



Early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bond and communication

Wczesne nieadaptacyjne schematy a jakość więzi i komunikacji małżeńskiej¹

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Abstract: Introduction: Early maladaptive schemas are dysfunctional cognitive-emotional patterns that arise as a result of unsatisfied one or more of the basic psychological needs in childhood. These schemas concern the individual and his relationships with significant people (Young, Klosko, Weishaar, 2003). This work presents the results of research on the correlations between early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bond and communication. **Method:** The basic research hypothesis was that these correlations are negative. It was assumed that the stronger the intensity of the schemas, the lower the level of the quality of marital bond and communication. The research included 252 married people (149 women and 103 men). The respondents completed: Young's Schema Questionnaire YSQ-S3, Marriage Bond Scale SWM and Marriage Communication Questionnaire KKM. **Results:** Based on the obtained results, the existence of the expected correlations was confirmed. Schemas from the area of disconnection and rejection turned out to be most strongly correlated with both bonding and marital communication. **Conclusions:** Verification of the correlations of early maladaptive schemas with the quality of marital bond and communication deepens the knowledge about the cognitive and emotional patterns formed in childhood, significantly related to the ways of functioning in a close relationship, and this kind of knowledge can find practical application in the therapy of couples and marriages. In addition, the obtained results may be a contribution to further analysis taking into account variables related to early childhood experiences, such as parenting styles or systems of family of origin and other constructs describing the quality of the marital relationship.

Keywords: early maladaptive schemas, marital bond, marital communication

Abstrakt: Wstęp: Wczesne nieadaptacyjne schematy to dysfunkcyjne wzorce poznawczo-emocjonalne, które powstają wskutek niezaspokojenia jednej lub więcej z podstawowych potrzeb psychicznych w dzieciństwie. Schematy te dotyczą jednostki oraz jej relacji z osobami znaczącymi (Young, Klosko, Weishaar, 2003). Niniejsza praca przedstawia wyniki badań dotyczących związku pomiędzy wczesnymi nieadaptacyjnymi schematami a jakością więzi i komunikacji małżeńskiej. **Metoda:** Za podstawową hipotezę badawczą przyjęto, że zależności te są ujemne. Założono, że im silniejsze natężenie schematów, tym niższy poziom jakości więzi i komunikacji małżeńskiej. Badanie objęło grupę 252 osób (149 kobiet i 103 mężczyzn), będących w związku małżeńskim. Badani wypełnili: Kwestionariusz Schematów Younga YSQ-S3, Skalę Więzi Małżeńskiej SWM oraz Kwestionariusz Komunikacji Małżeńskiej KKM. **Wyniki:** Na podstawie uzyskanych rezultatów potwierdzono istnienie oczekiwanych związków. Najsilniej korelującym zarówno z więzią, jak i komunikacją małżeńską okazały się schematy z obszaru rozłączenia i odrzucenia. **Wnioski:** Weryfikacja korelacji wczesnych nieadaptacyjnych schematów z jakością więzi i komunikacji małżeńskiej pogłębia wiedzę na temat ukształtowanych w dzieciństwie poznawczo-emocjonalnych wzorców istotnie powiązanych ze sposobami funkcjonowania w bliskiej relacji, zaś tego rodzaju wiedza z kolei może znaleźć praktyczne zastosowanie w terapii par i małżeństw. Ponadto uzyskane rezultaty mogą stanowić przyczynek do kolejnych analiz z uwzględnieniem zmiennych dotyczących wczesnodziecięcych doświadczeń, jak np. stylów wychowawczych czy systemów rodziny pochodzenia oraz innych konstruktorów opisujących jakość związku małżeńskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: wczesne nieadaptacyjne schematy, więź małżeńska, komunikacja małżeńska

The concept of early maladaptive schemas

The concept of Young, Klosko and Weishaar (2003) focuses on the early childhood origins of current psychosocial problems and emphasises the underlying importance of frustration of emotional needs in the

personal development of the individual. As a result of intensive and prolonged deprivation, the child develops, mainly on the basis of parental attitudes, non-adaptive beliefs about himself/herself and others,

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which are coupled with a burdening and distressing emotional condition (van Genderen, Rijkeboer, Arntz, 2015; cf. also: Louis, Wood, Lockwood, Ho, Ferguson, 2018). Failure to meet the child’s basic needs, which are desirable for mental health, leads to the development of dysfunctional cognitive and emotional patterns, known as schemas (Edwards, Arntz, 2015).

Early maladaptive schemas, as defined by Young et al. (2003) are defined as patterns developed mostly in childhood and developed throughout life, consisting of memories, emotions, beliefs and bodily sensations. These patterns, which concern the individual and his or her relationships with others, determine the way in which a person perceives, processes and interprets his or her own behaviour and the surrounding

world. These schemas are self-reinforcing and resistant to change (Roediger, Stevens, Brockman, 2018). The particular schema that a person develops also depends on his or her innate personality dispositions and characteristics of the environment in which he or she grows up, as well as the interaction between them (Edwards, Arntz, 2015).

According to this approach, schemas function as effects and representations of unmet psychological needs, and can therefore also serve as indicators of the level of an individual’s adaptive and socialisation competences (Vreeswijk, Broersen, Nadort, 2015). The approach of Young et al. (2003) uses the authors’ hypothetical model of five basic psychological needs, which are assumed to be innate and universal. These

Table 1. A model of early maladaptive schemas as conceptualised by Young et al. (2003)

Schema area	Schemas
<p>I. Disconnection and rejection Bonding difficulties, insecurity and instability in interpersonal relationships as a result of deprivation of the need for secure attachment to others. Family of origin: rejection, emotional coldness, distance.</p>	<p>1. Abandonment – Sooner or later I will be left alone again. 2. Mistrust – <i>Getting too close is dangerous, I need to keep my distance.</i> 3. Emotional deprivation – <i>I am not getting support, love and understanding.</i> 4. Defectiveness/Shame – <i>I am worthless, therefore unworthy of love.</i> 5. Social isolation – <i>I am different from everyone around me.</i></p>
<p>II. Impaired autonomy and performance Perception of self as dependent on others, unable to live independently and act effectively as a result of deprivation of the need for autonomy, competence and a sense of identity. Family of origin: overprotectiveness, entanglement.</p>	<p>6. Dependence/Incompetence – <i>I cannot survive without the help of others.</i> 7. Vulnerability to Harm or Illness – <i>I’m so weak, I have to be on my guard.</i> 8. Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self – <i>I can’t live without my parent/partner and they without me.</i> 9. Failure – <i>I am a loser, others are better than me.</i></p>
<p>III. Impaired limits Difficulty in accepting limits, low frustration tolerance, deficit in strong willpower to pursue goals as a result of deprivation of the need for realistic boundaries and self-control. Family of origin: excessive permissiveness, lack of supervision.</p>	<p>10. Entitlement/Grandiosity – <i>I am allowed more than others.</i> 11. Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline – <i>I can’t stand it, it should be done by someone else.</i></p>
<p>IV. Other-directedness Putting other people’s desires before one’s own, adapting one’s actions to the needs and opinions of others, having a strong sense of responsibility for solving other people’s problems, wanting to make a good impression with other people as a result of deprivation of the need to freely express one’s needs and emotions. Family of origin: suppression of feelings, conditional acceptance.</p>	<p>12. Subjugation – <i>My opinion means nothing, let others decide.</i> 13. Self-Sacrifice – <i>I have to forget about myself, I have to help others.</i> 14. Approval-Seeking – <i>I am valuable as long as others accept me.</i></p>
<p>V. Over-vigilance and inhibition The devaluation of spontaneity in expressing feelings, a negative and pessimistic evaluation of reality, pressure to achieve and a very strict moral code applied to both self and others as a result of the deprivation of the need for spontaneity and play. Family of origin: excessive demands, rigid rules, perfectionism.</p>	<p>15. Pessimism – <i>I feel some kind of misfortune approaching.</i> 16. Emotional Inhibition – <i>I can’t show my feelings because I will be ridiculous.</i> 17. Unrelenting Standards – <i>I am only worthy when I achieve high results.</i> 18. Punitiveness – <i>Whoever makes a mistake must be punished.</i></p>

Note. Names and definitions of schemas based on: Young et al., 2003.

needs are: secure attachment to others; autonomy, competence and a sense of identity; free expression of needs and emotions; spontaneity and play; realistic boundaries and self-control (Lockwood, Perris, 2015). Young et al. (2003) distinguished eighteen schemas and attributed them to the relevance to unmet needs of five higher-order factors, called schema domains or areas (cf. also: Arntz, van Genderen, 2020). The areas and the individual schemas associated with them are presented in Table 1.

1. Marital bond and communication

Both bonding and marital communication are complex and dynamic processes that take place between two people who are close to each other. These ongoing relational processes can be directed towards a development that gives a sense of satisfaction with the relationship, or – without the right competences, commitment and cooperation – can lead to a crisis and/or breakdown of the relationship. The complexity and dynamism of both constructs, are related to their multidimensionality (Miłoszewska, 2012). In the present study, the well-known and often applied in research concepts by Szopiński (1980) and Kaźmierczak and Plopa (2005) have been used to describe marital bonding and communication.

The psychological bond is generally accepted as the basis for marital cohabitation. It is defined in the literature as a process of mutual, personal giving of oneself to the spouse on three levels of interpersonal relations: cognitive, emotional and action-related (Szopiński, 1980; Ryś, 1999). According to Szopiński (1980), marital interactions realised in these three dimensions create a common, threefold psychological quality in the form of: co-understanding, co-feeling and co-acting, which, remaining in feedback, make the psychological experiences of one spouse become part of the experiences of the other (cf. e.g., Li et al., 2022).

Co-understanding manifests itself primarily in shared interests and opinions. Through it, the spouses seek to exchange insights, experiences and expectations and are able to accept their spouse's

point of view. This attitude of mutual listening and understanding, while accepting the other person's individuality, strengthens communication and promotes conflict resolution (Ryś, 1999). The second component of the bond – empathy – is expressed in the willingness as well as the ability to participate in the emotional experiences of the partner, while maintaining one's identity and independence. Affectionate consonance, linked to empathy, underpins mutual closeness, openness, a sense of security, acceptance and mutual support (Sitarczyk, Waniewski, 2001). In turn, the essence of interaction is the principle of partnership, understood as mutual respect and a symmetrical and responsible commitment to the sustainability of the relationship. The action aspect of the bond manifests itself in the practical dimension of caring for each other, building a family community, meeting the biological and psychological needs of the spouse (Ryś, 1999). The proper functioning of co-understanding, co-feeling and co-acting, creates an integral bond that gives the spouses a sense of satisfaction and contentment with the relationship (Szopiński, 1980).

One of the most essential elements binding two people's relationship together and making it one is communication, carried out at both verbal and non-verbal levels (Satir, 2000). Marital communication is characterised by a particular intensity due to the frequency and quality of personal interactions, whereby each spouse both influences and is influenced by the communication process (Plopa, 2008). Adaptive marital communication patterns are the foundations of a satisfying and happy relationship, and conversely, problems in the area of communication are most often referred to by partners experiencing crises (cf. e.g., Carrere, Buehlman, Gottman, Coan, Ruckstuhl, 2000; cf. also: Lavner, Karney, Bradbury, 2016). Among couples assessing their relationship as successful, positive and supportive messages prevail, in contrast to couples dissatisfied with their relationship, among whom attitudes such as controlling and depreciating the partner and biased attribution of negative meanings to messages from the spouse prevail (cf. e.g., Alipour, Kazemi, Kheirabadi, Eslami, 2020; cf. also: Dakowicz, 2021).

It should be highlighted that each of the marriages has a specific, unique style of communicating, encoding and processing messages, therefore the basic task of the spouses in the context of proper communication is to choose such forms that will foster the development of a mutually satisfactory bond (Plopa, 2008). Kaźmierczak and Plopa (2005) distinguished three types of communication in the marital relationship: supportive communication, committed communication and depreciative communication. Supportive communication manifests itself in showing respect for one's spouse, taking an interest in his or her problems and needs and being proactive in solving relational and family problems (Satir, 2000). Committed communication is the process of the spouses creating a relationship characterised by cordiality, a sense of security, mutual understanding and intimacy. This style includes all behaviours that prevent daily routine and actions that emphasise the importance and uniqueness of both the partner and the relationship itself (Ryś, 1999). A depreciating communication style is characterised by aggressive behaviour towards the spouse, devaluing him or her by, for example, insults or ridicule. This style is also associated with a desire to dominate and control the other person's actions (Kaźmierczak, Plopa, 2005; cf. also: Satir, 2000).

2. Own studies

2.1. Issues in own research

The aim of the study has been to verify the dependency between early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bonding and communication. As mentioned – according to the concept of Young et al. (2003), schemas are dysfunctional and pervasive cognitive-emotional patterns that arise as a result of the failure to satisfy one or more of the of basic psychological needs during childhood. The concept also assumes that these early childhood-derived maladaptive schemas, which are repeated throughout life, affect the

individual and their relationships with their significant others (ibid). Schemas can therefore be understood as a kind of rigid matrix, fixed on the basis of relational experiences with a significant person, most often a parent. In this regard, a close, intimate relationship appears to be a special space for the activation of schemas, i.e. the repetition of learned patterns that control the way the relationship functions. Close relationships are the backdrop for the emergence of particular patterns that significantly limit an individual's competence in interpersonal functioning (cf. e.g., Mohhamadi, Soleymani, 2017). Destructive beliefs and the unpleasant emotional states that accompany them can be categorised as internal conditions, i.e. those that reside in the person themselves and are the result of their personal development and experiences (Liberska, Matuszewska, 2001).

Based on the above considerations and the research gap, a problem was addressed that can be formulated in the form of a question – are there correlations, and if so, which ones, between early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bonding and communication? With regard to the question thus formulated, two correlational hypotheses have been raised:

- H1. Early maladaptive schemas are negatively related to the quality of the marital bond, such that the stronger the intensity of the schemas, the weaker the strength of the bond.
- H2. Early maladaptive schemas are related to the quality of marital communication, such that the stronger the intensity of schemas, the lower the level of supportive and committed communication and the higher the level of depreciating communication. This assumption applies to the assessment of both one's own communication behaviour and that of one's spouse.

The results obtained in the verification of the above hypotheses may be of particular importance in terms of a deeper understanding of the causes of relational marital problems, and, consequently, this knowledge may be helpful in determining the direction of work in the therapy of couples and marriages.

2.2. Research tools

The Young’s Schema Questionnaire YSQ-S3 has been used to measure early maladaptive schemas (Young, 2005). The authors of the Polish adaptation of the YSQ-S3 are Oettingen, Chodkiewicz, Mącik and Gruszczyńska (2018). The questionnaire is used to measure the intensity of 18 early maladaptive schemas, forming 5 general areas in the concept of Young et al. (2003). The tool contains 90 statements. In the present study, the alpha-Cronbach’s reliability parameters for individual scales ranged from 0.77 to 0.94. The quality of marital bond was assessed with the SWM Marital Bond Scale by Szopiński. The reliability of the scale meas-

ured by the Alpha-Cronbach’s coefficient was 0.95. The questionnaire, consisting of 60 statements, had three subscales: co-feeling, co-understanding and co-acting. The quality of marital communication was determined using the KKM by Kaźmierczak and Plopa. KKM has two versions for assessing one’s own and one’s spouse’s behaviour. Each contains 30 statements, measuring communication: supportive, committed and deprecating styles. The reliability of the Alfa-Cronbach’s questionnaire for each scale ranged from 0.75 to 0.86. In addition, in order to obtain socio-demographic information, respondents were asked to fill in a metric containing questions on such data as gender, age, place of residence, education, etc.

Table 2. Correlations of early maladaptive schemas with the quality of the marital bond (N = 252)

Variable	Bond	Co-feeling	Co-understanding	Co-acting
Disconnection and rejection	-0.467**	-0.449**	-0.463**	-0.454**
Emotional deprivation (ED)	-0.527**	-0.526**	-0.515**	-0.500**
Abandonment (AB)	-0.266**	-0.242**	-0.271**	-0.263**
Mistrust (MA)	-0.384**	-0.371**	-0.378**	-0.374**
Social isolation (SI)	-0.327**	-0.312**	-0.333**	-0.309**
Defectiveness/Shame (DS)	-0.436**	-0.416**	-0.421**	-0.437**
Impaired autonomy and performance	-0.274**	-0.243**	-0.283**	-0.272**
Failure (FA)	-0.246**	-0.228**	-0.260**	-0.230**
Dependence/Incompetence (DI)	-0.301**	-0.278**	-0.302**	-0.300**
Vulnerability to Harm or Illness (VU)	-0.195**	-0.167**	-0.205**	-0.197**
Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self (EM)	-0.101	-0.073	-0.106	-0.115
Other-directedness	-0.248**	-0.235**	-0.257**	-0.233**
Subjugation (SB)	-0.305**	-0.283**	-0.305**	-0.302**
Self-Sacrifice (SS)	-0.091	-0.097	-0.098	-0.069
Approval-Seeking (AS)	-0.195**	-0.178**	-0.206**	-0.185**
Over-vigilance and inhibition	-0.245**	-0.234**	-0.242**	-0.239**
Emotional Inhibition (EI)	-0.340**	-0.322**	-0.358**	-0.311**
Unrelenting Standards (US)	-0.076	-0.078	-0.068	-0.075
Punitiveness (PU)	-0.090	-0.092	-0.076	-0.095
Pessimism (NP)	-0.261**	-0.242**	-0.253**	-0.269**
Impaired limits	-0.228**	-0.211**	-0.217**	-0.239**
Entitlement/Grandiosity (ET)	-0.194**	-0.185**	-0.183**	-0.200**
Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline (IS)	-0.205**	-0.185**	-0.196**	-0.218**

Note. **p < 0,01

2.3. Study population

The study targeting spouses was conducted online in accordance with the principles contained in the Declaration of Helsinki. Respondents were informed about their voluntary participation, the purpose and conduct of the study and were assured of complete anonymity and that the results obtained would be used solely for scientific purposes. Respondents were provided with a link to take part in the study. The sampling was purposive-incidence. A total of 252 people were surveyed, of whom 51.1% (149 people) were female and 49.9% (103 people) were male. The age of the subjects ranged from 20 to 72 years (M = 45.19; SD = 10.69). All respondents

were married. The shortest length of relationship was 1 year, while the longest was 51 years (M = 19.54; SD = 11.47). The surveyed population overwhelmingly consisted of people with a university degree – 84.1% (212 persons), while the remaining participants were mainly those with a secondary education – 13.1% (33 persons). In terms of place of residence, the study group consisted of people living in cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants – 49.6% (125 people), towns with up to 10 000 inhabitants – 26.6% (67 people) and towns with between 10 000 and 50 000 inhabitants – 23.8% (60 people). The current financial situation of their family was assessed by most people as good – 73.8% (186 people) and very good – 24.2% (61 people).

Table 3. Correlations of early maladaptive schemas with the quality of marital communication (N = 252)

Variable	My support	My commitment	My depreciation	His/Her support	His/Her commitment	His/Her depreciation
Disconnection and rejection	-0.327**	-0.253**	0.353**	-0.362**	-0.273**	0.373**
Emotional deprivation (ED)	-0.368**	-0.270**	0.256**	-0.511**	-0.422**	0.409**
Abandonment (AB)	-0.188**	-0.144*	0.333**	-0.161*	-0.085	0.212**
Mistrust (MA)	-0.273**	-0.202**	0.309**	-0.281**	-0.221**	0.331**
Social isolation (SI)	-0.235**	-0.194**	0.262**	-0.241**	-0.200**	0.287**
Defectiveness/Shame (DS)	-0.292**	-0.238**	0.275**	-0.319**	-0.215**	0.301**
Impaired autonomy and performance	-0.168**	-0.150*	0.327**	-0.161*	-0.093	0.258**
Failure (FA)	-0.140*	-0.166**	0.152*	-0.142*	-0.132*	0.160*
Dependence/Incompetence (DI)	-0.221**	-0.213**	0.333**	-0.161*	-0.056	0.222**
Vulnerability to Harm or Illness (VU)	-0.114	-0.090	0.309**	-0.122	-0.080	0.255**
Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self (EM)	-0.043	0.020	0.243**	-0.073	-0.005	0.169**
Other-directedness	-0.193**	-0.177**	0.321**	-0.176**	-0.137*	0.302**
Subjugation (SB)	-0.270**	-0.217**	0.272**	-0.200**	-0.137*	0.364**
Self-Sacrifice (SS)	-0.006	-0.086	0.199**	-0.114	-0.038	0.175**
Approval-Seeking (AS)	-0.185**	-0.121	0.274**	-0.110	-0.147*	0.188**
Over-vigilance and inhibition	-0.161*	-0.181**	0.243**	-0.138*	-0.159*	0.242**
Emotional Inhibition (EI)	-0.269**	-0.328**	0.202**	-0.223**	-0.167**	0.294**
Unrelenting Standards (US)	-0.013	-0.053	0.126*	-0.012	-0.082	0.105
Punitiveness (PU)	-0.043	-0.043	0.156*	-0.006	-0.086	0.126*
Pessimism (NP)	-0.178**	-0.143*	0.279**	-0.186**	-0.161*	0.234**
Impaired limits	-0.200**	-0.139*	0.306**	-0.148*	-0.148*	0.240**
Entitlement/Grandiosity (ET)	-0.184**	-0.154*	0.326**	-0.125*	-0.144*	0.235**
Insufficient Self-Control/Self-Discipline (IS)	-0.167**	-0.093	0.219**	-0.135*	-0.118	0.188**

Note. *p < 0,05; **p < 0,01

2.4. Results of the study

In order to verify the study hypotheses regarding the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bonding and communication, the *r-Pearson* linear correlation statistic was used. First, the correlation between early maladaptive schemas and marital bond strength were assessed. The *r-Pearson* linear correlation coefficient showed statistically significant correlations between all areas and most of the individual schemas belonging to them and the overall level of bonding and its three dimensions: co-understanding, co-feeling and co-acting. Thus, hypothesis H1 was confirmed. The area of disconnection and rejection ($r = -0.467^{**}$) was found to be the most strongly correlated with marital bonding, as well as the component patterns of emotional deprivation ($r = -0.527^{**}$) and defectiveness/shame ($r = -0.436^{**}$). The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2.

Correlations between early maladaptive schemas and marital communication quality were then assessed. Statistical analysis indicated that all five areas and most of the individual schemas were negatively associated with a supportive and committed communication style and positively with a deprecating communication style, supporting hypothesis H2. Such a correlation occurred both when assessing their own communication behaviour and when assessing their spouse's behaviour. All of the relationships discussed were characterised by a similar strength of correlation. As in the case of bond, similarly, the most frequent and strongest correlations pertained to patterns in the area of disconnection and rejection. Particularly noteworthy are the three distinctive results of the relationship between emotional deprivation and the assessment of the spouse's behaviour in terms of: his/her support ($r = -0.511^{**}$), his/her commitment ($r = -0.422^{**}$) and his/her depreciation ($r = 0.409^{**}$). Detailed data are presented in Table 3.

3. Conclusions and discussion of the results

The aim of the present study has been to verify the correlation between early maladaptive schemas and the quality of marital bond and communication.

Based on the theoretical assumptions of the concept of schemas by Young et al. (2003) the primary research hypothesis was that these dependencies are negative. The results presented support the validity of this assumption. The results obtained also allow for a more in-depth analysis concerning the individual schemas. With regard to bonding, the area of disconnection and rejection, which correlates most strongly with it, as well as the associated patterns of emotional deprivation and defectiveness/shame, deserve special attention (Table 2). This area is the result of an unmet need for secure attachment to others and is associated with a lack of security and stability in interpersonal relationships (Roediger, Stevens, Brockman, 2018). In case of emotional deprivation, this feeling relates to an individual's strong belief that other people will not satisfactorily meet their need for emotional support. In contrast, the defectiveness/shame schema is related to the belief that a person is flawed, inferior and worthless and does not deserve love, attention and respect. These types of thoughts and feelings are associated with difficulties in building relationships (Young et al., 2003). This corresponds completely with the study result discussed above, indicating that the stronger the beliefs and emotions, such as feelings of abandonment, of not deserving love, of not being loved enough by others or of being threatened in interpersonal relationships, the weaker the marital bond expressed in co-understanding, co-feeling and co-acting.

Similar conclusions apply to marital communication, the individual dimensions of which also correlated most strongly and frequently with patterns in the area of disconnection and rejection (Table 3). Thus, cognitive-emotional patterns related to insecurity and stability in interpersonal relationships co-occurred with decreased levels of support and commitment, as well as increased levels of depreciation in marriage. Interestingly, these relationships are as much about assessing one's own behaviour as that of the spouse (cf. e.g., Mehrpouya, Jajarmi, Musawi, 2021; Mahmoudi, Mahmoudi, Nooripour, 2017). A distinctive correlation appeared to be the association of emotional deprivation with the assessment of communication by the partner (Table 3). As mentioned, the pattern of emotional deprivation

describes the individual's conviction that they are not getting a satisfactory degree of love, support and understanding. This means that this schema may involve a tendency to perceive messages as more negative than was intended by the communicator (Dakowicz, 2021; Kaźmierczak, Plopa, 2005). In addition, if the individual is accompanied by the conviction that the loved one is not able to give him or her enough love, then by behaving according to the schema and biased interpretation of the spouse's attitudes, the individual himself or herself may cause distance in the marital relationship (Young et al., 2003). Such phenomena, similar to the mechanism of the self-fulfilling prophecy, can concern all maladaptive schemas and their relation to false perceptions of the self, the partner and their relationship (cf. e.g., Leong, Chen, Fung, Bond, Siu, Zhu, 2019).

In conclusion, the verification of the correlation between early maladaptive schemas with the quality of marital bond and communication is important for both research and practice. First and foremost, it deepens knowledge of the cognitive-emotional

patterns formed in childhood that are associated with ways of functioning in an intimate relationship. This kind of knowledge, in turn, can find practical application in the therapy of couples and marriages (cf. e.g., Khatamsaz, Forouzandeh, Ghaderi, 2017; Mohhamadi, Soleymani, 2017). As far as the limitations of the study conducted are concerned, it is worth noting its correlational formulation, which does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the causal nature of the relationships studied. Nevertheless, the results obtained are in line with theories concerning the internal conditions of the individual in terms of his or her relational and communicative competences (cf. e.g., Navaei, Arya, 2016; Porjorat, 2016; Raftar, Pasandideh, Kazemi, 2019; Ghandpazi, Navabinejad, Delavar, 2020; Eftekhari, Hejazi, Yazdani, 2018). Furthermore, the results obtained are interesting enough to contribute to further analyses including variables related to early childhood experiences, such as parenting styles or family of origin systems, and other constructs describing the quality of the marital relationship.

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