THE IMPACT OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING ON CODEPENDENCY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS

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Dedication

Dedicated to the ups and downs from Allah (SWT) which kept me going. And the people who supported me unconditionally through the degree and thesis, my mama, papa, sisters, brothers, Nani jaan and my cat, Donut. I also dedicate my thesis to my supervisor and mentor, Dr Khawer Bilal who trusts in my potential more than myself.

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Hania Asghar Khan

ABSTRACT

Codependency in relationships is frequently linked to dysfunctional family origins. In such dynamics, people form an inordinate emotional dependence on others and priorities other's needs at the expense of their own well-being. The study argues that codependency is characterized by excessive reliance on others, prioritizing the resolution of their issues while neglecting one's own needs. It falls somewhere along a continuum that runs from dependence — someone who needs to rely on others for basic needs — to interdependence — a shared reciprocity. In collectivist cultures (e.g. Pakistan) psychosocial and economic dependence in interdependent families strengthen the codependent pattern especially in settings in which family functioning is impaired. In addition to this, early maladaptive schemas, shaped by childhood experiences in dysfunctional families, contribute patterns of excessive need for affirmation, low self-esteem, and emotional entanglement that contribute to psychological distress in adulthood. The present study examined how this unhealthy reliance, i.e. codependency and psychological distress, are shaped by these early maladaptive schemas, which have their roots in early family interactions i.e. family functioning. The study hypothesized that family functioning leads to the development of early maladaptive schemas, which leads to codependency and psychological distress. Furthermore, the study hypothesized that early maladaptive schemas mediate the relationship between family functioning and codependency. A sample (N=435) having age range 20-40 (M=24.31, SD=4.32) was collected through purposive sampling. McMaster Family Assessment Device - General functioning scale (Miller et al., 1985) to assess family functioning, Young Schema Scale Short Form-3 (Young, 2005) to assess early maladaptive schemas, Friel Adult Child/Co-dependency Assessment Inventory (Friel, 1985; Friel & Friel, 1987) to assess codependency and The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) (K6, K10; Kessler et al., 2002) to assess psychological distress

were administered to get the inferences on the variables under study. The descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient through IBM SPSS 22, Mediation Analysis (SEM) through Smart PLS 4 were run to generate results. Results indicated significant strong predictive correlation between family functioning and codependency, family functioning and psychological distress, family functioning and early maladaptive schemas, early maladaptive schemas with codependency and psychological distress. Furthermore, the results indicated that early maladaptive schemas partially mediate the relationship between family functioning and codependency, and family functioning and psychological distress. By understanding how family functioning led to the development of early maladaptive schemas which results in codependency and psychological distress, qualitative research could be used by future researchers to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of people struggling with codependency. Further studies should evaluate the effectiveness of interventions targeting early maladaptive schemas to mitigate the effects of dysfunctional family environments

Keywords: Family functioning, codependency, psychological distress, early maladaptive schemas, mediation analysis.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Full Form
APA	American Psychological Association
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
EMS	Early Maladaptive Schemas
EMS-IA	Early Maladaptive Schemas-Impaired Autonomy
EMS-OD	Early Maladaptive Schemas- Other-Directedness

List of Symbols

Symbol	Full Form
α	Alpha Cronbach's Index
β	Standardized Coefficient
f	Frequency
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
%	Percentage
r	Correlation Coefficient

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