

Self-differentiation, Schemas, and Future Time Orientation in Romantic Relationships Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The study explored self-schemas, differentiation of self and future time orientation in relation to the romantic relationship status of young adults (18-30). A cross-sectional exploratory design with purposive sampling was adopted. A sample of 344 unmarried participants responded to the socio-demographic data sheet, Young Schema Questionnaire- S3, Differentiation of Self Inventory- R and Future Time Orientation in Romantic Relationships. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, correlation coefficients and multiple regressions were employed for analysis. Among the participants, 65% had been in a romantic relationship at least once. Those who were ever in a romantic relationship had higher scores on schemas of insufficient self-control and admiration seeking compared to those who were never in any relationships. The younger age group (18-24) scored higher on all schema domains in comparison to the older age group (25-30) and males had higher mean scores than females. Differentiation of self was higher in those who never had any romantic relationship and in the older age group. Overall high future time orientation was noted for the group. No significant differences across age, gender and relationship status and no predictor for future orientation were identified. There is a need to understand the study variables in the cultural context. Future research may consider prospective studies across the age groups to see the dynamic nature of these constructs and the influence of social-cultural factors.

Keywords: *Young Adults, Future Time Orientation in Romantic Relationship, Early Maladaptive Schemas, Differentiation of Self.*

INTRODUCTION

The transition to adulthood is marked by a shift in primary importance from familial bonds to romantic partners and other social relationships (Antonucci et al., 2004). Romantic relationships allow exploration of autonomy beyond familial relationships and aid psychological aspects such as identity, intimacy and attachment and hence, demand huge emotional and cognitive investment. Romantic relationships may become either a vital source of support as well as elicit negative emotions and stress (Bouchey & Furman, 2003). In healthy romantic relationships, the romantic partners play a crucial role in providing a buffer from experiencing adverse outcomes in adulthood relationships, especially in individuals with vulnerable childhood histories such as insecure attachment (e.g. Simpson et al. 2011). However, unsatisfactory or negative experiences in romantic relationships can also amount to mental health consequences like anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and in some extreme situations, suicidal attempts (Furman & Winkles, 2012; Sorensen, 2007; Teeruthroy & Bhowon, 2012). Even though India as culture follows a traditional approach wherein pre-marital romantic relationships are largely discouraged, opportunities for the forming romantic and sexual partnerships exist. Many young individuals have been found to engage in romantic relationships which may be casual or involve long term planning (Alexander et al., 2007; Varma & Mathur, 2015).

Early Maladaptive Schemas

Young's (1999) construct of Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) has provided an important construct that is useful for understanding the relationship of interpersonal experiences with the schemas (Yoo et al., 2014). According

to this construct, an individual's early experiences in the social context and emotional experiences with significant others become the basis for developing cognitive relational schemas which further influence the way an individual interacts with others and his/her interpersonal orientation. EMS are central to the person's identity because they determine an individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviours across the relationship interactions. Often may elicit negative affect when they are activated in the context of interpersonal interactions (Young, 1994). EMS, however may vary in their levels of pervasiveness and proneness to activation such that the presence of unpleasant life events could activate them while the presence of supporting and healthy experiences can buffer them. Schemas tend to impact the kind of social relationships formed and the way one responds in various relationships, often explaining the relational difficulties and psychological problems (Astaneh et al., 2013). EMS plays an adaptive role in childhood, allowing it to make sense of the environment. In emerging adulthood, romantic relationships demand the intertwining of self-concepts of the dyad, making the picture more complex. When there is loss of a romantic relationship, the parts of the self formed by interaction with the partners are lost or modified for the reconstruction of the self to happen. This alteration of self-concept, however, has been viewed as a necessary evil, that allows recovery from defunct relationships over time (Slotter et al., 2010).

Differentiation of Self

Bowen's (1978) construct differentiation of self is an aspect of personality that explains the nature of emotional balance existing in a relationship through which interpersonal anxieties are managed. Differentiation appears to have

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formed classically in the early formative years under the influence of family-of-origin experiences (Holman & Busby, 2011). Differentiation is defined as an individual's capacity to differentiate thoughts and feelings and make a choice with respect to ones' behaviours. Individuals with greater differentiation are able to experience strong affect however, they can return to the calmer affect easily and to logical reasoning when circumstances require the same. It also mediates flexibility, adaptability, and a better ability to cope with stress. Individuals with higher differentiation are able to balance both emotions and rationality in thinking and also able to maintain autonomy in their intimate relationships. They are able to establish stronger and long-lasting meaningful relationships as well as are able to have higher future orientation across various domains of life. In contrast, individuals who are less differentiated are more reactive, and find it difficult to maintain calm in the context of the high emotionality of others. They either fuse to the extent that their anxiety affects the others in the relationship or emotional cutoff in order to manage internal tension (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron et al., 2003). Problems in adequate differentiation of self have been linked with higher potential of coping and problem solving deficits, abuse in relationships and marital discord (Skowron & Dendy, 2004).

Future Time Orientation in Romantic Relationships (FTORR)

Future Orientation refers to the process by which individuals use their previously formed schemata or attitudes to process the incoming information and make predictions for the future (Trommsdorff, 1983). Öner (2000) contextualized future orientation within romantic relationships to assess an 'individual's level of investment in and commitment towards relationships in the future. Various socio-cultural characteristics and individual factors such as personality characteristics, gender, and perspective on romantic relationships are said to influence his/her perceptions of the FTORR (Öner, 2001). Individuals who score high on FTORR are said to be more selective while choosing the partners, whereas; those who score low are more flexible in their relationship choices and tend to live in the "here and now".

Romantic relationships formed in young adulthood are seen as significant markers in the transition into adulthood which are closely intertwined with the construct of self. Still, the literature on romantic relationships among unmarried young adults is not vast especially in the Indian setting. The role of differentiation in the family context is well established but not well understood in the pre-marital intimate relationships. Further, FTORR appears to have found its significance in research only recently. Thus, this study aims to examine self-schemas, differentiation of self and FTORR in young adults across age, gender and relationship status (romantic relationships in the past, present and without any). Further, the interrelationship among the variables and predictors of FTORR are also explored.

METHOD

The study adopted an exploratory design. The young adults who are unmarried, able to read and understand English were included in the study and those who were seeking interventions for mental health concerns were excluded. A total of 423 young adults (aged between 18-30 years) were selected using purposive sampling from the community and college populations. Out of which, 54 participants were excluded due to the absence of sufficient data and 24 questionnaires were empty and the final sample consisted of 344 individuals.

Tools

1. Socio-demographic Data Sheet collected the socio-demographic data such as age, sex, living arrangement, education, sexual orientation, religion, relationship status, and nature of relationship experiences in the family and during childhood.

2. Young Schema Questionnaire- Short Form (YSQ-S3, Young, 2005) is a shorter version of Young Schema Questionnaire- Long Form (YSQ-LF; Young & Brown, 1994). YSQ-S3 has 90 items rated on a 6-point scale. Young (1998) has identified 18 early maladaptive schemata, categorized under five larger domains (Disconnection and Rejection, Impaired Autonomy and Performance, Impaired Limits, Other-Directedness, and Overvigilance and Inhibition). A higher score on any subscale indicates a greater possibility of a particular maladaptive schema. Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale was 0.94 and, moderate to high reliability is reported for the subscales.

3. Differentiation of self inventory (DSI-R, Skowron & Schmitt, 2003) is a self-report multidimensional inventory having 46 items that focus on significant relationships and current relations with the family of origin of adults, items are rated on a 6 point Likert Scale. It has a full scale differentiation score and scores for the following subscales: 'Emotional Reactivity', 'I Position', 'Emotional Cut-off', and 'Fusion with others'. Individuals with poor differentiation are found to involve in fused relationships when they are anxious (Skowron, 2004; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Higher scores on each subscale reflect greater differentiation. The scale has demonstrated sound psychometric properties.

4. Future Time Orientation of Romantic Relationship (FTORR, Öner, 2000) scale has 11 items assessing one's need for future commitment and the degree of future investment in the relationships with the partner. The items are rated on 4-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 4 (very true of me). Total scores ranged from 11 to 44 with higher scores reflecting higher future orientation. The reliability coefficient was .89 (Öner, 2001).

Procedure

The study was approved by the Institute Ethics Committee. The data was collected from November 2014 to January 2015. The investigator approached many universities within 5 Km of her Institute in the city of Bangalore out of which, 6 granted permission for the collection of data. With the help of college staff, the tools of the study were administered in groups. In addition, the investigator also did individual administrations to those who chose to participate separately. The participants were explained about the nature

and purpose of the proposed study, confidentiality of the information given by the participants was ensured and anonymity was maintained. Written informed consent was obtained. All participants were informed regarding the availability of the investigator in case of further clarification in the campus for a specified time, in addition, guidance for psychological help and the contact details were provided.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS– version 15) were employed to perform statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the measures of the study and demographic variables. ANOVA, t-test, was employed to compare scores obtained in ERR, YSQ-S3, DoS and FTORR across age, gender and relationship status groups. Pearson’s correlation and Multiple Regression was employed to understand the associations among variables. The data was also subjected to Post Hoc analysis for a better understanding of the significant differences across the four relationship status groups.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Socio-Demographic Details	Frequency (N=344)	Percent
Age	18 – 24	73.3
	25 -30	26.7
Gender	Male	44.8
	Female	55.2
Education	Graduation	70.9
	Post-Graduation	26.2
	PhD	2.9
Religion	Hinduism	52.0
	Muslim	22.1
	Christian	23.3
	Others	2.6
Sexual Orientation	H Heterosexual	100
Relationship Experience	Never	34.9
	Ever	65.1
Relationship Status	Only Past	29.9
	Only Current	19.5
	Past & current	15.7
Number of Past Relationships	1	26.5
	2	11.3
	3 or more	9
Duration of Current Romantic Relationship (years)	<1	14.8
	1-2	7.8
	≥3	11.6

With respect to EMS, the group belonging to being ever in a relationship had higher scores on schemas of insufficient self-control and admiration seeking compared to those who were never in any relationship.

Table 2: Difference in means of EMS across two Relationship experience groups, age and gender

Maladaptive Schema	Relationship Status	Mean (SD)	t	Age	Mean (SD)	t#
Emotional Deprivation	Never	2.57 (1.17)	1.0	18-24	2.65 (1.18)	4.95
	Ever (n=120)	2.44 (1.15)		25-30	2.04 (0.95)	
Abandonment	Never	2.68 (1.00)	-1.02	18-24	2.94 (1.05)	5.72
	Ever	2.80 (1.11)		25-30	2.24 (0.94)	
Mistrust	Never	2.60 (1.02)	-0.2	18-24	2.83 (1.05)	7.26
	Ever	2.62 (1.08)		25-30	2.03 (0.84)	
Social Isolation/ Alienation	Never	2.43 (1.02)	-1.24	18-24	2.69 (1.04)	5.75
	Ever	2.57 (1.03)		25-30	2.07 (0.82)	
Defectiveness /Shame	Never	2.09 (0.97)	-0.24	18-24	2.25 (0.99)	5.10
	Ever	2.12 (0.98)		25-30	1.72 (0.80)	
Failure to Achieve	Never	2.36 (0.90)	-1.68	18-24	2.66 (0.98)	5.76
	Ever	2.54 (1.06)		25-30	1.98 (0.91)	
Practical Incompetence/ Dependence	Never	2.30 (0.85)	-1.04	18-24	2.56 (0.94)	6.77
	Ever	2.40 (1.01)		25-30	1.82 (0.78)	
Vulnerability to harm or Illness	Never	2.24 (0.84)	-1.73	18-24	2.61 (0.98)	9.19
	Ever	2.43 (1.08)		25-30	1.69 (0.75)	
Enmeshment	Never	2.39 (0.87)	-0.75	18-24	2.66 (0.89)	7.91
	Ever	2.46 (0.98)		25-30	1.82 (0.82)	
Subjugation	Never	2.52 (0.87)	-1.19	18-24	2.80 (0.94)	7.29
	Ever	2.65 (0.99)		25-30	2.07 (0.76)	
Self-Sacrifice	Never	3.33 (1.07)	-0.27	18-24	3.47 (1.05)	3.41
	Ever	3.36 (1.01)		25-30	3.04 (0.93)	
Emotional Inhibition	Never	2.96 (0.93)	0.44	18-24	3.12 (0.98)	6.09
	Ever	2.91 (1.04)		25-30	2.41 (0.89)	
Unrelenting Standards	Never	3.57 (1.00)	1.60	18-24	3.64 (0.91)	5.92
	Ever	3.40 (0.95)		25-30	2.97 (0.95)	
Entitlement /Superiority	Never	3.07 (1.00)	-1.13	18-24	3.33 (0.96)	5.81
	Ever	3.19 (0.97)		25-30	2.66 (0.86)	
Insufficient Self Control	Never	2.90 (0.92)	-3.26**	18-24	3.21 (0.96)	2.57

/ Self Discipline	Ever	3.26 (0.98)	25-30	2.91 (0.97)		
Admiration/ Recognition Seeking	Never	2.81 (1.00)	-2.11* 18-24	3.15 (1.01)	5.47	
	Ever	3.06 (1.05)	25-30	2.48 (0.96)		
Pessimism/ Worry	Never	2.92 (0.97)	0.45 18-24	3.20 (1.04)	9.33	
	Ever	2.97 (1.09)	25-30	2.26 (0.74)		
Self Punitiveness	Never	3.00 (0.92)	-0.38 18-24	3.19 (0.96)	5.29	
	Ever	3.04 (1.02)	25-30	2.58 (0.92)		
YSQ total	Never	2.71 (0.64)	-0.74 18-24	2.94 (0.66)	8.55	
	Ever	2.79 (0.74)	25-30	2.27 (0.61)		

** p=0.001, *p=0.03; # all values significant at 0.01

RESULTS

The mean age of the sample was 21.9 (±3.23) years; majority belonged to the age group 18- 24 years. There were more female participants than male participants and the majority were pursuing their graduation level education. About half of the sample identified with Hinduism as their religion. Further with regard to experience with intimate relationships, 35% of the sample had never been in a relationship (the majority were in the 18-24 age range with a mean age of 20.26yrs) and 65% have been in a romantic relationship at least once. Among those who have been in a relationship majority only had past relationships.

Comparison of scores on EMS domains across 4 relationship status (never, only past, only current, past and current) shows that there was significant difference on the domain Emotional Deprivation (F=8.22; p=0.001), Practical Incompetence/ Dependence (F=3.38; p=0.01), Subjugation (F=3.29; p=0.02), Insufficient Self control/Self discipline (F=3.64; p=0.01). Post Hoc analysis indicated that the group having relationship in the past only had a significantly higher score on the schema of Emotional Deprivation compared to those belonging to the group of only current relationship (Mean Difference = 0.52; p = 0.02) and the group past and current relationship (Mean Difference = 0.88; p =0.001). Also, those belonging to the group of never having a relationship had significantly higher mean score in Emotional Deprivation than those belonging to Past and Current Relationship group (Mean Difference = 0.64; p=0.001).

The mean scores on the schema Practical Incompetence and Dependence were higher for the group with Only Current Relationship than the group with Past and Current relationship (Mean Difference = -0.51; p =0.02). On the schema Subjugation, the mean score of the group Only Past had significantly higher mean than the group Both Past and Current Relationships (Mean Difference = 0.40; p =0.01). On the schema Insufficient self control/ self discipline domain the mean score of group Only Past Relationship was significantly higher than the Never in a relationship group (Mean Difference = 0.37; p = 0.02). Comparison of maladaptive schemas across the two age groups shows that

the difference in means is significant across all domains wherein the younger age group had higher scores on all early maladaptive schema domains than the older age groups.

Table 3: Difference in means of Differentiation of Self and Future Time Orientation in Romantic Relationships across Relationship status, and age

Differentiation of self	Relationship Status	Mean (SD)	t	Age	Mean (SD)	t-score
Emotional Reactivity	Never (n=120)	3.69 (0.79)	3.52***	18-24 (n= 252)	3.39 (0.88)	-2.61**
	Ever (n=224)	3.34 (0.93)		25-30 (n = 92)	3.67 (0.91)	
I Position	Never	3.90 (0.82)	0.20	18-24	3.88 (0.72)	-0.61
	Ever	3.89 (0.72)		25-30	3.94 (0.84)	
Emotional Cutoff	Never	4.04 (0.76)	-0.68	18-24	3.98 (0.73)	-4.16***
	Ever	4.10 (0.76)		25-30	4.36 (0.78)	
Fusion with Others	Never	3.49 (0.73)	0.35	18-24	3.38 (0.75)	-3.41***
	Ever	3.46 (0.78)		25-30	3.69 (0.76)	
DoS Total	Never	3.81 (0.55)	2.789***	18-24	3.71 (0.53)	0.033
	Ever	3.65 (0.48)		25-30	3.71 (0.46)	
Future time orientation in romantic relationships	Never	2.77 (0.49)	-0.682	18-24	2.81 (0.48)	-0.18
	Ever	2.82 (0.48)		25-30	2.82 (0.48)	

** p=0.01, *p=0.05; *** p=0.001

Analysis of gender differences indicated a significant difference on the total score of YSQ such that males have a higher mean score than females (Mean difference = 0.20, p < 0.01). Further, significantly higher mean scores were observed in males on the domains of Emotional Deprivation (Mean difference = 0.43, p < 0.001), Abandonment (Mean difference = 0.23, p < 0.05), Mistrust (Mean difference = 0.24, p < 0.05), Defectiveness/ Shame (Mean difference = 0.26, p < 0.05), Expectations about self and environment, Incompetence/ Dependence (Mean difference = 0.26, p < 0.05), Enmeshment (Mean difference = 0.21, p < 0.05), Emotional Inhibition (Mean difference = 0.24, p < 0.05) and Unrelenting Standards (Mean difference = 0.29, p < 0.01).

On differentiation of self across relationship status it was found that mean scores of the group who have never been in a relationship was significantly higher on the domain of Emotional reactivity and Differentiation of Self Total Score. The Post hoc analysis revealed that there was a

significant difference in the four relationship subgroups on the scale of Emotional Reactivity ($F=4.24, p=.006$). The mean scores of only current relationship group was significantly lower than Only Past Relationship group (Mean Difference = $-0.52; p < 0.05$). Further, it was found that the Past & Current relationship group has significantly lower mean score than group Never been in a relationship (Mean Difference = $-0.64; p < 0.05$) and also group Only Past relationship (Mean Difference = $-0.88; p < 0.001$). Further, DoS total was also found to be significantly different ($F=3.86, p=0.01$) between group Never and the group Only Past ($P=0.03$) and Only Current ($p = 0.04$) relationships.

Table 4: Correlation between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Differentiation of Self

	ER	IP	EC	FO	DOSFULL
Emotional Deprivation	-.310(**)	-.111(*)	-.399(**)	-.250(**)	-.303(**)
Abandonment	-.516(**)	-.127(*)	-.420(**)	-.446(**)	-.479(**)
Mistrust	-.454(**)	-0.051	-.440(**)	-.334(**)	-.401(**)
Social Isolation/ Alienation	-.454(**)	-0.034	-.416(**)	-.316(**)	-.381(**)
Defectiveness/ Shame	-.345(**)	-.197(**)	-.453(**)	-.308(**)	-.405(**)
Failure to Achieve	-.421(**)	-.161(**)	-.388(**)	-.379(**)	-.458(**)
Practical Incompetence/ Dependence	-.319(**)	-.220(**)	-.372(**)	-.340(**)	-.365(**)
Vulnerability to harm or illness	-.342(**)	-.153(**)	-.367(**)	-.318(**)	-.367(**)
Enmeshment	-.308(**)	-.131(*)	-.383(**)	-.368(**)	-.365(**)
Subjugation	-.431(**)	-.166(**)	-.461(**)	-.405(**)	-.410(**)
Self-Sacrifice	-.259(**)	.173(**)	-.181(**)	-.248(**)	-.173(**)
Emotional Inhibition	-.331(**)	-0.027	-.431(**)	-.356(**)	-.374(**)
Unrelenting Standards	-.291(**)	.168(**)	-.249(**)	-.319(**)	-.201(**)
Entitlement/Superiority	-.375(**)	.137(*)	-.351(**)	-.311(**)	-.289(**)
Insufficient Self Control/ Self Discipline	-.354(**)	0.046	-.304(**)	-.329(**)	-.295(**)
Admiration/Recognition Seeking	-.466(**)	-0.048	-.363(**)	-.438(**)	-.425(**)
Pessimism/Worry	-.455(**)	-0.042	-.399(**)	-.457(**)	-.420(**)
Self Punitiveness	-.392(**)	0.006	-.332(**)	-.372(**)	-.342(**)
Young Schema Questionnaire	-.540(**)	-0.071	-.536(**)	-.501(**)	-.491(**)

* $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

Comparison of DoS across the two age groups shows that the difference in means is significant on the subscales emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff and fusion with others. The results suggest higher scores in the group of 25-30 years as compared to the age group 18-24 years. Gender

differences across DoS were examined using Levene’s test for equality of variance. There were no significant differences on any of the subscales.

The FTORR across the relationships status ($F=0.89; p=0.44$), age and gender (mean difference-0.02; $p=0.65$) groups were not significantly different.

ER, EC and FO are significantly negatively correlated with all the subscales of YSQS3 indicating that lower maladaptive schema is related to greater differentiation on these domains. The correlation values range between 0.25 and 0.54 suggesting a moderate correlation. The subscale of I position had a positive correlation with subscales of Self-Sacrifice, Unrelenting Standards and Entitlement/Superiority and had a negative correlation with all other subscales suggesting that lower scores on these maladaptive schemas are related to higher scores on I position, therefore, greater differentiation.

Logistic regression was carried out to determine the predictors of FTORR. The variables used in the model included various demographic details such as age, gender, and number of past relationships. Further, YSQ and DSI total scale means were used as predictors. The results indicate only a 13.3% variation when regression was done through Enter method.

DISCUSSION

The sample was largely drawn from undergraduate colleges thus majority were in the age range of 18-24 years and most of them were involved in romantic relationship which is in accordance with the current scenario of romantic relationships in young adults of India (Alexander et al., 2007; Varma & Mathur, 2015). The formation of a romantic relationship may be related to how an individual perceives self (self-schemas) and who they perceive themselves to be capable of being with (Robinson & Cameron, 2012). From this perspective the data obtained in the study was analyzed to assess differences in maladaptive schemas between participants who have never been a relationship and those who did (Table 2). The findings suggest that the participants who have ever been in a relationship have higher EMS of insufficient self- control/ self-discipline than those who have never been in a relationship. This probably suggests that the group with the experience of being in a romantic relationship has a higher tendency towards inability to exercise sufficient self-control, self-discipline and tolerate frustration for achieving personal goals. Further, they face more difficulty in postponing immediate gratification, tend to have greater difficulty in establishing control of emotions and experience boredom of tasks sooner. More specifically, within this group, the maladaptive schema was higher for the participants with only past relationship as compared to the group that has never been in a relationship. Further, the group with romantic relationship experience also has a higher schema of need for Admiration/Recognition Seeking suggesting that this group also placed importance on obtaining recognition and acceptance from others. They may express higher rejection sensitivity as well (Young, 1998). The findings seem to indicate activation of maladaptive schemas upon close interaction with the partner, and a tendency to lose control over limits in the

relationship as well as become more approval seeking (Astaneh et al., 2013). It may be possible that the schemas of admiration seeking, need for gratification and poor frustration tolerance get activated in romantic relationships.

A further analysis across four relationship statuses reflected that the schema of Emotional

Deprivation has been represented differently across relationship statuses. Emotional Deprivation is higher for those having only past relationships than for those who are currently in a romantic relationship or have both past and current relationships. Also, it is higher in the group who has never had a relationship experience as compared to those who have both past and current relationships. The findings indicate that the presence of a relationship during the time of the study may be acting as a moderator for the schema, as presence of a partner could fulfil the wishes of nurturance, empathy, guidance and protection which otherwise may not be present in the groups with no relationship or the ones with only previous experiences. Through the Convoy Model of Social Relations, Antonucci et al. (2004) suggested that turning to young adulthood, brought about changing pattern of relationships wherein spouse or romantic partner gained excessive relevance in terms of support, much more than peers and family as was visible in childhood or adolescence. Absence of a romantic relationship could mean deprivation of emotional support. Further, the schema of Subjugation was also found to be higher for the group with only past relationships as compared to the group with both past & current relationships. This suggests that people with only past experiences in relationships have a higher tendency towards schemas of surrendering of control to others and increased worry of negative consequences. They may also exhibit the tendency to suppress their needs or emotions with the assumption that they shall be discounted, ignored or criticized. Workings of such schema could possibly be indicative of low interpersonal satisfaction increasing chances for a break-up (Paim & Falcke, 2012). The schema of Practical Incompetence and Dependence was found to be higher in the group with only current relationship as compared to the group with both past and current relationship. This could indicate that young people while in relationship may find it difficult to handle everyday responsibilities thus may feel the need to depend on others.

Comparison across age groups clearly suggests that maladaptive schemas are consistently higher for the age group of 18- 24 years as compared older age group. The finding indicates a contradiction to the theoretical conjecture of maladaptive schemas that they are stable constructs (Young et al., 2003). Both the groups were comparable on marital status, relationship experiences and employment status. Therefore, these life events may not be the factors moderating maladaptive schemas. Other possible reasons could be that most of the higher age group participants were those who were pursuing higher education and experienced higher stability in terms of their life goals, would have had greater learning and exposure to new experiences and personal development as compared to students from under-graduation. Schemas, therefore, may undergo change as the individual progresses in age as a

result of varying life experiences. Further, life experiences need not necessarily activate maladaptive schemas but can instead help translate them in a positive direction as well.

With regards to gender differences, males were found to have greater maladaptive schemas which reflected higher maladaptive schemas of disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance and overvigilance and inhibition. The findings indicate that men tend to have negative self-concept/insecurity, greater needs for dependence and fear of rejection. They have a tendency towards overvigilance of their own behaviors for the fear of losing relationships. Further, men are more likely to have an excessive emotional involvement with their romantic partner/ family. As a result, full individuation may not occur thus resulting in an inability to fulfil the emotional needs of the partner (Young, 1998). As supporting evidence, research suggests that men, irrespective of whether they are in a relationship or not, base their self-esteem on relationship standing more than women, meaning, that relationships can serve as a source of social standing (Kwang et al., 2013). Felmlee (1997) indicated that men tend to express less emotional involvement and vulnerability in relationships. However, the finding was linked with the need for men to exert greater power in the relationship by being more emotionally distant. The findings may also be corroborated by the cultural context such as patriarchal set up in India, men are largely discouraged from emotional expression perceiving that as a sign of feminine characteristics and are rather encouraged to keep up a restrained exterior that is unfazed in the face of turmoil (Banerjee, 2005). Inadequate expression of emotions could be a contributor to the development of such maladaptive schemas.

In the current study, the group who has never been in a relationship indicated low emotional reactivity in comparison to those who have been in a relationship. Further, the differentiation in the group with no relationship is better than the group with only past and only current relationship. Skowron and Friedlander (1998) also suggested that persons in a relationship have higher emotional reactivity and thus they react to the emotionality of others. The research also shows that individuals with greater emotional reactivity show more aggression and insensitivity in relationships (Skowron et al., 2009).

Further, age also showed an impact on DoS such that persons in the higher age group of 25- 30 years had higher scores on ER, EC and FO thereby indicating greater differentiation in comparison to the age group 18-24 years. Skowron and Friedlander (1998) also indicated that greater differentiation occurs as age and life experiences increase. Thus, lower maladaptive schemas in the 25-30 age group could be attributed to higher DoS noted in this group. This difference could be attributed to higher differentiation of self noted in the former age group. In the current study, no gender differences were noted on differentiation levels exhibiting inconsistency with available literature. Kosek, (1998) reported that women tend to express their state of emotionality through emotional reactivity whereas men utilized disengagement from partners.

A moderate correlation was found between EMS and DoS (Table 4). Persons with lower maladaptive schemas have greater differentiation on emotional reactivity, emotional cut off and fusion with others. It was found that individuals with schemas of Self- Sacrifice, Unrelenting Standards and Entitlement/ Superiority schemas had a higher tendency to adopt 'I' position in relationships. Further, persons with schemas of emotional deprivation, abandonment, defectiveness, failure to achieve, dependence, vulnerability to harm or illness, enmeshment and subjugation had lower differentiation due to difficulty in adopting 'I' position in relationships. Thereby, it indicates that individuals with low maladaptive schemas have higher differentiation such that they are able to develop a better balance of emotional and intellectual functioning as well as closeness and freedom in relationships (Bowen, 1978).

The finding is congruence with that of Langroudia et al. (2011) who also reported a negative association between aspects of self (emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off and fusion with others) with early maladaptive schemas and a positive association between I-position and EMS. According to Young (1998), persons with these schemas are because of their incorrect interpretation of others behaviours withdraw from close relationships. They often harbour conflict between intimacy with others and getting away from others. This finding is consistent with both of Young's and Bowen's theory (Langroudia et al., 2011). Lal and Bartle-Haring (2011) reported that partners' differentiation of self predicted partners' relationship satisfaction; which in turn predicts partner supportive behavior. Similarly, Dumitrescu (2012) suggested that decreased level of EMS predicts an increased level of couple satisfaction and individual mate value. Yoosefi et al (2010) highlighted the role of EMSs in relationships such that less differentiated young individuals experience more severe and a range of interpersonal problems with time.

Future orientation can be understood as a cognitive schema that allows structuring of future events in time and causation (Öner, 2001). Links have been found between future orientation and one's maturation, life experiences and cultural factors (Trommsdorff, 1983). In the current research, FTORR was studied in relation to EMS, and DoS. No significant difference across relationship experience, relationship status, age and gender was found in terms of FTORR. Further, the overall orientation appeared to be high suggesting that the participant group overall suggesting desire for longevity in relationships. The findings, however, appear to be inconclusive and require further evaluation (Table 3). In research by Öner (2001), reported that less satisfied individuals had significantly higher FTORR regarding romantic relationships, indicating that excessive worry over the future of a romantic relationship might result in more dissatisfaction. Gender differences have also been noted in FTORR such that women were more future-oriented in their ongoing romantic relationships than men (Öner, 2001; Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003). Weak predictors of future time orientation in romantic relationships were identified in the current study. This result is contrary to the previous research findings (Öner, 2001; Sakalli-Ugurlu, 2003) wherein partner selection, experience of jealousy, and

eagerness to break-up predicted FTORR. This particular construct needs further exploration in order to understand the cultural context.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study has implications as it is one of the first endeavors to explore the subject of romantic relationships in an unmarried population in the Indian context. The sample selected for the study belongs to a wider age range as compared to other studies. Further, the large sample in the study allows making safe conclusions. The study explores EMSs and differentiation in relationship with each other and the findings reveal that the two are in fact related and have implications upon the interpersonal functioning of individuals. The study also initiated research in the area of future time orientation in romantic relationships in the Indian context. Being mindful of the limitations can assist future research in this domain. Including participants from both urban and rural settings and varying educational statuses could increase applicability beyond urban educated youth. Further, demographic data available in terms of education, religion, relationship with parents, siblings and childhood experiences has not been utilized sufficiently in the analysis. The inconclusive findings in the domain of future time orientation in romantic relationships prompt the need for further examination.

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