



Investigating the mediating role of maladaptive schemas and emotional expression in the relationship between childhood trauma and sexual intimacy in women from low-income families

Nasim. Hadiyan¹
Shokoofeh. Mottaghi^{2*}
Yaser. Rezapour Mirsaleh³

1. M.A Family Counselling, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran
2. *Corresponding author: Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran
Email: mottaghi@ardakan.ac.ir
3. Department of Counseling, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ardakan University, Ardakan, Iran

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Abstract

Aim: The present study was conducted with the purpose of investigating the mediating role of maladaptive schemas and emotional expression in the relationship between childhood trauma and sexual intimacy in women from low-income families. **Methods:** This research was a descriptive-correlational research that was performed by structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the research included all women from low-income families under the coverage of Isfahan City Relief Committee, 209 of whom were selected by convenience sampling method and answered the questionnaires of sexual intimacy Batlani, Ahmadi and Bahrami (2010), Early maladaptive schemas Young (1994), Child Trauma Bernstein and Fink (1998), and Emotional Expressiveness of King & Emmones (1990). Research data were analyzed at two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics, especially structural equation modeling. **Results:** The findings showed that childhood trauma doesn't significant effect on the sexual intimacy of married women in low-income families ($P>0/05$); but it has a significant effect on emotional expression and areas of early maladaptive schemas ($P<0/01$). Also, among the domains of early maladaptive schemas, only the domain of listening and inhibition has a significant direct effect on emotional expression and emotional expression also has a significant effect on sexual intimacy ($P<0/01$). In addition, childhood trauma has a significant indirect effect on sexual intimacy only through the domain of deafness and inhibition and emotional expression ($P<0/01$). On the other hand, childhood trauma affects sexual intimacy by affecting emotional expression ($P<0/01$). **Conclusion:** Therefore, childhood trauma can have an effect on sexual intimacy by influencing the field of listening and inhibiting and expressing emotions. Paying attention to the mentioned factors can help improve the level of sexual intimacy of women. **Keywords:** *Sexual Intimacy, Childhood Trauma, Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Expressiveness*

Introduction

The review of domestic and international studies indicates that the relationship between childhood trauma in women from lower economic classes and emotional regulation, and its effects on the sexual intimacy of this segment of society, has not been addressed. This research is considered important for expanding knowledge and examining variables that have received little attention due to social and cultural issues. Moreover, the testing of the proposed model is regarded as an innovative research approach that helps in understanding the factors associated with the variable of sexual intimacy and determining the contribution of each in forming this essential aspect of couples' lives. According to the researcher's review, no study has yet examined this variable within the framework of structural relationships. From a practical standpoint, in recent years, where researchers have assessed divorce as a severe psychological harm and ranked it among life's stress-inducing events, the examination of its causes reveals that 82% of women lack sexual satisfaction and intimacy, and 25% of the reasons for their divorce requests were due to dissatisfaction with sexual relations (Sadeghi, 2016). Therefore, the issue raised in this research is whether there is a relationship between childhood trauma and sexual intimacy through the mediation of early maladaptive schemas and emotional expression in women from low-income families.

Method

This research was a descriptive-correlational research that was performed by structural equation modeling. The statistical population of the research included all women from low-income families under the coverage of Isfahan City Relief Committee, 209 of whom were selected by convenience sampling method and answered the questionnaires of sexual intimacy Batlani, Ahmadi and Bahrami (2010), Early maladaptive schemas Young (1994), Child Trauma Bernstein and Fink (1998), and Emotional Expressiveness of King & Emmones (1990). Research data were analyzed at two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics, especially structural equation modeling.

Results

The findings showed that childhood trauma doesn't significant effect on the sexual intimacy of married women in low-income families ($P > 0/05$); but it has a significant effect on emotional expression and areas of early maladaptive schemas ($P < 0/01$). Also, among the domains of early maladaptive schemas, only the domain of listening and inhibition has a significant direct effect on emotional expression and emotional expression also has a significant effect on sexual intimacy ($P < 0/01$). In addition, childhood trauma has a significant indirect effect on sexual intimacy only through the domain of deafness and inhibition and emotional expression ($P < 0/01$). On the other hand, childhood trauma affects sexual intimacy by affecting emotional expression ($P < 0/01$).

Conclusion

The current research investigates the mediating role of maladaptive schemas and emotional expression in the relationship between childhood trauma and sexual intimacy in women from low-income families. Among the factors influencing couples' satisfaction, the presence of sexual intimacy, which is affected by various variables, is significant. One such variable is the presence of childhood trauma,

typically associated with early maladaptive schemas, leading to emotional behaviors. Emotional expression can impact sexual intimacy depending on individuals' coping styles to address these schemas and reduce the physical, psychological, and sexual pain stemming from childhood trauma, thus improving couples' intimacy and relationships.

In light of the research findings, it is recommended to establish affordable counseling, psychotherapy, couple therapy, and family therapy centers to teach dealing and interaction methods in low-income families. This approach could direct individuals' maladaptive schemas towards efficiency. Additionally, free counseling sessions or educational workshops could be organized for married women to familiarize them with the role of emotional expression in sexual intimacy, thereby experiencing higher sexual intimacy. Finally, it should be noted that this research, like others, faced limitations, including the lack of control over intervening variables such as women's education level, occupation, etc., which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Due to the specific conditions of the study's population, convenience sampling was used among low-income married women, potentially affecting the study's external validity. Considering these points, it is suggested that future researchers compare this study in the context of high-income married women. Additionally, it is recommended that future research utilize schema therapy training methods and emotional training such as emotion regulation to improve women's sexual intimacy, allowing for a causal inference from the results.

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