

# THE RELATIONSHIP OF MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS WITH WOMEN'S MARITAL INTIMACY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF LOVE STYLES

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This study was conducted to examine the mediating role of love style in the relationship between maladaptive Schemas with women's marital intimacy.

Through multistage cluster sampling, the study examines data from married women in Bojnord (Iran). Two-hundred and sixty-six respondents completed the marital intimacy questionnaire, maladaptive Schemas questionnaire, and love attitude scale, and the data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and path analysis. The findings showed that abandonment/instability Scheme through mediator variable of pragma style, emotional inhibition scheme through Eros style, insufficient self-control schema through the Storge style as well as vulnerability and grandiosity through Mania style affects marital intimacy. The love styles in the relationship between maladaptive Schemas and marital intimacy of women has a mediating role and moderates the impact of Schemas on marital intimacy.

## Introduction

Intimacy as the quality of personal relationship embraces connection and interdependence between two partners. In this manner, it consists of affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions; intimate partners consider their relationship as unit effectively, cognitively and behaviorally (Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 1995). Waring (1984) defines marital intimacy as a multifaceted domain in interpersonal relationships that describes the quality of a marital relationship at certain periods of the time. He argued

that intimacy is a continuum of communication component, having measured by quantity and severity, and the dimensions of affection (to express close feelings), compatibility (rate of easiness in working with others), connection (feeling of commitment to the spouse), identity (rate of self-confidence and self-esteem), conflict resolution (ease in resolving conflicts), autonomy (independence from the parent's family), expression (being shared in feelings, thoughts and beliefs of each other), and sex relationship (rate of spouse's response to one's sexual needs). Women express intimacy as love, affection and warm passion while men find intimacy in more cooperation in activities, physical proximity, passing the time with partner and having sexual behavior (Hook, Gerstein, Detterich, & Gridley, 2003).

Accordingly, family theorists emphasize the importance of intimate correlation between spouses, and consider it necessary to establish a family identity; the intimacy is required for successful marriage and a vital source of happiness, sense of meaning and marital satisfaction (Pielage, Luteinjin, & Arrindell, 2005).

Young and Gluhoski (1995) explained that satisfaction in close relationships is seen when both developmental needs were adequately met, and adult needs; when these could not be satisfied, there were specific maladaptive Schemas that are affected by intimacy relationships. The Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) are emotional and cognitive patterns of self-defeating a reformed in the early stages of development and repeated throughout life, and maladaptive behaviors are created in response to these Schemas (Young, Kolsko, & Wisshaar, 2003).

EMS originates parental relationships and effect on the ability to feel the satisfaction of romantic relationships and has a meaningful relationship with intimacy and compatibility in romance and marital relationships (Chatva, & Wishman, 2009; Dattilio, 2006). In addition, Robinson (2000) indicated the positive correlation between mother-child and family adaptation related to intimate relationships in adulthood. N. Arianfar and Arianfar (2017) found that the scheme of disconnection and rejection field effect directly on marital conflicts. Paim, Madalena, and Falcke (2012) found that schemes of mistrust/abuse, social isolation/alienation, defectiveness/shame, dependence/incompetence, entanglement, self-sacrifice, inflexible standards, grandiosity/arrogance, insufficient self-control/self-discipline and punitive posture related positively to marital violence, while schemes of emotional deprivation, defectiveness/shame, failure, entanglement, subjugation, insufficient self-control/self-discipline, self-sacrifice and dependence/incompetence correlated negatively with skills of negotiation.

Additionally, the review of literature on marital issues suggests that adults

with marital problems activate more maladaptive and inhibitory schemas (Thimm, 2010). Nevertheless, Moghadamfar and Shah Nazari (2017) found that the schemes of vulnerability to harm or illness, entitlement/grandiosity, insufficient self-control/ self-discipline, and failure positively predict marital satisfaction. However, the schemas of emotional inhibition, self-sacrifice, unrelenting standards/ hypocriticalness, and social isolation predict negatively marital satisfaction. In addition, there have not been sufficient studies on relationships between marital intimacy and EMS.

Recently couples' love style has attracted the attention of researchers in the area of marriage and family. Love style refers to how to define love or being a lover. The theory of love identifies love as six different styles and considers these styles as an attitude that is not incompatible in a person (Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1986). Love styles included: (1) Eros - romantic love or passion, in which physical attraction is important, and sex relationship is prioritized; (2) Storge - love-friendly, sincere, comfortable, warm, calm and sweet. It starts with friendship, spreads gradually, and corresponds to emotional love; (3) Ludus - love is as idleness and less commitment; (4) Mania - love is frenzy, scrupulous, exclusive, jealous, and is characterized by anxiety and obsession to the spouse; (5) Pragma - pragmatic love and relies on the search for a partner that is compatible with expectations, interests, past, and personality (the combination of the love of Eros and Ludus); (6) Agape - divine and altruistic love and lover is patient and does not expect to be countered (composition of Eros and Storge). The intensity of emotions varies between different styles. There is extreme excitement in Eros and Mania, middle excitement in Agape and weak excitement in Ludus, Storge, and Pragma (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988).

Regarding the relationship between marital satisfaction and love styles, little results have reported, for example, Hendrick et al. (1986) explored that Eros and Agape styles have a positive correlation with marital satisfaction or predict it. Also, Gana, Saada, and Untas (2013) reported that Storge, Pragma, Agape and mania style were positively related to marital satisfaction. In other related studies, Vedes, Hilpert, Nussbeck, Randall, Bodenmann, and Lind (2016) illustrated that love styles of Eros and Agape affected relationship satisfaction positively, whereas Ludus affected relationship satisfaction negatively. Yancey and Berglass (1991) indicated that Storgic and Ludic love is positively correlated with life satisfaction, while manic and pragmatic love are negatively related to life satisfaction. However, there is a gap in the literature on the relationship between love style and marital intimacy; something that we examine in this paper.

Although our study has not investigated the mediator role of a variety of love styles in the relationships between EMS and marital intimacy, Arianfar and Arianfar (2017) found that the components of love (commitment, intimacy, and passion) have a mediating role in relationships between maladaptive schema of disconnection and rejection and marital dissatisfaction. Similarly, Jonason and Kavanagh (2010) indicated that the Dark Triad is correlated positively with love styles of Ludus and Pragma. Given the importance of the presented content, the present study suggests that EMS directly affects marital intimacy and that EMS affects marital intimacy through the mediator of love style styles. Therefore, the current research examines the effect of each of the EMS on marital empathy and the impact of each of the EMS through each of the love styles.

## Method

The sample (380) for this study was selected from all married women in Bojnord, Iran, in 2017. A randomized cluster sampling method was used to select a region from Bojnord. Questionnaires booklet were delivered to the married women who were willing to cooperate in the study. From this mailing, 266 completed and returned the questionnaires to the researchers.

## Instrument

**Marital Intimacy Inventory:** based on the 90-item form of Waring Intimacy Questionnaire (WIQ), designed a marital intimacy questionnaire. In this study was used the short form of 33-item that has been answered on the 5-point Likert scale, I completely disagree (1) to I completely agree (5). The subscales of this self-report questionnaire include affection, affinity, consistency, identity, expressiveness, conflict resolution, sexual orientation, and autonomy. The retest reliability of the scales ranged from 0.73 to 0.90 and for the total score of intimacy for men was 0.89 for women 0.86. The internal consistency of the subscales scale was in the range of 0.52 to 0.87, the internal consistency of the overall score was 0.78 in men and 0.81 in women. The correlation of Waring Intimacy Questionnaire with general health questionnaire as divergent validity was -0.305 and with the dimensions of the personal evaluation of intimate relationships (Schaefer, & Olson, 1981) as a convergent validity was in the range of 0.52 to 0.46 (Waring, 1984). In this study, the internal consistency of the scale obtained 0.83 using Cronbach's alpha.

**The Attitude to Love Scale:** This questionnaire was developed by Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) based on Lee's love theory. This questionnaire is 42-item that includes six love-making styles of Eros, Agape, Storge, Pragma,

Ludus, and Mania. Each of subscales consists of 4 items in which has been answered on a 5-point Likert scale (I completely disagree to I completely agree). In Iran, the Cronbach's alpha reliability for the six love styles has been reported in the range of 0.71 to 0.82 (Sadeghi, Ahmadi, Bahrami & Etemadi, 2013).

**Early Maladaptive Schemas questionnaire:** This questionnaire consists of 75 items that have been extracted from the long-form of Young's questionnaire. Items are chosen on 5points Likert scale("describes me exactly to "do not apply at all"). The high score indicates a more intense maladaptation for each schema. This questionnaire consists of maladaptive schemas of abandonment/instability, mistrust/abuse, emotional deprivation, defectiveness/shame, social isolation/alienation, dependence/incompetence, vulnerability to harm or illness, enmeshment/undeveloped self, failure, entitlement/grandiosity, insufficient self-control/self-discipline, subjugation, self-sacrifice, and emotional inhibition. Lechenal-Cheraltet, Maunch and, Couttraux, Bouvard, and Martin (2006) showed that the Cronbach's alpha of this questionnaire was a range of 0.44 to 0.87. In Iran, Shahamat (2011) showed that this questionnaire has good convergent validity with psychological distress scales, sense of value, cognitive vulnerability to depression and personality disorders. The Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale is reported to be 0.80 and the subscales in the range of 0.87 to 0.60.

## Results

The data were first analyzed using the Pearson correlation to explore the relationships among EMS, love styles, and marital intimacy.

**Table1: correlation among variables**

Fields	Schemas	Marital intimacy	Agape	Mania	Pragma	Storge	Ludus	Eros
Disconnection/ rejection	Emotional Deprivation	-.21**	-.04	-.06	-.07	.12*	.06	-.20**
	Abandonment/ instability	-.11	.14*	.17**	.18**	.01	.01	.05
	Mistrust/abuse	-.18**	.05	.22**	.06	.19**	.09	-.18**
	Social isolation/ alienation	-.17**	.05	.15*	-.04	.19**	.14*	-.18**
	Defectiveness/ shame	-.32**	-.05	.11	-.02	.20**	.15*	-.20**
	Total	-.19**	0.05	.16**	.04	.18**	.11	-.18**
	Failure	-.17**	.03	.10	-.08	.06	.02	-.19**
Impaired autonomy / performance	Dependence/ incompetence	.29**	.03	.10	-.05	.03	.12	-.23**
	Vulnerability to harm or illness	-.24**	-.05	.21**	-.07	.08	.16**	-.17**
	Enmeshment/ undeveloped self	-.24**	-.10	.17**	.08	.19**	.11	-.24**
	Total	-.28**	.03	.18**	-.03	.10	.11	-.24**

Other directedness	Subjugation	-.15*	.05	.22**	.008	.14*	.12*	-.22**
	Self-sacrifice	0	.10	-.006	-.13*	-.02	.06	-.02
	Total	.10	.10	.14*	.08	.08	.12*	-.15*
Overvigilance/ inhibition	Emotional inhibition	-.29**	-.02	.13*	-.05	.12*	.14*	-.27**
	Unrelenting standards/ hypocriticalness	.09	.09	.09	-.07	-.03	-.07	-.05
	Total	-.24**	.05	.14*	.08	.05	.03	-.19**
Impaired limits	Entitlement/grandiosity	.02	.01	.19**	-.05	.14*	-.06	-.19**
	Insufficient self-control/ self discipline	-.18**	-.06	.09	.03	-.37**	.09	.23**
	Total	-.11	.02	.16**	.01	.26**	.01	-.23**
Marital intimacy		1	-.38**	-.17**	.17**	.26**	.02	.55**

As Table 1 shows, there is not significant correlation between marital intimacy with the Ludus love style, and the Agape love style has not meaningful correlation with any schemas. The Pragma love style does not correlate with any of the EMS, except for the schema of abandonment/instability. Ludus only has a meaningful correlation with the schema of subjugation. Additionally, the Agape style had a weak correlation with the schema Abandonment/instability. When Agape and Ludus styles were included in the model, non of EMS had not meaningful effect on these love styles, fit of the model was weakened. Therefore, Agape and Ludus styles, which had no mediating roles in the relationship between EMS and marital intimacy were removed from the proposed model. Since the present study sought to investigate the role of the mediator of love styles in the relationship between EMS and marital intimacy, the conceptual model was analyzed, and the results of the path analysis are presented in Figure 1.

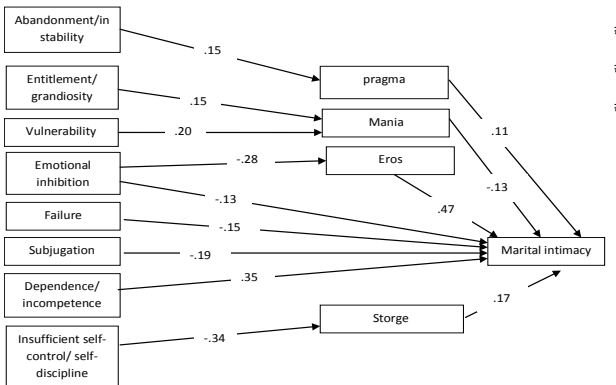


Figure 1: The model of the relationship of EMS with marital intimacy through love styles

Results of comparative fitness indexes for the model showed that CFI, TLI, IFI, RFI, and NFI were 0.98, 0.99, 0.99, 0.93, and 0.97 respectively, and were in the acceptable range (1 to 0.90). The absolute fitness indexes, AGFI and GFI, were .94 and .98 that were in an acceptable range (1 to 0.95). In addition, the results showed that  $\chi^2$ ,  $\chi^2/df$ , and  $p$  were 31.62, 1.13, and 0.29 respectively. The rate of RMSEA was 0.022 indicating goodness of fitness model. Thus in the model presented, the mediator role of love style was confirmed in the relationship between EMS and marital intimacy.

**Table 2: Direct effect of variables**

Paths	Standardized regression coefficient	P	C.R	S.E
Abandonment/instability to Pragma	.15	.007	2.68	.03
Insufficient self-control/ self-discipline to Storge	-.34	.0001	-6.03	.05
Entitlement/grandiosity to mania	.15	.008	2.63	.04
Vulnerability to harm or illness to main	.20	.0001	3.50	.04
Emotional inhibition to Eros	-.28	.0001	-4.88	.06
Eros to marital intimacy	.47	.0001	9.73	.11
Storge to marital intimacy	.17	.0001	3.54	.13
Pragma to marital intimacy	-.11	.02	-2.29	.18
Mania to marital intimacy	-.13	.01	-2.47	.15
Emotional inhibition to marital intimacy	-.13	.02	-2.19	.15
Subjugation to marital intimacy	-.19	.006	-2.77	.19
Dependence/incompetence to marital intimacy	.35	.0001	4.31	.23
Failure to marital intimacy	-.15	.03	-2.16	.18

Given the standardized regression coefficient in Table 2, the strongest paths are between Eros to marital intimacy, and insufficient self-control/self-discipline to Storge, respectively.

Also, the results show that the schema of abandonment/instability through the variable Pragma style marginally affects the marital intimacy of women, (-0.02). Emotional inhibition schema through Eros style affects women's marital intimacy (-0.13). Insufficient self-control/ self-discipline schema through Storge marginally affects marital intimacy (0.06), as well as schemas of vulnerability to harm or illness and entitlement/grandiosity through Mania style, affect marital intimacy (-0.03) and (-0.02) respectively.

## Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the relationships between EMS and marital intimacy through love styles. The results showed that self-sacrifice and entitlement schemas did not relate to marital intimacy while other EMS correlated negatively to marital intimacy. The only exception was dependence/incompetence schema that had a positive correlation with marital intimacy. These findings were consistent with the results of similar studies (e.g., Robinson 2000), which showed that EMS plays an essential role in the quality of the next intimate relationships of individuals.

Moreover, in the other studies, Arianfar and Arianfar (2017), Paim, et al. (2012) illustrated EMS plays a vital role in the frequency of couples' marital problems and affects the quality of marital relationships. These findings are also consistent with Moghadam Far and Nazari's (2017) study, which illustrates the schemas of emotional inhibition, unrelenting standards/ hypocriticalness, and social isolation were negatively related to marital satisfaction.

Considering the fact that unsuccessful emotional experiences partly shape EMS in childhood (Young, et al., 2003), negative correlations are explained as the initial unsuccessful emotional experiences between couples which lead to pessimism and distrust. Couples, consequently, cannot easily share their emotional experiences. Moreover, self-esteem and trust, which are essential for marital intimacy, are compromised by pessimism and the lack of expression of feelings. Hence the concept of marital intimacy is based on trust, self disclosure, and expression of feelings between the couples (Van den Broucke et al., 1995).

The path analysis demonstrated that women's marital intimacy in this study is negatively influenced by emotional inhibition, failure, dependence, and subjugation schemas. Participants, with dependence schema, tended to believe that they are not able to cope with such responsibilities as solving daily problems, exercising good judgment and making the right decisions without being helped (Young, et al., 2003). On the other hand, these kinds of schemas might be misinterpreted as love and honesty in the Iranian culture where a woman's dependence is considered as a good trait. Respondents with an emotional inhibition scheme, similar to the ones with an insecure attachment style, are reluctant to have close relationships, as they tend to be fearful of not being loved and of breaking up. Moreover, they tend to be more concerned about being hurt and deceived, and subsequently experience less intimacy (Moghadam Far, & Nazari, 2017; Cassidy, 1988). Additionally, suppression of emotions and impulses make people adapt dry rules and expectations and end their happiness, calm, close relationships, and health.



This study showed that the Eros, Storg, Pragma, and Agape love styles, with exception of the Ludus style, are positively correlated with couples' marital intimacy. Consistent with previous studies, this also indicates that love and loving styles predict marital satisfaction and quality of marital life (Hendrick, et al. (1988), Gana, et al. (2013) and Vedes, et al. (2016). Moreover, loving styles increase the commitment and satisfaction, resulting in a stable marital relationship, trust, and intimacy among them. According to the studies conducted in this regard, every single love style meets the various needs of the couples, makes them satisfied with interaction and improves intimacy. For example, the Eros style was shown to be positively related with the committed relationship, high self-confidence, positive feelings, positive perception of self, self-disclosure, compatibility (see also Gana, et al., 2013; Kanemasa, Taniguchi, Daibo & Shimori, 2004). Furthermore, Agape love increases one's attention to the needs of the partner, as well as expanding the flexibility and friendship behaviors, thereby increasing the level of intimacy among them. In addition, because the Agape love style is associated with loyalty, honesty, and maturity (Gana, et al. 2013), this leads to greater clarity in marital interactions that can be an important factor in marital intimacy.

Concerning the negative correlation between marital intimacy and mania style, it is inconsistent with the findings of Gana et al. (2013). Accordingly, Ahmadi, Davoudi, Ghazaei, Mardani, and Seifi (2013) and Honari and Saremi (2015), the ambivalent insecure attachment style plays a vital role in creating mania love style. Additionally, research suggests that negative personality traits such as neuroticism, antisocial, paranoid, psychotic, schizophrenia, and mania have a positive correlation with mania style (Davies, 1996).

The results of path analysis support the notion that the schema of abandonment/instability through the Pragma style mediator affects the marital intimacy of women. It seems that individuals with a schema of abandonment/instability are distrustful of receiving affection and communicating with others (Young et al. 2003). They use the Pragma style to select a person as their partner who is compatible with their expectations, interests, and personality.

Moreover, path analysis demonstrated that the emotional inhibition schema through Eros style affects women's marital intimacy so that emotional inhibition negatively affects Eros style and Eros style affects positively marital intimacy. Since the Eros style is based on being romantic and expressing emotional and sexual feelings, emotional inhibition involves extreme inhibition of actions, emotions or spontaneous tendencies, which are commonly used to avoid being rejected, feeling embarrassed or losing control and personality impulses (Young, et al. 2003). The existence of a negative relationship between these

two variables are logical. Hence those, massively inhibiting their spontaneous emotions and desires, cannot use the Eros style which is a strong predictor of marital intimacy.

The results of path analysis indicate that the insufficient self-control/ self-discipline schema affects marital intimacy through Storge style. Additionally, individuals with inadequate self-control/ self-discipline schema cannot tolerate their emotions and impulses sufficiently and successfully and delay immediate satisfaction to achieve long-term goals (Young, et al. 2003). Therefore, this schema negatively affects Storge style, which is friendly and sincere, requiring attention to the needs of the partner, and controlling destructive impulses in interpersonal and intimate relationships. Finally, the present study showed that the vulnerability to harm or illness and entitlement schemas influenced marital intimacy through mania style.

In conclusion, EMS and love styles appear to play an important role in predicting marital intimacy of couples. Building on this study, we suggest that subsequent studies continue to explore the robustness of the relationships examined here.

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