

Identifying the Role of Early Maladaptive Schemas in Variety of Domestic Violence against Women with the Experience of Violence

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study was to detect the role of early maladaptive schemas in a variety of domestic violence cases against women with an experience of violence.

Methods: In this study, a correlational design was used. The sample consisted of 197 women living in Tehran, who had experienced various levels of violence. The instruments consisted of Young Schema Questionnaire-Short form (YSQ-SF) and the Conflict Tactic Scale-2 (CTS-2).

Results: The results showed a significant positive relationship between early maladaptive schemas domains and domestic violence ($P < 0.01$). The results also revealed a significant difference in all domains of early maladaptive schemas between women who had experienced higher levels of violence and the women with lower levels of violence.

Conclusion: High scores in early maladaptive schemas domains would have negative impact on women experiencing domestic violence.

1. Introduction

The statistics related to the prevalence rates of domestic violence is not the same in different parts of the world. The difference in the results of statistics could be based on the different definitions of violence, how and when the question is posed to the women, method of study and the examined society (Bacchus, Mezey, & Bewley, 2004). Also the results of the 48 researches in different countries indicate that 10 to 69 percent of the women have reported the physical violence of their own sexual partners against them during some different periods through their lives (Morier-Genoud, Bodenmann, Favrat, & Vannotti, 2006).

There are many different researchers conducted on the reasons behind this type of behavior by different types of individuals. They wanted to know why some woman

would be victimized in this manner. For example, carrying out a review of the dangerous factors of domestic violence against women, Eschomaker and his colleagues (2001) have understood that of many factors that accompany the victimization of the women before violence are the age of the victim, education, unemployment, and pregnancy, the precedent for being victimized during childhood, mental illnesses and some personality factors. Among them, poor education, unemployment and childhood experience of being victimized have displayed average or strong correlation with the domestic violence.

Most of the related researches lead to the domestic violence have studied the characteristics that belong to the perpetrators of the domestic violence, demographic factors of perpetrators and victims including age, education and sexuality (Morier-Genoud, Bodenmann, Favrat, & Vannotti, 2004; Babu & Kar, 2009; Caetano, Vaeth, Ra-

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misetty-Mikler, 2008; Flury, Nyberg, & Riecher-Rössler, 2010; Mohammadkhani, Azadmehr, 2008; Hassanpour azghadi, & Simbor, 2011). Therefore, few researches have studied the characteristics of the victims and the probable role of these characteristics in their acceptance of violence (Mohammadkhani, Mohammadi, & Azadmehr, 2006; Lerner, Kennedy, 2000; Calvete, Estévez, Corral, 2007). In a research Dutton, Burghardt, Perrin, Chrestman and Halle (1994) have studied the cognitive schemas of thrashed women (for example, the meaning they attributed to violence, post-traumatic reactions and the experience of being the victim of sexual violence).

The findings indicated that the meaning of violence for these women explains the variance of cognitive schemas about their safety and others (For example the style of waiting for the recent violence, severity and fatality of violence and the style of documents). According to Young (1994), schemas affect the emotional and reciprocal impressions of the individuals in the close relationships. Cognitive psychologists believe it to be so difficult to change the schemas (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003).

Violence could activate those maladaptive schemas created by during the victims childhood era (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003) or it can get involved in the psychological adjustment of the women who are suffered from violence (Calvete, Estévez, & Corral, 2007). Accordingly, in addition to the characteristics that make the individuals prone to commit violence against their own partners, it seems that the schema structure of the individuals suffered from the violence prepares them somehow to accept the use of violence against them by their husbands or partners. Therefore, studying the factors related closely to the domestic violence against women, the present research attempts in a way so much different from the former researches to answer this question: Which domains of early maladaptive schemas are more eminent in women who have experienced higher levels of violence in comparison with the women with lower levels of violence? And which schema domain of the women that have experienced violence is able to predict the domestic violence against them?

2. Methods

Participants

The scheme of the present research is of causal-comparative sort that belongs to the domain of descriptive researches and is considered post-incident. The statistical universe of the present research is comprised of all the married women who are through with their first

year of marriage, between 17 to 50 years of age, living in Tehran having no previous drinking, or psychological problems or any serious illnesses. 197 individuals were selected by the targeted and judgmental samplings that were present in the research sampling. Selection of all these women was based on the purposed sampling and professional judgmental procedure. To make this type of sampling logical and reliable, investigation were directly conducted by asking questions from Family Court District of Northern Tehran (Vanack) for women exposed to harsher violence and for women who had gone through less violence in their family.

After obtaining letters of introduction and official permits needed for the study, the consent of the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation University to the family courts and city councils and getting permits from the relevant organizations, we started our sampling. After visiting the site to work with the participants, the researcher introduces herself, gives brief information about the research, and assures the participants of the confidentiality of the information. Then it is mentioned that the analyses of data is a group work and the names of the participants are not needed on the questionnaire.

Moreover, the subjects were free and were allowed to end their cooperation with the research any time they wanted, after reporting their written consent to participate in the research. To collect data, after obtaining demographic information including age, education, length of marriage, the experience of drug and alcohol abuse and the experience of severe mental disorder, was required from the participants to complete the short forms of Young's schema questionnaire and the conflict tactics-scale questionnaire. We have used the software SPSS-19 to analyze data. The statistical techniques used in the research are the statistical test of Pearson correlation coefficient, multivariable analyses of regression and t test of independent groups. The results of the test will be discussed later at length.

Measures

Young Schema Questionnaire- Short Form (YSQ-SF)

this questionnaire contains 75 questions and is made by Young and Brown to analyze 15 early maladaptive schemas. The early form of this questionnaire, from which its short form was made in 1998, contained 205 items (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Reliability of all schemas is calculated from 76% up to 93%. In addition, the reliability of the short form was calculated 64% with the retest technique. Moreover, the results of the factor

analysis support the internal consistency of the questionnaire (Barazandeh, 2008). Divandari, Ahi, Akbari and Mehdian (2010) have studied in a research the factor structure in short form of Young's maladaptive schema questionnaire. The average of alpha coefficients was calculated 80%. Furthermore, its reliability was calculated 94% and its narrative was calculated 34% by the method of studying the correlation with the Irrational Beliefs Test (IBT). In this research the coefficient alpha of the questionnaire was calculated 95%.

Conflicts Tactics Scale (CTS-2)

this device is one of the most functional and useful instruments to obtain data in relation with the domestic violence and the spouse-violence (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The current measure assesses the prevalence and the time of violence simultaneously in two directions based on the dimensions of physical assault (for example, he slapped me on the face), psychological aggression (for example, he insulted me), violence and sexual coercion (for example, he forced me to have intercourse with him using violence such as beating or thrashing) and physical damage and injury (for example, while having quarrel, he beat me so harshly that I fainted).

The micro-scale of negotiation assesses the non-violent relationships. The alpha coefficient of five subscales belonging to psychological aggression, negotiation, physical assault, sexual coercion and damage is 0.79, 0.86, 0.86, 0.87, 0.95 (12) respectively This questionnaire was translated and used for the first time by Mohammadkhani (2005). The reliability alpha coefficient for the Conflict Tactic Scales (CTS-2) was reported as 79 percent based on the preliminary study on 20 couples carried out by Mohammadkhani (2005). In the research, the internal validity for total scale of CTS-2 is (alpha: 94.9 percent), for psychological subscale 85.9 percent, for damage and injury subscale 88.2 percent and also the rate of the scale of total

severe and lenient violence is in a proper order of 94.3 and 90.2 percent, all of them are given suitable validity (Mohammadkhani, 2006). In addition, coefficient of this questionnaire for total scale of CTS-2 is calculated 96%.

3. Results

We have used the Pearson Correlation Test in order to study the relation among the different domains of early maladaptive schemas in women and the domestic violence against them. Table 1 includes the correlation coefficients related to these variables. Based on the results of Table 1, there is a meaningful and positive relation between all the domains of early maladaptive schemas in women and the domestic violence against them.

According to the results, there is a positive and meaningful correlation ($P < 0.01$) among the psychological, physical and sexual violence from the dimensions of domestic violence against women and all the domains of early maladaptive schemas in women. There is negative meaningful correlation between the dimension of negotiations in marital relations and the domain of disconnection/ rejection in women ($P < 0.05$). In addition, there is a positive and meaningful relation between the dimension of damage and injury, from the dimensions of violence against women, and the domains of disconnection/ rejection, impaired autonomy and performance and other-directedness in women ($P < 0.01$).

Table 2 is comprised of the results of Multiple Regression Analyses Test. According to the results, the five domains of early maladaptive schemas in women are able to predict 22 percent from the variance of domestic violence against them ($P < 0.1$; $F = 12.033$). Studying the regression coefficients belonging to each early maladaptive schemas in women for the prediction of the level of domestic violence demonstrated that only two domains of disconnection/rejection ($P = 0.047$; $\text{Beta} = 0.2000$) and impaired autonomy and performance ($P < 0.1$; $\text{Beta} = 0.385$) were

Table 1. Results of the Pearson correlation test in order to study the relation among the different domains of early maladaptive schemas.

Variables		Pearson correlation	Sig
Domestic violence	Rejection and disconnection	0.406**	0.001
	Impaired autonomy and performance	0.462**	0.001
	Other-directedness	0.306**	0.001
	Over vigilance and inhibition	0.187**	0.007
	Impaired limits	0.144**	0.044

** Correlation at the level of 0.01 (two ranges).

* Correlation at the level of 0.05 (two ranges) (N=197).

Table 2. Results of multiple regression analyses test.

Model	Multiple correlation	Determination coefficient	Moderated determination	Standard error	F	Sig.
1	0.489	0.240	0.22	76.5793	12.033	0.001

Predictive variables: domain of disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, other-directedness, Over vigilance and inhibition, impaired limits
Dependent variable: domestic violence.

able to explain the variance of modifications in domestic violence.

According to the results of the Table 4, these two groups of women with higher and lower levels of violence have meaningful difference in all domains of violence. Therefore, the women with higher levels of violence receive meaningfully higher scores in early maladaptive schemas.

4. Discussion

In our attempt to answer, the questions below we faced many problems; are the early maladaptive schemas in women one of the reasons of domestic violence against them? Do the schemas cause the victims to stay with the perpetrator of the violence? Does the domestic violence against women lead to the destruction of individual's schemas about herself and the others?

The results of the present research show that there is a close relation between all domains of early maladaptive schemas in women and the level of domestic violence against them. The schemas affect the reciprocal and emotional impression of the individuals in close relationships. As it is mentioned before, According to cognitive diathesis-stress models, when schemas are dysfunctional, women become vulnerable to negative psychological outcomes. For example, schemas that are in the domain

of disconnection and rejection will lead to the fact that they are the reason for any violent behavior. It seems that one may consider the abuse and violence against them as inevitable, whereas; the individuals whose schemas are placed in the domain of impaired autonomy and performance, experience a wide range of affection to their partner that abuses them. They feel themselves devoid of that necessary personal source to solve the problem (Okenwa, 2011; Dutton, Burghardt, Perrin, Chrestman, & Halle, 1994). This situation would lead to depression disorders in women through the steady violence against them.

On the other side, Young (1999) noted that the maladaptive schemas remain silent until an external event activates them. Owing to this fact, a possibility of substitute for the cognitive model of diathesis-stress models is to say that the violence against these women would lead to the activation of dysfunctional schemas in them. In parallel with what has already been said, some researches display that the experience of violence and abuse can affect the cognition of the victims, in particular when damaged by the violence (Lerner, Kennedy, 2000; Dutton, Burghardt, Perrin, Chrestman, & Halle, 1994; Arias, Lyons, & Street, 1997).

Despite this fact, among the five domains of early maladaptive schemas, only two domains of disconnection/rejection and impaired autonomy and performance are able

Table 3. Summary of means and standard deviations of groups in each early maladaptive schema.

	Level of violence	Mean	SD	N
Rejection and disconnection	Low	43.3571	13.1154	28
	High	74.2927	20.6075	41
Impaired autonomy and performance	Low	30.8214	8.7180	28
	High	61.6829	20.6427	41
Other-directedness	Low	21.3929	6.8547	28
	High	32.9268	9.7272	41
Over vigilance and inhibition	Low	26.2143	8.0845	28
	High	33.7563	10.4206	41
Impaired limits	Low	26.1071	9.1382	28
	High	32.2927	10.7220	41

Table 4. Results of the test for independent groups in order to study the significance of the difference between two groups.

	Level of violence	Mean	T-test		
			t	df	Sig.
Rejection and disconnection	Low	43.3571	7.022	67	0.01
	High	74.2927			
Impaired autonomy and performance	Low	30.8214	8.524	57.873	0.01
	High	61.6829			
Other-directedness	Low	21.3929	5.417	67	0.01
	High	32.9268			
Over vigilance and inhibition	Low	26.2143	3.222	67	0.01
	High	33.7563			
Impaired limits	Low	26.1071	2.495	67	0.015
	High	32.2927			

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to explain meaningfully the domestic violence against women. In addition, the domain of disconnection and rejection is able to explain some parts of the modifications of psychological and sexual violence from the dimensions of domestic violence. In addition, the domain of impaired autonomy and performance is able to explain some parts of the modification variance of all dimensions of domestic violence, except negotiations in close relationships. These results are only part of a whole range of researches carried out to study the cognitive factors in violence against women (Calvete, Estévez, & Corral, 2007; Carlson, McNutt, Choi, & Rose, 2002; Palker-Corell & Marcus, 2004).

The results of the research indicate that the domain of impaired autonomy and performance is the most prominent domain in predicting the total level of domestic violence and various dimensions of violence against one's own partners about the women suffering from it. The individuals whose schemas are in the mentioned domain have some expectations from themselves and the others, which cause disorders in their capability of separating themselves from their parents and functioning independently. From this prospect, the parents of these individuals have made excessive attempts to take care of them, which bring about disturbances for their individual performance. As a result, these individuals cannot have their independent identity and cannot lead their lives without the generous help of others with any doubt.

The evidence indicate that 76 percent of the women who have experienced physical and sexual violence since the age of 18 are also exposed to violence from their present or former spouse, roommate or boyfriend. The fact that

the female victims of violence are individuals who are economically, as well as emotionally, dependent to the perpetrator of violence affects the mechanism of abuse and mistreatment so much. Ragavan, Swan, Snow and Mazur (2005) indicated based on this context that there is a connection between violence and abuse of one's own partner and some of the special schemas of the domain of impaired autonomy and function, such as low self-efficacy, which affects the individuals' capability to break off the violent relationship.

The female victims, who have impaired autonomy and performance schemas and experience wide range of affection to their abuser pairs, feel themselves devoid of that necessary personal source to solve the problem and to live up independently (Ponce, Williams, & Allen, 2004; Dutton, Burghardt, Perrin, Chrestman, & Halle, 1994). Because of these individuals' heavy financial and emotional dependence on their violent spouses, they are not able to break off this deeply repugnant relationship. Under these circumstances, from one side, the use of violence by the spouse and the inability of female to leave the spouse from the other side set the conditions for the women that lead to various psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Studying the role of domestic violence in depression of women suffered from violence, with cognitive schemas being the moderator, Calvete and his colleagues (2007) indicated that among all the domains of cognitive schemas, only the domain of impaired autonomy and performance has the power of moderating the connection between violence and depression in women. Therefore,

with the increase of one's score in the domain of impaired autonomy and performance, the women with the experience of violence would probably suffer from depression.

Finally, the findings of this research show the meaningful difference between the women with higher levels of violence and the others with lower levels of violence in all domains of early maladaptive schemas (Table 3). According to Young, the individual with self-damaging models get involved in, relationships, situations and inattentive choices that lead to stimulation and stability of the schema and they avoid having relationships leading to the recovery of schemas. The relationships of these individuals with the others are formed in a way that negative answers stimulate them to reinforce their maladaptive schemas about themselves and the world. Under these circumstances, it seems that the individuals who have experienced violence choose the individuals who are functioning in parallel with their maladaptive schemas to establish relationships. On the other hand, because of deep disturbance in the domains of disconnection/rejection and impaired autonomy and performance the individuals with the experience of violence do not have the capability to end their violent relationship and leave their violent partner.

One of the main restrictions of this research is not using the random method. The absence of random method could make the generalization of the results of the research much more difficult, because the probability of the difference between the average of selected sample in each group and the average of society to which the sample belongs is so huge. From the other side, it is clear that numerous variables such as the personal characteristics of the violent individual, the rules and norms of the society, economic and financial issues, problems concerning the women's rights and so many other issues play a role in shaping the atmosphere of violence against women. Unfortunately, we did not have the possibility of studying them in this research.

Owing to these circumstances, we suggest this study to be carried out by employing random sampling method and matching groups. Furthermore, the present research did not have the opportunity to compare the early maladaptive schemas of women with those of men. It is suggested for the coming researches that we study the maladaptive schemas in couples exposed to domestic violence to determine what sort of matching among the domains of early maladaptive in mentioned couples would raise the possibility of domestic violence.

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