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| Extended Abstract |

The association of early maladaptive schemas and dysfunctional schema coping modes with interpersonal dominance and submissiveness: Perceived similarity in couplesBüşra Fatma Gültekin¹ , Miray Akyunus² **Keywords**

early maladaptive schemas, interpersonal problems, dysfunctional schema coping modes, interpersonal complementarity, dominance, submissiveness

Abstract

Schema Therapy Model and Interpersonal Theory of Personality have consistent developmental explanations of personality and interpersonal relationship patterns. According to the Schema Model, dysfunctional schema coping modes, as well as early maladaptive schemas, can affect relational patterns in close relationships. Moreover, the complementarity principle of the Interpersonal Circumplex Model suggests that behaviors in interpersonal relationships show reciprocity in the dominance dimension. In this study, early maladaptive schemas and dysfunctional schema coping modes in relation to dominance and submissiveness were examined in romantic relationship context. The sample of the study includes 731 (408 females and 317 males) participants aged between 18-61. The data of the study was collected via Demographic Information Form, Inventory of Interpersonal Problems-Circumplex Scales-Short Form self-report and observer version, Young Schema Questionnaire Short Form-3, and Schema Mode Inventory. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the association of dominance and submissiveness to perceived partner-dominance and perceived partner-submissiveness, while the effect of schemas and schema modes are controlled for. Depending on the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, two independent serial mediation models were proposed and tested. The results showed the mediating role of the coping schema modes (surrender and over-compensation) and one's interpersonal problems (submissiveness and dominance), respectively, in the relationship between the disconnection schema and perceived interpersonal problems in the partner (perceived partner submissiveness and dominance). Participants perceived their partners similar to themselves in interpersonal problems. The findings were discussed within the scope of the literature and their clinical implications were evaluated.

Young's Schema Therapy Model proposed that five universal basic needs must be met in childhood. Those basic needs are defined as secure attachment (security, stability, nurturance, and acceptance), autonomy and sense of identity, expression of needs and emotions, spontaneity, and play, and realistic limits. When these needs are not met, maladaptive schemas might be formed throughout the developmental stages from early years to adulthood (Young et al., 2003). Within the schema therapy model, five schema domains and 18 early maladaptive schemas were defined (Young et al., 2003) to describe different emotional and behavioral patterns of personality.

The Schema Therapy Model was later claimed to be insufficient to completely formulate these patterns since individuals do not exhibit a single behavior and

coping style for any schema, and particularly patients with a certain type of personality organization have rapid transitions from one intense affect to another (Rafaeli et al., 2011). Therefore, the Mod Model was proposed in which the modes can be defined as the emotional state of the individual associated with the schema at a certain time. Accordingly, three of four modes were dysfunctional child (the vulnerable child, the angry child, and the impulsive/undisciplined child), parent (demanding parent, the punishing parent), and coping modes (submissive, avoidant, and over compensatory modes) and only one functional mode category was proposed, including healthy adult and happy child modes (Rafaeli et al., 2011).

Similar to the Schema Therapy Model, the Inter-

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personal Theory of Personality suggests that repetitive childhood experiences can be carried into adulthood relationships (Sullivan, 1953). Accordingly, the child primarily needs to depend on parents and the environment for learning throughout development, and effective interpersonal learning can occur in a secure and comfortable familial or therapy environment. Indeed, an anxiety-provoking environment can lead to inadequate or inappropriate interpersonal behaviors (Evans, 1996). Leary (1957) elaborated on the interpersonal theory and defined the interpersonal circumplex with the coordinates named dominance (power) and affiliation (love). The interpersonal behaviors of the dominance dimension range from domineering-controlling to submissive behaviors, and the affiliation dimension ranges from cold-distant (hostile) to self-sacrificing (overly-nurturing/friendly) behaviors (Horowitz et al., 1993).

In interpersonal relationships, it is assumed that the behaviors of the interacting people mutually affect each other. Different models claim that the best compatibility in interpersonal relationships is achieved through similarity or complementarity (Bryne, 1971; Carson, 1969; Wiggins, 1979). According to the proposition called the Principle of Complementarity, it has been suggested that complementary behaviors are mutual in the dominant-controlling and submissive dimensions and similar in the self-sacrificing and hostile-cold dimensions (Carson, 1969; Horowitz and Vitkus, 1986; Horowitz et al., 1993).

The Schema Model and the Theory of Interpersonal Personality propose consistent explanations of personality development and interpersonal functioning. In addition to that, there are also conceptual overlaps between early maladaptive schemas, schema modes, and types of interpersonal problems. For example, submission and entitlement schemas, surrender and overcompensation coping modes overlap with submissive and dominant-controlling interpersonal problem types. The limited number of studies examining the relationship between interpersonal problem types and early maladaptive schemas revealed that the majority of the schemas have positive relationships with different types of interpersonal problems (Mojallal et al., 2015; Moore-Messman & Coates, 2007; Thimm, 2013). In this study, early maladaptive schemas and dysfunctional schema coping modes in relation to dominance and submissiveness were examined in a romantic relationship context.

METHODS

The sample of the present study included 731 (408 females and 317 males) voluntary participants aged between 18 and 61. The data for the study was collected

via the Demographic Information Form, Inventory of Interpersonal Problems—Circumplex Scales—Short Form (self-report and observer version), Young Schema Questionnaire Short Form-3, and Schema Mode Inventory.

RESULTS

Two multiple hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine the factors that predict perceived partner-dominance and perceived partner submissiveness. In both analyses, relationship status was the control variable in the first step, five early maladaptive schema domains were entered in the second step, dysfunctional coping modes (overcompensation, submissive) were entered in the third step, and finally self-reported dominance and submission variables were entered into the model in the last step. Depending on the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, two independent sequential mediation models were proposed and tested. The Serial Mediation Models were conducted using the SPSS PROCESS Macro (Model 6).

The Disconnection Domain ($\beta = .32, t(729) = 9.10, p < .001$), Other-Directedness Domain ($\beta = .16, t(728) = 3.80, p < .001$), and Impaired Limits Domain ($\beta = .10, t(727) = 2.64, p < .01$), Overcompensatory Mode ($\beta = .21, t(726) = 4.72, p < .001$), Submissive Mode ($\beta = .15, t(725) = 3.47, p = .001$), Dominance ($\beta = .12, t(724) = 2.95, p < .01$) was found to be positively related to Partner-Dominance and explained a total of 18% variance.

According to the results of the second hierarchical regression model, relationship status ($\beta = .10, t(729) = 2.69, p < .01$), Disconnection Domain ($\beta = .47, t(728) = 14.26, p < .001$), Unrelenting Standards Domain ($\beta = .12, t(726) = 3.14, p < .01$), Submissive Mode ($\beta = .22, t(726) = 5.69, p < .001$), and Submissiveness ($\beta = .40, t(725) = 10.29, p < .001$) found to be positively correlated with Partner-Submissiveness and explained a total of 36% variance.

Two independent sequential mediation models were proposed, depending on the regression models' results. In the first model, the Disconnection Schema Domain explained 36% of the variance in perceived partner-submissiveness, first through the submissive coping mode and then through submissiveness [$F(3,727) = 135.24, p < .001$]. In this model, the Disconnection Schema Domain is positively related to Submissive Coping Mode (CI [.14, .18]), Submissive Coping Mode is positively related to Submissiveness (CI [.27, .37]), and Submissiveness is also positively related (CI [.33, .49]) with perceived Partner-Submissiveness. Both the overall effect (CI [.09, .11]) and the

direct effect (CI [.03, .06]) of the Disconnection Schema on perceived Partner-Submissiveness were significant. Moreover, the results showed that when all the variables in the model were controlled for, the disconnection schema predicted perceived partner-submissiveness through the Submissive Coping mode and Submissiveness, respectively (CI [.16, .26]).

In the second sequential mediation model, the disconnection schema domain explained 16% of the variance in perceived partner-dominance, first through the over compensatory mode and then through dominance [$F(3,727) = 44.55, p < .001$]. In this model, the Disconnection Schema is positively associated with Over compensatory Coping Mode (CI [.31, .40]), Over compensatory Coping Mode is positively associated with Dominance (CI [.11, .15]), and Dominance is also positively associated with (CI [.05, .23]) perceived Partner-Dominance. The overall effect (CI [.05, .08]) and the direct effect (CI [.02, .06]) of the Disconnection Schema on perceived partner-dominance were significant. Moreover, the results showed that when all the variables in the model were controlled for, the disconnection schema predicted perceived partner-submissiveness through the Over compensatory Coping mode and Dominance, respectively (CI [.002, .01]).

DISCUSSION

In the present study, early maladaptive schemas and dysfunctional schema coping modes in relation to dominance and submissiveness were examined in a romantic relationship context. According to the results, the Disconnection Schema Domain was the strongest predictor in both models, while the Overcompensation coping mode was the strongest predictor of perceived partner-dominance, and the Submissive coping mode was the strongest predictor of perceived partner-submissiveness.

The results showed the mediating role of the coping schema modes (submissive and overcompensation) and one's interpersonal problems (submissiveness and dominance), respectively, in the relationship between the disconnection schema and perceived interpersonal problems in the partner (perceived partner submissiveness and dominance). Indeed, when the effects of schema domains and schema coping modes were controlled for, participants perceived their partners as similar to themselves in interpersonal problems. This finding supported the similarity model (Byrne, 1971) rather than the complementarity model (Carson, 1969). This result is inconsistent with some of the studies in the literature (Markey et al., 2003; Sadler and Woody, 2003; Sadler et al., 2009; Strong et al., 1988). On the

other hand, it is consistent with studies (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Markey & Markey, 2007) that are similar in terms of factors such as the sample characteristics (i.e., participants were mostly singles) and the use of observer-report to measure the interpersonal problems of the partners. Therefore, the data collection and the measurement method used in the present research should be considered when interpreting the results.

Considering its implications, this research provides empirical validation for the schema therapy model proposals, which suggest that interpersonal problems such as dominance and submissiveness can be explained by individuals' schemas associated with their early life experiences and how they cope with them. Clinical implications are also promising that the present findings contribute to a better understanding of the developmental processes of interpersonal problems, which are frequently brought into psychotherapy work.

Compliance with Ethical Standards Ethical permission was taken from the Ethical Committee of İstanbul Şehir University (Meeting Decision Date and No: 10.10.2019 & 32/2019).

Conflict of Interest The author(s) declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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