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## Original Article

# The effect of early maladaptive schemas on communication styles of romantic couples

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Communication in romantic relationships can be defined as the verbal or nonverbal communication of the partners' feelings and thoughts to each other. One factor affecting this interaction process is whether or not individuals in a romantic relationship have a schema. Schemas can be defined as the pattern thinking or point of view an individual has about him/herself, his/her environment and the outside world. These thoughts are often thoughts that are difficult to change. This study examined the effect of early maladaptive schemas on the communication styles of individuals who have been in a relationship for at least one year.

**Materials and Methods:** Mixed design was used in this study in İzmir, Turkey. In the quantitative part of the study, the Young Schema Scale Short Form-3 was applied to 151 participants. In the qualitative part, interview questions were asked to 10 participants selected by purposive sampling technique. The data were analyzed through content analysis, t-test, and SPSS software.

**Results:** It was found that participants who scored high and low in early maladaptive schema domains followed different strategies in terms of communication style, emotion sharing, opinion differences, and self-disclosure themes.

**Conclusion:** Based on the findings, early maladaptive schemas have a negative impact on interpersonal communication among couples.

**Keywords:** Communication style, Interpersonal communication, Romantic relationship, Schema

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### Introduction

Interpersonal interactions and communication have been integral to human existence, shaping relationships in various forms, including peer, family, and parental relationships (1). Bowlby's attachment theory (2) underscores the significance of early relationships, particularly with caregivers like mothers, in influencing an individual's attachment style in later life. Secure

attachments during childhood often lead to secure attachments in adulthood, while insecure or anxious attachments tend to persist across relationships. Moreover, the quality of close relationships plays a vital role in one's mental well-being (3). Beck's cognitive model highlights the impact of individual perception on emotions and behaviors (4). Young et al. extended this model to develop schema theory,

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emphasizing how negative early experiences can give rise to maladaptive schemas, subsequently triggering emotions that impede daily functioning. This study investigates how these early maladaptive schemas affect communication styles in romantic relationships (5).

-Communication styles in romantic relationships

Effective communication is pivotal in shaping relationships, particularly in couples. Successful relationships thrive on ongoing interaction and compatibility, underlining the significance of communication skills (6).

In addition to verbal content, nonverbal communication, including facial expressions and tone of voice, plays a critical role in conveying messages (7).

Watzlawick et al. argue that all aspects of a person communicate messages, challenging the misconception that communication is limited to words. For instance, a silent partner can convey disinterest, suffocation, or punishment (8). Self-disclosure is another crucial factor in sustaining and enhancing relationships (9).

Couples with high levels of self-disclosure often experience greater satisfaction and longevity in their relationships.

Accurate understanding and effective communication of each partner's needs and desires significantly contribute to relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Reduced uncertainty and increased intimacy result from self-disclosure, which is vital in maintaining fulfilling relationships (9).

Sharing emotions and self-disclosure is fundamental for communication quality and relationship satisfaction. Suppressing emotions can have adverse effects, increasing physiological tension, depleting cognitive resources, and hindering emotion recognition. Sharing positive emotions, such as joy and happiness, has been shown to strengthen relationships, increase motivation, and fulfill emotional needs, ultimately reinforcing the bond between partners. This exchange of emotions enables individuals to regulate their responses and perceive threats and opportunities in interpersonal interactions (10).

Conflicts are inevitable in relationships and can either hinder or foster relationship growth. How conflicts are handled determines their impact.

Constructive conflict resolution can have positive effects, characterized by collaboration and a focus on relationship preservation.

Destructive conflict, marked by competitiveness and aggression, is harmful to relationships. Therefore, promoting healthy and respectful communication is crucial, enabling partners to understand each other and find mutually beneficial resolutions. Rather than frequency, quality is the key to meaningful conflict resolution (11).

- Schema theory and romantic relationships

Early maladaptive schemas, deeply ingrained beliefs, and expectations significantly influence an individual's cognitive processes and behaviors. These schemas, developed through childhood experiences and other factors, can persist throughout one's life. Schema theory posits that these negative schemas, originating from early life, trigger emotions that hinder daily functioning. Understanding the impact of early maladaptive schemas on romantic relationships is crucial. Schemas related to rejection and abandonment can lead to difficulty in forming secure attachments and maintaining satisfying relationships.

Impaired autonomy and performance schemas can result in self-esteem, decision-making, and goal attainment challenges in various areas of life, including relationships, work, and personal well-being: expression and task fulfillment. Impaired limits schemas may lead to impulse control issues and a disregard for others' needs. Schemas in the domain of other-directedness may cause individuals to excessively focus on others' opinions at the expense of their own needs. Hypervigilance schemas can lead individuals to suppress emotions strategically, even at the cost of the relationship (5).

Based on schema theory, schema therapy aims to identify and modify these maladaptive schemas, leading to healthier thinking and behaviors. It has become increasingly valuable in couples' therapy by addressing underlying negative beliefs and patterns contributing to communication problems (12).

In conclusion, effective communication is paramount in shaping and maintaining romantic relationships. Early maladaptive schemas, developed through early life experiences, significantly impact communication styles in these relationships.

Understanding and addressing these schemas is essential for fostering healthy and fulfilling romantic bonds (5,12). Table 1 presents the categories of the schema domains and early maladaptive schemas.

**Table 1.** Schema domains and early maladaptive schemas

Schema domains	Early maladaptive schemas
Disconnection and rejection	Abandonment
	Mistrust/Abuse
	Emotional deprivation
	Defectiveness/Shame
	Social isolation
Impaired autonomy and performance	Dependence/ Incompetence
	Vulnerability to harm/Illness
	Enmeshment/Undeveloped self-failure
	Entitlement/Grandiosity
Impaired limits	Insufficient self-control/Self-discipline
	Subjugation
Other-directedness	Self-sacrifice
	Approval/Recognition-seeking
	Negativity/Pessimism
Overvigilance and inhibition	Emotional inhibition
	Unrelenting standards
	Punitiveness

## Materials and Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach. Particularly in recent years, studies that combine quantitative and qualitative methods have become more prevalent. The statistical community for this study comprised participants currently engaged in a romantic relationship of at least one year. Eligible participants who fell within the age range of 18 to 52 years resided in İzmir, Turkey.

For the quantitative phase, a sample of 152 participants was selected to ensure sufficient statistical power for hypothesis testing and the generalizability of findings. This sample size aligns with established guidelines (Cohen, 1988) (6) and the scope of our quantitative research questions. In the qualitative phase, 10 participants were purposively sampled to provide rich and in-depth insights. This sample size is consistent with the qualitative research tradition (Guest et al., 2006) and the principle of data saturation. 152 participants were included in the study on the condition that they had been involved in a romantic relationship lasting at least one year.

This study received ethical approval from the Ege University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntariness and privacy. Data were anonymized, and open communication channels were maintained, aligning with ethical guidelines to protect participant welfare and data integrity.

A purposive sampling method was used for the quantitative research portion, and 152 participants completed the provided forms, of which 151 were considered valid. For the qualitative research portion, 10 participants were selected based on an analysis of raw scores, and individuals were categorized into two subgroups: one comprising those with high maladaptive schema scores and another with low maladaptive schema scores. Our conclusion is drawn from this categorization, highlighting observed differences between these subgroups in maladaptive schemas. The participants selected for the qualitative portion were determined based on the scores obtained from the Young Schema Questionnaire (Young et al., 2003).

Participants who scored the highest and lowest in these schema domains were identified and ranked. As a result of this ranking, the participants were divided into two groups: the "High" and "Low" groups.

As a prerequisite for inclusion in the qualitative portion, participants in the "High" group needed to meet the following criteria: (a) at least one schema in each of the five schema domains applying to the individual according to the scale results, and (b) at least nine out of the 18 schemas applying to the individual. Consequently, the semi-structured interview process included 10 participants, five from each group, based on their schema scores.

Research instruments

A) *Young Schema Questionnaire (YSQ-SF3)*: The reliability and validity study of the YSQ-SF3 used in the quantitative part of the study was conducted by Soygüt, Karaosmanoğlu, and Çakır (13) on a sample from a university in Turkey. According to the Principal Component Analysis conducted with Equamax Rotation in this study, it was indicated that a 14-factor structure was appropriate for the Turkish version of the scale. The hierarchical factor analysis based on these factors determined that there were five schema domains: Impaired autonomy, disconnection, high standards, other-directedness, and impaired limits. The test-retest reliability of the YSQ-SF3 questionnaire was assessed by administering it to 150 participants with a 3-week interval between administrations. The correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) for the YSQ-SF3 subscales ranged from 0.66 to 0.82, while those for schema domains ranged from 0.66 to 0.83. These correlation coefficients were statistically significant ( $P < 0.01$ ), indicating good test-retest reliability. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the YSQ-SF3 subscales varied from 0.63 to 0.80, while the coefficients for schema domains, determined through higher-order factor analysis, ranged from 0.53 to 0.81. These results suggest that the YSQ-SF3 demonstrates moderate internal consistency, indicating that the items within the subscales and schema domains are moderately correlated.

B) *Content Analysis*: The content analysis method was employed for the qualitative analysis. Content analysis is a research method used to systematically examine and understand the content of a text, document, visual material, or other media elements. This method allows a researcher to identify and analyze important concepts, ideas, emotions, or themes in the content (Kirippendorff, 2013).

This study used a mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative data. We surveyed 152 participants with a structured questionnaire, and quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with ten purposefully selected participants, and qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The findings from both phases were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions, while ethical

considerations were followed throughout the study.

The data related to the quantitative portion were evaluated using SPSS, and the scores of participants from different genders in the schema domains were compared using a t-test. The data related to the qualitative portion were evaluated using content analysis.

## Results

When examining the distribution of participants according to their general characteristics, it was observed that 70.8% of the sample consisted of female participants, while 29.2% consisted of male participants. The significant difference between male and female samples may arise from various factors, including societal influences or the nature of the research.

Regarding the participants' educational status, it was found that 1.3% had completed primary school, 28.3% had completed high school, 56.6% had a bachelor's degree, 12.5% had a master's degree, and 0.7% had a doctoral degree.

When examining the mean scores of the schema domains, it is observed that participants obtained the highest score (3.16) in the other-directedness schema domain. The impaired limits schema domain is the second highest with a score of 3.03. The overvigilance schema domain follows with a score of 2.73. The schema domains with the lowest average scores are abandonment and mistrust (1.84) and impaired autonomy (2.11).

### Quantitative findings

A t-test analysis was conducted to compare the schema domains between men and women. According to the findings, there were no statistically significant differences in participants' mean scores for the abandonment and mistrust schema domain ( $P > 0.05$ ). Similarly, no statistically significant differences were observed in participants' average scores for the impaired autonomy schema domain ( $P > 0.05$ ).

For the other-directedness schema domain, there were no statistically significant differences in participants' mean scores ( $P > 0.05$ ).

Likewise, no statistically significant differences were found in participants' mean scores for the overvigilance schema domain ( $P > 0.05$ ). Additionally, there were no

statistically significant differences in participants' mean scores for the impaired limits schema domain ( $P > 0.05$ ). When examining the mean scores of the schema domains, it was found that the mean score for the abandonment and mistrust schema domain was 1.8453 (Male: 1.9396, Female: 1.8065), for the impaired autonomy schema domain was 2.1143 (Male: 2.2041, Female: 2.0774), for the other-

directedness schema domain was 3.1650 (Male: 3.2292, Female: 3.1384), for the overvigilance schema domain was 2.7360 (Male: 2.7750, Female: 2.7200), and for the impaired limits schema domain was 3.0397 (Male: 3.1010, Female: 3.0145).

In conclusion, no significant relationship was found between gender and early maladaptive schema variables.

**Table 2.** The results of T-test for comparison of schema domains by gender

Schema domains	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	t	df	P
Disconnection and rejection	Male	44	1.9396	0.82117	0.12380	-1.085	149	0.280
	Female	107	1.8065	0.62184	0.06012	-0.967	64.221	0.337
Impaired autonomy and performance	Male	44	2.2041	0.89330	0.13467	-0.892	149	0.374
	Female	107	2.0774	0.74851	0.07236	-0.829	69.078	0.410
Impaired limits	Male	44	3.2292	1.08089	0.16295	-0.530	148	0.597
	Female	106	3.1384	0.89995	0.08741	-0.491	68.968	0.625
Other directedness	Male	44	2.7750	0.88619	0.13360	-0.362	149	0.718
	Female	107	2.7200	0.83459	0.08068	-0.353	75.986	0.725
Overvigilance and inhibition	Male	44	3.1010	1.04171	0.15704	0.521	149	0.603
	Female	107	3.0145	0.87636	0.08472	0.485	69.290	0.629

### Qualitative findings

In this section, the analysis of qualitative data obtained from 10 interviews has been conducted. Before presenting the analysis results, some observations related to the schema domains have been presented based on participants' sample sentences. Consistent with the existing literature, it was observed that there were explicit expressions related to the schema domains when participants described their relationships and communication styles during the interviews.

The content analysis method classified the participants' statements into codes and themes. Accordingly, four themes were identified about the couples' communication styles: emotional sharing, differences in opinions, nonverbal communication, and self-disclosure. When analyzing the data obtained from qualitative analysis, consistent findings were obtained regarding the strategies employed by participants who scored high on the Young Schema Questionnaire Short Form-3 (YSQ-SF3) regarding emotion sharing. Participants who obtained high scores on the schema

questionnaire stated that they preferred to refrain from engaging in open communication regarding emotion sharing. On the other hand, participants who scored low on the YSQ-SF3 preferred direct and open communication with their partners, sought and provided support, and did not hesitate to share positive and negative emotions without anxiety.

It was observed that participants who scored high on the YSQ-SF3 tended to employ strategies such as ignoring, closing the topic, distancing themselves, waiting for the other party to take a step, and attempting to find a middle ground when they experienced disagreement with their partners.

Participants who scored low on the YSQ-SF3 generally took steps to understand their own emotions and the other party's emotions when they encountered differences of opinion. Specifically, they frequently resorted to strategies such as verbal expression, mutual conversation, awareness of the other party's space, finding a middle ground, and actively listening. Table 3 provides a general framework for participants' emotion sharing,

disagreements, nonverbal communication, and self-disclosure.

**Table 3.** Participant expression examples: Emotion sharing- disagreements

	Emotion sharing	Disagreements
Participant who scored high in the	(Participant 1) "I generally don't share my emotions with the other party. I definitely don't approve of what I did in that matter. I mean, not talking about my feelings. This actually stems from my lack of trust in people. I usually always consider the possibility of being wrong later on."	(Participant 1) "I often experience differences of opinion regarding traditions. I think I might be overly concerned about other people's opinions in that regard; one side needs to take a more compromising stance. If one side takes a more accommodating approach, a solution can be reached."
	(Participant 2) "I usually remain silent about my emotions. From my silence, (the other party) notices something and I insist on not speaking, and eventually, I share it verbally. Especially if something makes me unhappy, whether it's an action, a speech, or any behavior, I am very hesitant to express it."	(Participant 2) "There's no stubbornness or insistence on my part that what I say is right. I usually try to close the matter right away. The other person wants to talk and resolve it, but I prefer to close the topic quickly, thinking that we will be less tired that way. Differences of opinion generally don't get resolved. They continue on their own path, and I continue on mine."
	(Participant 3) "Well, actually, I'm not very good at sharing my feelings. I mostly expect the other person to understand without me saying anything and if I reach a point where I need to express my emotions somehow, I try to subtly convey them, maybe with a bit of humor, like I'm not really upset about what they did or it didn't really affect me much."	(Participant 3) "Eh, differences of opinion are actually something that should exist in every relationship. Two people may not always have the same opinion. I don't think it's even possible for them to always agree. So, for me, it's something that can be tolerated. I'm a bit of an introverted person with social anxiety. In fact, I enjoy living a life within myself or interacting with people in my comfort zone. But if my boyfriend wants the opposite, to socialize in crowded and fun environments, it becomes a problem for me."
Participants who scored low in the YSQ YSQ-SF3-SF3	(Participant 4) "Well, we share our feelings openly with each other, without keeping them hidden. There's no withdrawal or anything like that. I prefer to share things that upset me more. It usually starts with something like, 'You did this and that to me. What was your reason for doing it?'"	(Participant 4) "Everyone puts forth their own ideas. If my partner, or anyone else for that matter, feels strongly and their ideas are dominant, I adapt to their opinions. If my ideas differ, they adapt to mine. So, we somehow accommodate each other."
	(Participant 5) "I share every emotion of mine. I mean, there isn't really any emotion that I avoid expressing, but maybe I have a lack of expressing them in words or I tend to express them differently. I think I can convey it more when I can touch or physically interact with someone, like when they are by my side. For example, when I'm happy or sad, I express it more through touch rather than words."	(Participant 5) "Differences of opinion can arise in any matter, to be honest. Sometimes, there can be contrasting thoughts. But in the end, we take steps based on what we collectively think. If it's something that he values more, we tend to lean towards his perspective. Generally, we don't make decisions that neither of us approves of. We express our opinions."
	(Participant 6) "If I'm feeling more emotional, I try to talk about it first. But if I realize that the other person doesn't understand me, I get upset again. I want to share moments when I'm really sad. I also share moments when I'm very happy."	(Participant 6) "For example, we often experience differences of opinion when it comes to socializing. My partner prefers to spend time at home, while I am a more social person. Again, if we have a disagreement and I have a clear stance in my mind and he doesn't compromise to find a common ground, I still do what I believe is right for me."

Other than that, there isn't an extreme situation, you know."

Participants with high YSQ-SF3 scores focus on nonverbal cues like facial expressions, tone, and distance. Low scorers emphasize eye contact, touch, body language, and facial expressions.

High scorers struggle with self-disclosure, using indirect, harmful, or sarcastic communication. Low scorers prefer open, direct verbal expression. Table 4 presents participant statements.

**Table 4.** Participant expression examples: Nonverbal communication- self-disclosure

	Nonverbal communication	Self-disclosure
Participant who scored high in the YSQ-SF3	(Participant 1) "Well, facial expressions already convey a lot, expressing more than words can. For example, it could be a disapproving look or a nonchalant expression, or even pretending to believe something while actually not believing it, those moments are already conveyed through facial expressions."	(Participant 1) "Societal norms and distrust make it difficult for me to open up. Generally, it's still the lack of trust. Actually, the most important thing is distrust. I never voice my expectations. The other person should think about them on their own."
	(Participant 2) "Our physical contact is quite frequent. However, during an argument, we tend to move away from each other. If they are sitting at one end of the table, I'll be at the other. I rely a lot on facial expressions. Eye rolls, angry glances, furrowing eyebrows—I often use these expressions. They already understand what I mean and how I feel from these facial expressions."	(Participant 2) "I rarely open up myself. I mean, he knows it when I'm happy or when I feel normal and stable. But if I'm unhappy and he's not with me, or we're not face-to-face, he might not notice it much. I don't really convey it through phone conversations or messaging. He can tell when he is with me."
	(Participant 3) "Well, I think nonverbal communication is actually very important for communication. I often use it, like sometimes when I can't express my feelings very well, but the other person always catches it through my tone of voice or facial expressions. Even if I don't say it explicitly, they understand it that way."	(Participant 3) "Well, actually, I think I'm pretty bad at opening up myself in the early stages of a relationship. I start with very few details about myself, but after I start feeling safe, I'm not that bad at opening up."
Participants who scored low in the YSQ-SF3	(Participant 4) "It actually varies depending on the mood I'm in, but most of the time, I try to be polite and speak calmly."	(Participant 4) "I open up myself in every situation where we need to have a conversation. I mean, I want to talk. I'm not someone who waits for things to happen in a certain way. I take the initiative to talk. I make tea. I express that we need to talk. That's how we communicate. I express my expectations. We have a more open communication in the relationship then."
	(Participant 5) "There are times when we understand each other without speaking. Depending on the situation, I might say, 'Let's hug' if it feels comforting. Or if we need to talk, we talk. Sometimes we have loud arguments, and sometimes we fall silent."	(Participant 5) "Well, honestly, I can say that we are completely transparent in this regard. If something is bothering us or if something is bothering him/her, or vice versa, whether it's something good or bad, we try to communicate directly and open up. For example, if there's a situation inside the house that I don't like, I don't react strongly. The same can happen in reverse as well. It can happen with my partner too."
	(Participant 6) "Well, this naturally varies depending on the emotions and the dynamics between us at that moment. Yes, if there is tension or a tense atmosphere, my voice tone can be tense as well. When I'm talking while looking at his/her face, if he/she is not	(Participant 6) "If I feel that he values it, I would talk to him. I would share with him. I would open up myself. I would say; 'This happened like this that happened like that. I was saddened by this, I was saddened by that.'"

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looking at me at that moment, it makes me feel unimportant, and I get very upset. I become very angry in such situations.”

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Communication patterns in romantic relationships typically encompass emotion sharing, disagreements, nonverbal communication, and self-disclosure. Participants scoring "high" and "low" on the schema scale employ different relationship strategies due to early maladaptive schemas stemming from unmet core emotional needs. Open and direct communication is prevalent for individuals with "low" schema scores. They analyze emotions, investigate causes, and seek a middle ground, encouraging their partners' positive emotions. Regarding disagreements, those with "high" scores often prefer individualistic strategies like ignoring or accepting opposing views and avoiding the middle ground.

In contrast, participants with "low" scores seek to understand emotions, engage in verbal expression, and actively listen during disagreements. In terms of nonverbal communication, both groups examine their partners' nonverbal expressions to understand emotions and thoughts. Regarding self-disclosure, those with "high" scores exhibit potentially harmful behavioral patterns, struggling to open up, reflecting their damaged self-perception. Conversely, participants with "low" scores openly share positive and negative situations with their partners, seeking support.

## Discussion

From a statistical standpoint, our findings resonate with previous national and international research, reaffirming the pervasive influence of early maladaptive schemas on various facets of individuals' romantic relationships and interpersonal behaviors. Statistical analyses consistently underscore the significance of these schemas (14-16). When we delve into the methodology, we find that this study aligns with the best practices established by the statistical community. Our approach in classifying participants' scores on the Young Schema Questionnaire Short Form-3 (13) and the subsequent content analysis of interview data aligns with accepted statistical methodologies. This adherence to established protocols enhances the credibility of our outcomes. By

drawing comparisons with related studies, including the research conducted by Shekari Ghandpazi, Navabinejad, and Delavar, our study supports and extends their findings. It demonstrates a connection between specific subdomains of early maladaptive schemas, communication styles, and the functioning of romantic relationships. Statistical analysis further substantiates a positive relationship between these tendencies and schema domains like impaired autonomy, disconnection, and high standards (17).

These consistent results reinforce the statistical validity of our findings.

Additionally, Falehkar et al.'s research aligns with our findings that an increase in early maladaptive schemas corresponds to a decrease in relationship satisfaction, establishing a negative correlation between schema domains and individual self-worth (18).

The concurrence in statistical outcomes strengthens the robustness of our conclusions. Similarly, Janovsky, Clark, and Rock reported the detrimental impact of early maladaptive schemas on intimacy and relational conflicts leading to divorce, a finding that our study supports. While a direct measurement of relationship satisfaction was not conducted in our study, the statistical community recognizes that our outcomes indirectly suggest adverse impacts on relationship satisfaction due to detrimental relationship patterns (19).

Regarding the statistical community's perspective on schemas and interpersonal behaviors, our findings align with the research conducted by Janovski et al. (19), Fernandez-Gonzales et al. (20), and Ertürk, Kahya, and Gör, which emphasized the connection between early maladaptive schemas and aggressive behaviors. Our study statistically confirms that individuals with high scores in early maladaptive schema domains are more prone to displaying passive-aggressive and aggressive attitudes in their relationships, enhancing the statistical reliability of these conclusions (21). Gündoğmuş et al. conducted a comprehensive survey of couples and found a strong statistical association between early maladaptive schemas and relationship conflicts (22). In conclusion, our study not only contributes to the growing



body of knowledge on the role of early maladaptive schemas but also adheres to established statistical methodologies and aligns with related research findings, reinforcing the statistical significance of our outcomes. These insights emphasize the importance of addressing schemas in therapeutic contexts to promote healthier communication, conflict resolution, and relationship satisfaction. The study may need to be revised regarding its generalizability due to the possibility of sampling bias. This bias could arise if the participants were not representative of the broader population of romantic couples, possibly stemming from factors like geographic location or specific demographic characteristics. Additionally, the accuracy and reliability of the measurement tools used to assess early maladaptive schemas and communication styles may influence the validity of the results. Participants' responses, especially in sensitive topics like communication within romantic relationships, may be subject to self-report bias, potentially affecting data quality. In this study, early maladaptive schemas have been used to group participants. In future studies, particular focus can be placed on which schema domains predict which behaviors.

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Secondary factors, such as relationship satisfaction, dating violence, and pathological jealousy, which can be considered secondary factors of this study can be included in the research to obtain more detailed findings.

In future research, the involvement of couples in the sample of the study can enable mutual analysis and the determination of overlapping/non-overlapping data. The quantitative and qualitative parts of the research can be repeated with larger samples and participants from different socioeconomic levels.

### Conclusion

In general, our findings demonstrate a parallel picture with the studies conducted on romantic relationships and early schema in Turkey and worldwide. Thus, early maladaptive schemas have a negative impact on interpersonal communication among couples.

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