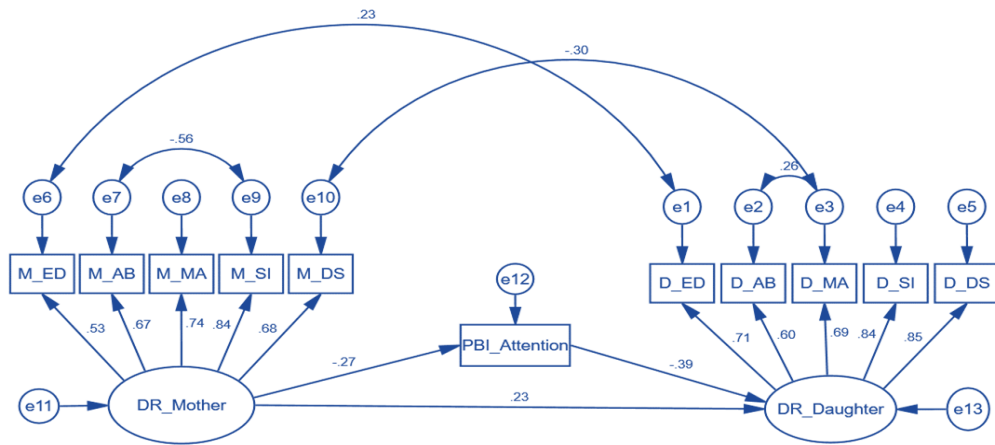
Table 2. Correlation matrix of study variables (n=207)

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|----------|----------|---|
| Mother’s disconnection and rejection schema | 1 | | |
| Daughter’s disconnection and rejection schema | 0.301** | 1 | |
| 3. Perceived maternal attention | -0.298** | -0.405** | 1 |

P<0.001**

Table 2 results indicate that there was a positive and significant relationship between the mother’s and daughter’s disconnection and rejection schema (*p*<0.001), but there was a negative and significant relationship between daughters’ and mother’s

rejection and disconnection with perceived maternal attention (*p*<0.001). Later, the mediating role of perceived maternal attention in the relationship between mother with daughter’s disconnection and rejection is examined.



Chi-square (df = 88.495 (38); P value = .000
;Relative Chi-Sq = 2.329; GFI = .931
; CFI = .945; IFI= .946
; TLI=.920; RMSEA = .080

Figure 1. Mediating structural model of study based on standard values

According to the findings, the estimated model had an acceptable fit and an appropriate structure after covariance errors of e6, e1, e3, e2, e10, e7, and e9 were

corrected. In the following, the model fit indices are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Structural model adaptability results with fit indicators after correction

| Indicators | $\frac{\chi^2}{df}$ | GFI | CFI | IFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Proposed criterion | $3 \leq$ | ≤ 0.9 | ≤ 0.9 | ≤ 0.9 | ≤ 0.9 | $0.08 \leq$ |
| Reported values | 2.33 | 0.93 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 0.92 | 0.08 |

Table 3 shows that all the fit indices were higher than 0.9 and the error rate was 0.08, suggesting that the obtained indices were favorable. A summary of the

results from the research hypothesis is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of results from the study structural model

| Paths | Non-standard regression values | Standard errors | Standard regression values | Critical ratio | p.value |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Mother's disconnection and rejection schema perceived maternal attention → | -0.671 | 0.191 | -0.271 | ***-3.51 | 0.001< |
| Perceived maternal attention daughter disconnection and rejection → | -0.205 | 0.038 | -0.391 | ***-5.33 | 0.001< |
| Mother disconnection and rejection daughter disconnection and rejection → | 0.295 | 0.100 | 0.228 | **2.95 | 0.003 |

* $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

As noted in Table 4 results, the effect of mother's disconnection and rejection schema on perceived maternal attention was negative and significant ($p < \beta 0.001 = -0.27$), and the effects of perceived maternal attention on daughters' disconnection and rejection schema was negative and significant ($p < \beta 0.001 = -$

.39). The effects of mother's disconnection and rejection schema on daughters' disconnection and rejection domain schema were also significant ($p = \beta 0.003 = 0.23$). Table 5 gives a maximum likelihood estimate of standardized effects in the model.

Table 5. A maximum likelihood estimates of standardized effects in the model

| Paths | Direct effects | Indirect effects | Total effects |
|---|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Mothe's disconnection and rejection schema Perceived maternal attention → | -0.27 | 0 | -0.27 |
| Perceived maternal attention Daughters' rejection and disconnection schema → | -0.39 | 0 | -0.39 |
| Mother's rejection and disconnection schema Daughters' disconnection and rejection schema → | 0.22 | 0.10 | 0.33 |

As noted in Table 5, the standard indirect effect of the mother's disconnection and rejection schema on the daughter's rejection and disconnection schema was 0.10. Bootstrap test results with a sample of 1000 people at a 95% confidence level indicated that the indirect effect of the mother's rejection and disconnection, mediated by perceived care, on the daughter's rejection and disconnection was 0.13. This value ranged from 0.06-0.27 at a 95% confidence level, being statistically significant at two ranges ($p = 0.001$), while the direct effect of the mother's rejection and disconnection schema on the daughter's rejection and disconnection was 0.12. This value ranged from 0.12-0.49 at a 95% confidence level, thus being statistically significant at two ranges ($p = 0.003$). In general, according to Bootstrap result, when the mediating variable of perceived care was introduced to the model as a predictive variable, the direct effect of the mother's rejection and disconnection schema on the daughter's rejection and disconnection schema reduced, though significant. Thus, the role of the

partial mediating variable was confirmed.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Study findings revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the mother and the daughter's maladaptive schemas in the ejection and disconnection domain mediated by perceived maternal attention. These findings confirmed Sundag, Zens, Ascone, Thome, & Lincoln (2018) about the inter-generational transfer of early maladaptive schemas from parents to children. They are also consistent with those of Zeynel & Uzer (2020) who suggested that a mother's early maladaptive schemas in the rejection domain could predict the same domain in daughters. To explain the significant and negative effects of a mother's rejection and disconnection schemas over perceived maternal attention, one would say that a mother is usually an individual who takes this responsibility from the early days. for this, a profound relationship is formed between mother and child.

This relationship helps human's newborns to finally turn into healthy, independent, and social humans. However, literature has shown that for a mother, growing up the female newborn follows a more complex path. This subject denotes that mother also faces more internal and external challenges in growing up a male child. Mother's view of the female child is directly affected by childhood days (Moshtaq, 2015). Zafiropoulou, and Avagianou (2014) reported findings are consistent with early maladaptive schemas in parenting styles, and Oei and Baranoff (2007) found a relationship between early maladaptive schemas in children-parent relations. Study by Shah and Waller (2000) showed that perceived partner bonding affected early maladaptive schemas, and studies by Harris and Curtin (2002) showed the effects of perceived partner bonding on forming schemas. In Harris and Curtin's study, however, one of the schemas (shame and defectiveness) in the rejection and disconnection domain was focused more attention. This study also did not examine inter-generational issues and only focused on several adults. Shah and Waller (2000) also investigated the mediating role of main maladaptive beliefs (here, taken as early maladaptive schemas) between the perceived partner bonding and depression vulnerability. It was concluded that two dimensions of perceived partner bonding could create early maladaptive schemas. also, in a similar study by Khorasanizadeh, Ranjbaripour, Poursharifi, Bagheri, and Poyamanesh, (2018), it was determined that from among the components of the mother and child relationship, control, inflexibility, and indifference were found to significantly predict early maladaptive schemas. Each of these components was interrelated with unmet needs affecting the formation of schemas. In general, the level of motherly care, closely related to the said components, could lead to forming early maladaptive schemas. The level of this care and attention is perceived by the child and remains in his mind.

Other similar studies by Wright, Crawford and Del Castillo (2009), Gunty and Buri (2008), and Fritzhand, Mirović, and Hadžić (2017) supported this idea that there is a relationship between early childhood experiences (attachment, childhood harms, perceived parenting styles, family functions, and parenting styles) and the formation of schemas. These findings can confirm previous findings, especially the inspiring article by Gibson and Francis (2019) entitled "Intergenerational Transfer of Early Maladaptive Schemas in Mother–Daughter Dyads, and the Role of Parenting". In sum, there are various factors involved in the motherhood of each woman; however, despite

the diversity of potential predictors of mother and daughters link, few studies have been conducted on the role of a mother's perception of self and her relations with others as regards their relationship with her daughter.

This study aimed to investigate intergenerational issues and focus on the main caregiver, i.e., the mother and take into account her homogenous sex child, daughter for the transference of early maladaptive schemas. The limitations of this study were finding mothers and daughters in pair forms, especially during the Coronavirus period which caused problems in gathering the samples. The online questionnaires and the high number of items made working with those scales difficult for middle-aged mothers. Consistent with the obtained results, it is proposed to use the Young or Baumrind parenting styles questionnaire as a mediator or one of the variables. Both parents, mother, father, and children of both sexes or twins (for innovation in the study and genetic investigation) should be included in the study. If required, the study subject should be comparatively investigated between women and men or different cultures. To generalize data, variables are recommended to be compared in different communities. To better identify the variables, future studies are proposed to be performed for three generations longitudinally. It is also suggested to hold workshops and classes to increase parents, especially mothers' awareness of pregnancies about maladaptive beliefs such as schemas and their effects on parenting styles, and the effects of various treatments on raising positive parental functions.

In general, it can be said that the low level of perceived maternal attention due to not meeting the basic needs of the child can lead to the formation of early maladaptive schemas. Also, what plays a role and is important in the relationship between the transmission of schemas from mother to daughter is the type of perception that the child has about the amount of attention of her mother and then perceived attention is so important in the development of the child.

5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

All ethical principles are considered in this article. Knowing about the subject of the right to informed consent, the researchers explained the purpose of the research in the link they sent to the participants and asked the participants to answer the questionnaires if they were fully satisfied.

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Authors' contributions

All authors have contributed to this research.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest in this research.

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