#16 PAPER 20 - SEPARATION-REJECTION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON FAMILY IDENTITY

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Abstract

The study focuses on maladaptive schemas in adults and their relation to identity structures and the study level. We started from the assumption that the schemas from Separation-Rejection domain, according to the five domains described by Young (1990, 2003), influences the Family Identity and could be influenced also by the study level. The research was conducted on a sample of 60 adults, equally men and women, belonging to three major study level groups: eight grades graduates; high school graduates; university graduates. The results indicate differences between the three groups, according to the study level.

Keywords: maladaptive schema; separation-rejection; family identity; study level

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of schema can be found in the cognitive approach of psychopathology from the beginning of the cognitive theories (Stopa and Waters, 2005). According to Beck’s cognitive theory of depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979), a schema is a fixed cognitive model that guides an individual toward a specific conceptualization of a specific set of stimuli. The negative beliefs about the self, the world, and the future incorporated in stable cognitive schemas are the key vulnerability factor for depression (Renner et al., 2012).

Later Young has developed a set of interventions for personality disorder, which uses schemas as the central organizing concept (Stopa and Waters, 2005).

According to Young (1990, 2003), early maladaptive schemas are broad, pervading themes or models composed of cognitions, memories, emotions and bodily sensations about oneself and the relationships with others. They tend to occur and develop in childhood or adolescence and provide adjustment of a person environment.

Later these schemas might become maladaptive in adulthood, being rigid and resistant to change patterns. Moreover, maladaptive schemas seem to be the ground for several DSM-IV Axis I and Axis II disorders (Soygüt, Karaoğlanoglu, Cakir, 2009).

The main sources for maladaptive schemas are the early negative life experiences (from childhood) with the origin in one’s family. Young indicates that there are 18 maladaptive schemas, grouped in 5 domains (Young et al., 2003): disconnection/separation and rejection; impaired autonomy and performance; impaired limits; other-directness; overvigilance an inhibition.

The concept of Identity Structures (IS) was founded by Vasile (2011) and refers to the extensions of one’s self-concept in relation to the environment. According to the author, “the ‘self’ represents a core of the individual personality in an integrative view (taking into account a number of theories, starting with psychoanalysis and continuing with cognitive approaches, humanistic views etc.) and this core interact with the environment through several interfaces called Identity Structures (IS). In a sense, the IS represents the individual “self” in its dynamics resulting from the interaction with the environment” (Vasile, 2011). Following the research, seven IS were found: physical identity; social identity; cultural identity; family identity; professional identity; self-esteem; behavior towards oneself.

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2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the study we started from the assumption that there is a relation between Separation-Rejection (SR) and Family Identity (FI) and we studied this relation according to the study level of the subjects.

**Separation-rejection** (SR) domain – occurs from early experience of an unpredictable and/or abusive or too detached family environment and contains schemas which refer to one’s belief that the needs of security, empathy, care, stability, acceptance and respect will not be satisfied in a consistent or predictable way. Seven maladaptive schemas could be found in this domain:
- Abandonment/Instability - the expectation that one will soon lose anyone with whom an emotional attachment is formed.
- Mistrust - the expectation that others will intentionally take advantage in some way.
- Emotional Deprivation - the belief that others will never meet one’s primary emotional needs.
- Social Isolation/ Alienation - the belief that one is isolated from the world, different from others, and/or not part of any community.
- Defectiveness/ Shame - the belief that one is internally flawed, and that, if others get close, they will realize this and withdraw from the relationship.
- Social Undesirability - belief that one is unattractive to others.
- Failure to Achieve - the belief that one is incapable of performing as well as one's peers in areas such as career, school, or sports.

**Family Identity** (FI) understood as the extent to which people identify with their family group, values or particular relatives that determines their inclination to behave in terms of their family membership (Vasile, 2012).

The study sample consisted of 60 adult subjects, 30 men and 30 women, divided in three groups according to three study level categories: 20 subjects which have not graduated high school, but only 8 grades; 20 subjects which have graduated the high school; 20 subjects which have graduated the university.

2.1. Instruments

Within the study two instruments have been used:
- Young Questionnaire – Short Form (YSQ-S3) – a schema inventory which measures the 18 maladaptive schemas.
- Identity Structures Inventory (ISI) – an inventory which measures the 7 IS.

Both instruments have been used and their final scores have been adapted so the final scores be similar, from 1 to 5, 1 meaning that the observed characteristic/treat is at its minimum and 5 meaning the characteristic/treat is at its maximum.

3. RESULTS

Following the study, the data have been collected and processed and statistical information has been obtained. The average scores for SR and FI for the three groups are represented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study level</th>
<th>Separation-rejection</th>
<th>Family Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No high school</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all the three groups the Pearson coefficient has been calculated and the results have been represented associated with linear functions in the figure 1, 2 and 3.
Fig. 1. Separation-Rejection related to Family Identity for subjects who have not graduated high school. Pearson: 0.061301

Fig. 2. Separation-Rejection related to Family Identity for subjects who have graduated high school. Pearson: -0.10677
Fig. 3. Separation-Rejection related to Family Identity for subjects who have graduated the university.

Pearson: -0.29936

It can be observed that the correlation between SR and FI is positive only within the first group (8 grades) and negative within the other two groups.

4. DISCUSSION

Statistical data resulting from this study show a weak positive correlation between SR and FI only within the “no high school” group. For the other two groups (high school and university graduates) there is a negative correlation between SR and FI. This result could suggest (for the studied sample) that the SR level is closely related to the FI (knowing also about the importance of the early experience in the subjects families) and there is a relation also to the education level. Other factors which influence the maladaptive schemas could be discussed here, such as the individual life experiences within other environment than family. Yet it could be suggested that the education plays a major role in the dynamics of the cognitive processes and individual schemas.

5. REFERENCES