



## Research article

## Exploring revictimization process among Turkish women: The role of early maladaptive schemas on the link between child abuse and partner violence



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## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 5 October 2015

Received in revised form

22 December 2015

Accepted 1 January 2016

Available online 29 January 2016

## Keywords:

Revictimization

Child abuse and neglect

Intimate partner violence

Early maladaptive schemas

Parallel Multiple Mediation Model

Repeated trauma

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study is to explore the revictimization process between child abuse and neglect (CAN), and intimate partner violence (IPV) based on the schema theory perspective. For this aim, 222 married women recruited in four central cities of Turkey participated in the study. Results indicated that early negative CAN experiences increased the risk of being exposed to later IPV. Specifically, emotional abuse and sexual abuse in the childhood predicted the four subtypes of IPV, which are physical, psychological, and sexual violence, and injury, while physical abuse only associated with physical violence. To explore the mediational role of early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) on this association, first, five schema domains were tested via Parallel Multiple Mediation Model. Results indicated that only Disconnection/Rejection (D/R) schema domains mediated the association between CAN and IPV. Second, to determine the particular mediational roles of each schema, eighteen EMS were tested as mediators, and results showed that Emotional Deprivation Schema and Vulnerability to Harm or Illness Schema mediated the association between CAN and IPV. These findings provided an empirical support for the crucial roles of EMSs on the effect of revictimization process. Clinical implications were discussed.

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious global problem because it affects women, families, and society. To draw the attentions over the matter, the [United Nations General Assembly \(1993\)](#) published the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, and defined IPV with its different aspects, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Prevalence studies of [World Health Organization \(2013\)](#) indicate that almost 30% of women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their intimate relationship.

A large amount of research which focusing on the associated factors of partner violence (e.g., [Bensley, Van Eenwyk, & Wynkoop Simmons, 2003](#); [Cold et al., 2001](#); [Millett, Kohl, Jonson-Reid, Drake, & Petra, 2013](#); [Noll, Horowitz, Bonanno, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003](#); [Renner & Slack, 2006](#)) consistently indicated that there was a strong link between child abuse and neglect (CAN) and IPV. Accordingly, early negative childhood experiences have been closely associated with the risk of being a victim in later adulthood relationships – *revictimization* (e.g., [Arata, 2002](#); [Edleson, 1999](#); [Gold, Sinclair, & Balge, 1999](#); [Hartley, 2002](#); [Lowell, Renk, & Adgate, 2014](#); [McKinney, Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, & Nelson, 2008](#); [Milner et al., 2010](#)). In a retrospective study conducted via telephone survey, 3568 women who stated that they experienced high rates of IPV also reported being abused as a child ([Thompson et al., 2006](#)). In another study based on interviews with 1800 ever-married women from 56 provinces of Turkey ([Altınay & Arat, 2008](#)), 48% of the women who reported that they had been

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**Table 1**  
Demographic characteristics of participants.

Variables	N (222 participants)	%
Young adult (between 20 and 30)	68	30.6
Middle adult (between 31 and 40)	81	36.5
Late adult (between 41 and 50)	66	29.7
Education		
Primary school	93	41.9
High school	55	24.8
University or higher	73	32.9
CAN (at least one time)		
Emotional abuse	101	45.5
Physical abuse	40	18
Sexual abuse	27	12.2
Emotional neglect	189	85.1
Physical neglect	140	63.1
IPV (at least one time)		
Physical violence	93	41.9
Psychological violence	184	82.9
Sexual violence	79	35.6
Injury	53	23.9

Note. CAN=child abuse and neglect, IPV=intimate partner violence. The remained number of the participant are missing value.

exposed to physical violence by their fathers during their childhood also experienced physical violence by their husbands. This association was addressed in small number of longitudinal studies as well (e.g., Barnes, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2009; Vezina et al., 2015; Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2008; Widom, Czaja, & Dutton, 2014).

To explore the mechanism of this repeated victimization, previous studies focus on its different aspects. Some studies (e.g., Asgeirsdottir, Sigfusdottir, Gudjonsson, & Sigurdsson, 2011; Walsh, Latzman, & Latzman, 2014; White & Widom, 2003; Widom, Marmorstein, & Helene, 2006) determine revictimization by focusing on the negative outcomes of child maltreatment, such as substance use. Some others (e.g., Lowell et al., 2014) emphasize similarities between attachment figures and later partners; and others (e.g., Gold et al., 1999; Macy, 2007) specify the influences of adapted coping strategies. However, cognitive literature (e.g., Gibb, 2002; Hankin, 2005) addresses the role of cognitive vulnerabilities on the repeated victimization of early negative experiences and later problems.

These early adapted vulnerabilities expanded under the framework of Young's early maladaptive schemas (Young, 1990). According to schema theory (Young, 1990), the child who had been harmed or victimized in their family on early ages may later develop some early maladaptive schemas (EMSs). EMSs are defined as broad, pervasive, dysfunctional themes or patterns comprised of memories, emotions, cognitions, and bodily sensations, which were developed during childhood, and elaborated throughout one's lifetime (Young, Klosko, & Weishar, 2003). They define 18 different EMSs grouped into five domains. The theory emphasizes the importance of prior victimization to develop EMSs which may increase the risk of experiencing later psychopathologies and problematic relations (Young et al., 2003).

Although the researcher (i.e., O'Dougherty-Wright, Crawford, & Del Castillo, 2009) showed the crucial roles of EMSs experiencing later problems, only limited studies have addressed their mediational role on the relationship between CAN and IPV. For instance, Gay, Harding, Jackson, Burns, and Baker (2013) found that the domains of Disconnection/Rejection (D/R) mediated the association between child maltreatment and partner violence. Additionally, Crawford and O'Dougherty-Wright (2007) reported the indirect effect of schemas of Mistrust/Abuse, Self-Sacrifice, and Emotional Inhibition between CAN and IPV relationship. There is still a strong need to understand the mechanisms of revictimization process through new statistical analyses and different samples (Gay et al., 2013).

On the basis of these findings, the aim of the present study is to examine the underlying mechanism of revictimization process through schema theory perspective. Specifically, it was hypothesized that CAN would be associated with later IPV, and this relationship would differ according to the subtypes of CAN and IPV. Additionally, it was hypothesized that EMSs mediate the relationship between CAN and IPV.

## Method

### Participants

222 married women who had been married for at least a year participated in the study. Participants were recruited from four cities of Turkey via convenience sampling. The ages of the women ranged between 20 and 50 ( $M = 35.65$ ,  $SD = 7.83$ ). With respect to the education levels, 41.9% of the participants were left primary school, 24.8% high school, and 32.9% university or post graduates (see Table 1).

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