

Research Paper**Relationship Between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Meaning of Life and Psychological Well-Being of the Elderly***Soheila Orang¹, Hadi Hashemi Razini², Mohammad Hosein Abdollahi²

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ABSTRACT

Objectives The present study aimed to examine the relationship between early maladaptive schemas with meaning of life and well-being of the elderly and investigation and its prediction by early maladaptive schemas.

Methods & Materials In this research, a total of 200 older people (96 women and 104 men) were selected from Tehran city by convenience sampling. The instruments used in this study consisted of the Yung early maladaptive Schema Questionnaire – Short Form (SQ-SF), Meaning of Life Questionnaire (MLQ) and Ryffs Scales of Psychological Well-Being (RSPWB).

Results The results of multiple regression analyses showed that 37% of the elderly participants found meaning, 27% found meaning in life, 27% in self- acceptance, 24% in positive relationship with the others, and 44% in environment control, as predicted by early maladaptive schemas. Early maladaptive schemas cannot project autonomy, personal growth and purpose in life. This correlation was significant ($P < 0.001$). Based on the analyses of variance, the regression method was also significant and linear because the value of F test for determining the effect of independent variables on finding meaning and meaning in life, i.e., 5.21 and 3.22, respectively, was significant ($P < 0.001$). Also, the effect of independent variables on well-being and self-acceptance ($f = 3.22$) showed a positive relationship with others ($f = 2.68$) and environment control ($f = 2.17$), which was significant ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusion Findings of this research revealed that early maladaptive schemas (unrelenting standards, self-sacrifice, subjugation, emotional deprivation, social isolation, and failure) have predictive power for meaning of life and well-being, which may affect the mental health of the elderly.

Key words:

Elderly, Early maladaptive schemas, Meaning of life, Well-being

Extended Abstract**1. Objectives**

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ince the world's population is aging rapidly, elderly age is of paramount importance. Gerontology seeks to better understand the elderly age, prevent the difficulties related to this age group, help improve the health

and well-being of the elderly population, and provide ways to the middle-aged people to be prepared for old age [1]. Therefore, studies aimed at improving mental health and quality of life in elderly age seem necessary. Since schemas are the deepest cognitive levels and the core of personality, it seems that search for meaning and psychological well-being in this period are related to early maladaptive schemes and play an important role in the quality of life and mental health in elderly [2]. Hence,

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the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between the components of early maladaptive schemas and the components of the meaning of life and psychological well-being.

2. Methods & Materials

The present study was a descriptive-correlational research. The study population consisted of all elderly men and women aged between 65 and 80 years who lived in Tehran in 2016. Accordingly, 200 persons were selected among the elderly men and women (96 women and 104 men) through available sampling method. The inclusion criteria for the elderly were as follows: having the specified age; consent and willingness to complete the questionnaires; and the physical health necessary to understand the questions. The exclusion criteria for the research process were reported as neuropsychiatric diseases, such as Alzheimer’s disease, which is declared by the elderly or by their friends, physical illnesses such as hearing loss and deafness, and refusal to continue collaboration due to the length of the questionnaire.

The research tools used to conduct the present study were the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (where the Cronbach’s alpha was 75% for the subscale of search for meaning and 78% for the subscale of presence of meaning) [3], Young Schema Questionnaire - Short Form - for evaluating 15 early maladaptive schemas (namely emotional deprivation, abandonment, distrust and mistreatment, social isolation, defectiveness and shame, incompetence and dependence, vulnerability to illness, enmeshment, sub-

jugation, self-sacrifice, emotional inhibition, unrelenting standards, entitlement, insufficient self-control, and failure) [4], and the Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (with the subscales of self-acceptance, the establishment of quality ties to other, autonomy, purposeful life, personal growth and domination on the environment) [5]. Cronbach’s alpha was reported 50% in the present study.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 18. The relationship was examined, and the variables were predicted using Pearson’s correlation coefficient and simultaneous multiple regression analysis with respect to the assumptions.

3. Results

Based on the research questions, the matrix of correlation between the subscales of early maladaptive schemas and the meaning in life showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between the schemas of distrust, entitlement, dependence, self-sacrifice, and unrelenting standards with search for meaning while there is a significant negative correlation with the subscale of failure. As well, there is a positive and significant correlation between the schema of entitlement, self-sacrifice, and unrelenting standards with the presence of meaning, but a negative significant correlation with failure ($P < 0.001$ and $P < 0.05$, respectively).

Simultaneous linear regression analysis was used to determine whether early maladaptive schemas predicted the search for and the presence of meaning in life. The results

Table 1. Significant level of regression coefficient of the early maladaptive schemas’ subscales

Variable	Non-Standardized Regression Impact Factors	Standardized Regression Impact Factor	t	Significance Level
Unrelenting standards and search for meaning	0.347	0.427	3.956	0.001
Unrelenting standards and presence of meaning	0.267	0.496	4.169	0.001
Emotional deprivation and positive relationships with others	0.110	0.278	2.730	0.007
Self-sacrifice and domination on the environment	0.128	0.302	2.969	0.004
Social isolation/alienation and self-acceptance	-0.114	-0.355	-3.288	0.001
Subjugation and self-acceptance	0.111	0.332	2.757	0.007
Failure and self-acceptance	-0.104	-0.261	-2.757	0.007

showed that only the schema of unrelenting standards succeeded in predicting the components of the search for and the presence of meaning of life.

In order to investigate the predictability of psychological well-being by early maladaptive schemas, the correlation matrix between components was first established to determine the correlation between the components of the early maladaptive schemas and psychological well-being.

The findings indicated that there is a correlation between the component of self-acceptance and the schema of abandonment/social isolation; between the component of positive relationships with others and the schemas of emotional deprivation, abandonment, defectiveness/shame, and subjugation; between the component of autonomy and the schemas of entitlement, self-sacrifices, and unrelenting standards; between the component of domination on the environment and the schemas of emotional deprivation, abandonment, entitlement, self-sacrifice, and unrelenting standards; between the component of purposeful life and the schemas of entitlement and unrelenting standards; and between the component of individual growth and the schemas of abandonment, distrust, entitlement, self-sacrifice, emotional inhibition and unrelenting standards.

Simultaneous linear regression analysis was used to determine whether early maladaptive schemas predicted the components of psychological well-being. Based on the results, among the subscales of the early maladaptive schemas, social isolation/alienation and subjugation/failure predicted self-acceptance in life; the emotional deprivation schema predicted positive relationships with others; and the self-sacrifice schema predicted domination on the environment. The findings also indicated that none of the subscales of early maladaptive schemas could predict autonomy. Also, among the subscales of early maladaptive schemas, none could predict the components of purposeful life and individual growth.

4. Conclusion

In general, the present study showed the effect of early maladaptive schemes on the meaning of life and psychological well-being during elderly age. Considering the limitations and unique characteristics of elderly age, it can be considered as an opportunity to assess and change attitudes of the elderly by revising their schemas and start a period full of meaning, growth and mental health [6]. The present research is consistent with the studies carried out in Iran by Yousefi, Zerehpooch, Moradi, and Bahrami

on the impact of early maladaptive schemas in life [7, 8, 9, 10]. In this regard, according to the research findings, knowing the importance of cognitive patterns in mental health, these stereotypical beliefs and thoughts can be revised and reevaluated during the elderly age by modifying the schema and understanding the roots of problems and incompatibilities. Also, emotional control and accountability to fate can be seen as the implications of modifying early maladaptive schemas; the present research is an attempt to enlighten and achieve it.

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Conflict of Interest

All authors certify that this manuscript has neither been published in whole nor in part nor being considered for publication elsewhere. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.