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ROLE OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS AND ATTACHMENT STYLES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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Content

INTRODUCTION

Intimate relationship lies at the core of human existence. To a large extend, the quality of that relationship defines the quality of one's life. The subjective experiences of closeness and connectedness with the romantic partner give rise to such highly valued benefits as mutual trust and validation, empathy, and acceptance. Research evidence aboundly demonstrates that couple intimacy is a significant contributing factor in positive relationship outcomes. Partners who report high levels of Intimate relationship satisfaction tend to maintain long-term, stable relationships. Conversely, Intimate relationship dissatisfaction is one of the main reasons for relationship dissolution.

In the process of the relationship, when partners experience conflicting preferences, goals or motives, conflict can arise. How to communicate while resolving disagreements is often identified as an important problem within couples. Managing and resolving conflict is difficult, and can itself be a significant source of stress. Identifying what constitutes effective communication during conflict is thus critical to help couples resolve problems and sustain their relationships. Even the most satisfying relationship can be put at risk by unresolved conflicts and the stress associated with them.

Common sources of conflict comprise discrepancies in equity and power, financial difficulties, unmet expectations, unacceptable habits, parenting, domestic and family responsibilities, jealousy etc. Despite decades of investigations, research on what constitutes satisfactory conflict resolution in intimate relationships has failed to provide a definitive answer.

One avenue for studying the conflict resolution in adult relationships is the association with the attachment styles. Numerous studies show that mainly anxious and avoidant attachment styles play a significant role in conflict resolution (Shi, 2003). On the other hand, the secure attachment plays a bigger role when it comes to relationship satisfaction (Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995; Roberts, 2000). Conflict resolution is an important concept of interest in terms of marital therapy and it focuses on communication

strategies and expression (Epstein, Baucom, & Rankin, 1993; Fowers, 1998). Research in the past two decades have shown the significance of attachment to both conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000; Feeney, 1999).

Other authors have focused on associations of the early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction (Khosravi, Saif & Banoo, 2007). The maladaptive schemas refer to tendencies and traits developed very early in life, as such, they are expected to form specific behaviors, which, in turn, influence the relationship satisfaction.

Another possible actor in the conflict resution within intimate couples, it seems, is the emotional expressivity. It has not been tested as a variable in the problematic interactions among attachment, schemas, conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction and the intension of the current work is to fill this gap.

Meanwhile, unpredictable events such as the pandemic of Coronavirus made the topic even more important and acute when couples were lockdowned together for a prolonged periods of time. Such conditions brought more conflict into couples' life and tested to the limits the strength of their relationships. (As a side effect, this situation aided data collection as social activity was minimized and this made people more willing to fill out questionnaires.)

Some of the above effects have been investigated in different countries and, to some extend, in the Bulgarian cultural framework (Petrov, 2011). However, these effects have not been studied in depth within the Bulgarian population. Driven by the necessity to fill this void, a new approach has been designed in the current work.

The mission of this investigation is answering the following questions:

1. *What role do attachment styles play in the way we communicate and relate to intimate partners?*
2. *What strategies do people use when dealing with conflicts on an interpersonal level?*

3. *Are there schemas (personality traits) that explain tendencies in our behavior in connection with relationship satisfaction?*
4. *Does emotional expressivity play a role, and does it modulate human relationships?*
5. *What is the effect of all the above when it comes to romantic satisfaction?*

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

Chapter 1. Attachment Styles

The work of John Bowlby strongly influences recent attempts to understand close adult relationships from attachment point of view. In his fundamental three volumes work "Attachment and loss" (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980), Bowlby explores the processes through which attachment is established. He mainly describes how children set up an emotional attachment to their primary caregivers and the anxiety they feel when separated. Bowlby is convinced that children need a close and ongoing relationship with a primary caregiver to develop emotionally. He stated that existing psychological theories at the time were inadequate to explain the intense attachment of infants and children to their caregivers and their drastic responses to separation (Bretherton, 1992). To build his theory, Bowlby draws concepts from many sources, including ethology, psychoanalysis, and systems theory. His theory is also based on a wide range of observations of children with disorders and adjustment difficulties in clinical and institutional settings. Most are infants and children separated from their primary caregivers for periods of variable duration and non-human primate mothers and their offspring. The theoretical formulation provides a detailed explanation of the development, function, and maintenance of attachment behavior. The attachment principles that Bowlby describes have made a vast theoretical contribution to understanding child development. Based on the work of Bowlby and his colleagues and students, revolutionary changes in the care of institutionalized children have been made. They have radically transformed hospital practices to minimize separation between parents and children. For example, mothers are encouraged to spend as much time as possible with their hospitalized children and to provide them with primary care. They have also significantly changed events surrounding the birth of children, parents being present at births and being able both the father and the newborn's siblings to interact with the mother and the newborn when they are at the hospital.

Furthermore, Bowlby's work has clear implications for those who study loss, grief, and bereavement and, in general, for parental behavior and child care practices. Bowlby's main contribution was recognizing the evolutionary need for attachment in the child concerning their caregiver, a need of a biological nature. Bowlby understood that the primary character of attachment as a motivational system is rooted in the infant's absolute need to maintain physical proximity to the caregiver, not only for their survival but for emotional security. In the natural environment to which our human ancestors had to adapt, a host of predators and other deadly threats made it extremely unlikely that a young child separated from protective figures could survive several minutes, let alone hours (Main, Hesse, and Kaplan, 2005). The attachment system is seen as an important component of human genetic programming as feeding and mating (Bowlby, 1969). This set of innate and instinctive responses to threat and insecurity is manifested in three types of behavior, which are:

1. Seeking, tracking, and maintaining proximity to a protective attachment figure—or one chosen from a small hierarchy of attachment figures—which is usually, but not always, a family member. Although it might seem that whomever the child associates with most (mother, father, or other caregivers) should be at the top of the attachment hierarchy, this favored place is usually reserved for the mother, regardless of the degree of attachment. Crying, clinging, calling to the attachment figure(s), or crawling up to the attachment figure is all part of the biologically integrated repertoire for establishing proximity and a safety zone.

2. Using the attachment figure as a "secure base" from which unfamiliar circumstances and experiences can be explored (Ainsworth, 1963). When the child has an attachment figure within reach as a secure base that provides protection and support when needed, it often feels free to explore. In contrast, exploration abruptly ceases when the attachment figure is temporarily absent.

3. Search for an attachment figure as a shelter in situations of danger and moments of alarm. In familiar with other ground-dwelling primates but unlike many other species, threatened humans do not seek safety in one place but in the company of a person considered stronger or wiser. Internal and external threats to the child's survival, such as darkness, loud noises, unfamiliar surroundings, and current or impending separation from the mother, may trigger proximity seeking, the hallmark of attachment behavior.

While physical proximity was the "goal" of attachment when Bowlby began developing his theory, the idea has been elaborated on and refined. Bowlby began to realize that physical proximity, crucial in itself, is also a symbol of the reassuring availability of the caregiver. From this perspective, the purpose of attachment behavior is not only protection from present danger but also the tranquility associated with the continued availability of the caregiver. Moreover, since the caregiver could be both physically accessible and emotionally absent, Bowlby defined the attachment figure's availability as a matter not only of accessibility but also of emotional responsiveness. To this broader conception, he added the internal dimension of attachment, arguing that the child's assessment of the caregiver's availability was crucial. Along the same lines, Sroufe and Waters (1977a) argue that the primary goal of the attachment system is not distance regulation but a feeling of security.

Although Bowlby initially focused on the behavior of young children, he came to see manifestations of the biological need for attachment as significant throughout life. This belief is corroborated by statistical data and everyday experience also part of this study. Actual data demonstrate that individuals who live with a partner or have close friends live longer than those who are isolated. Data from universal experience confirms that in times of threat, we reach out to people in our immediate environment. The logic shows that the more extreme the threat, the stronger the desire for connection, often through close bodily contact. That physical closeness, essential to the young child's survival, can be felt as an emotional need in later childhood and adulthood. Bowlby (1973) considers the attachment system an evolution resulting from natural selection and believes that the processes that make up this system are universal in human nature. As a complement to this normative

view of attachment behavior, the author also respects individual differences, as we can see from the following fundamental propositions of his attachment theory.

Central to these fundamental propositions is the role of the individual's expectations of attachment figures. Expectations about attachment figures' availability and responsiveness are believed to be incorporated into the internal models of attachment functioning. Attachment patterns reflect memories and beliefs that originate in early experiences of caring for the individual and are transferred to their new relationships, in which they play an active role in guiding perceptions and behavior. Expectations regarding caregiver availability and responsiveness depend on two variables: on whether the attachment person is judged to be the type of a person who usually responds to requests for support and protection, and if they judge themselves to be the kind of a person who is likely to immerse in helping behaviors. These two variables (models of the “other” and models of the “self”) are logically independent; since both leave actual interpersonal transactions, although they tend to be complementary and mutually confirming (Bowlby, 1973). Models of the self and patterns of social interaction are often developed in the context of relatively stable family environments, and they tend to persist throughout life. Since these models exert a continued influence on behavior, attachment patterns are thought to show considerable stability over time.

Ainsworth conducted the first detailed studies of individual differences in attachment. He conducted naturalistic observations of mother-infant interactions in Uganda and Baltimore, Maryland; each project involved intensive longitudinal data collection during a series of home visits. Based on these observations, Ainsworth and colleagues (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978) suggest that organized infant behavior patterns can be used to identify child-mother attachment styles. These styles are outlined as an insecure-avoidant attachment, secure attachment, and resistant or anxious-ambivalent insecure attachment. The child behavior patterns that define these three styles are systematically related to the amount of interaction between the mother and the child and the mother's sensitivity and receptivity to the signals and needs of the child. Ainsworth

et al. (1978) developed a laboratory procedure to assess attachment style based on the child's reactions to separations and meetings with their mother and a friendly stranger. They developed the “strange situation technique” to generate stress levels mild but increasingly intense in the child so that consequent changes in the child's behavior toward the attachment figure could be observed. The strange situation technique has been used extensively to assess children's attachment style and study the relationship between early attachment behavior and socio-emotional development. It is important to remember that the “strange situation technique” focuses on the child's behavior toward the primary caregiver when the child is distressed by the caretaker's departure and the stranger's approach. According to attachment theory, attachment styles reflect the norms that determine our responses to situations that upset us emotionally; namely, attachment theory can be described as a theory of affect regulation (Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Secure attachment is believed to reflect norms that allow the individual to recognize that they are distressed and turn to others for comfort and support. Avoidant attachment reflects norms that restrict the desire to acknowledge the distress and seek support. The anxious-ambivalent attachment is marked by hypersensitivity toward negative emotions and intensified expressions of distress.

It should be noted that some revisions to this tripartite classification have been proposed. More refined categories have been designed by observing considerable differences in attachment behavior within each group. In particular, researchers have identified four subgroups within the safe category based on differences in anxiety qualities of separation (Belsky & Rovine, 1987). Furthermore, researchers have often been unable to classify all children within the three attachment categories outlined by Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978). For this reason, researchers have proposed a fourth group (the disorganized-disoriented category of insecure attachment; Main & Solomon, 1986). This group tends to show contradictory approach behaviors (for example, they approach the attachment figure with their heads facing away), confusion or apprehension in response to the approach of the attachment figure and moody or depressed affect. According to

Bowlby, the child tends to establish an attachment relationship with a particular figure, usually the mother. Despite the importance of the mother-child bond, Bowlby (1984) recognizes that a human infant can and often does establish attachment relationships with more than one figure (Ainsworth, 1979). Bowlby argues that most children have multiple attachment figures around 9 or 10 months of age. However, they maintain that the primary caregiver becomes the primary attachment person, and in which it is preferred as a safe zone in times of distress. Other figures occupy a secondary and complementary place to the main one, parents and siblings the most common. This formulation implies the existence of a hierarchy in attachment figures. Consistent with this formulation, the data suggest that childhood attachment representations are related to attachment classification.

1.2 Differences between the Attachment Styles

All in all, the attachment styles are grouped with the following characteristics:

1. *Secure attachment style*

Secure babies access the urge to explore when they feel safe and seek comfort in bonding when they feel threatened. Ainsworth had concluded that infantile reactions to a reunion, rather than separation, revealed attachment security or insecurity. Secure infants—no matter how distressed the separation might be—immediately calmed down on re-establishing contact with the mother and soon returned to play. This kind of flexibility and resiliency was interpreted as coming from interaction with a sensitive mother who was receptive to the infant's cues and communications. The mothers of safe children usually rushed to pick them up when they cried and hugged them tenderly and lovingly, but only for as long as the child wanted. These same mothers reconciled their rhythm with the babies instead of imposing their program on them. In a way that was apparently "good enough," these mothers' behavior tended to reflect sensitivity rather than maladjustment, acceptance rather than rejection, collaboration rather than control, and emotional availability before remoteness (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

2. Avoidant attachment style

Anxious babies can appear complacent since the strange situation procedure exposes them to an inherently alarming environment. The apparent lack of distress can be mistaken for calm in their relentless exploration and indifference to the mother's return or departure. The heart rate during separation episodes is as high as that of visibly distressed children and, on the other hand, the increase in the level of cortisol (the primary stress hormone) before and after the procedure is significantly more significant than that of safe children (Sroufe and Waters, 1977b; Spangler and Grossmann, 1993). Ainsworth went on to postulate that the apparent indifference of the avoidant infant and the almost total absence of attachment behavior reflected a defensive accommodation similar to the detachment observed by Bowlby in two- and three-year-olds who had suffered prolonged separation from their parents. It was as if these elusive babies, like older children traumatized by separation and loss, had concluded that their openness to comfort and care was useless and had therefore given it up. Ainsworth found that mothers of infants rated as avoidant had actively rejected attachment attempts (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Other researchers would later observe that this type of mother withdraws when the children are sad (Grossmann and Grossmann, 1991). Inhibition of emotional expression, aversion to physical contact, and roughness were hallmarks of motherhood that produced avoidant infants, infants who remained limp when picked up rather than curling up or clinging (Main & Weston, 1982).

3. Ambivalent/Anxious attachment style

Ainsworth identified in his research two types of ambivalent children: those who were angry and those who were passive. Both were too preoccupied with the mother's location to explore the environment freely and reacted to the separation with overwhelming anguish, so it was necessary to interrupt such episodes frequently. After the reunion, children described as angry ranged between active openness to contact with the mother and expressions of rejection, manifested to varying degrees, from avoidance of the

mother's embrace to extreme tantrums. In contrast, children classified as passive seemed likely to show only tenuous attempts at comfort, sometimes implicit, as if they were so overcome with helplessness and suffering that they could not approach the mother directly. Unfortunately, the reunion did not lessen the anguish of the ambivalent children or end their anxiety about locating their mother. It was as if they were searching for a mother who was not there, even in her presence.

4. Disorganized attachment style

Disorganized attachment occurs when the attachment figure is perceived as the safe haven and the source of danger. That is when the child—preprogrammed to turn to parents in moments of alarm—is divided between the contradictory impulses of approach and avoidance. It is an untenable stance that offers no escape for the child from dependency on the parents. So it is unsurprising that the consequence of such a terrible "biological paradox" is disorganization and disorientation. Children's disorganization results not only from interactions with parents whose anger or abuse is manifestly frightening but also from interactions in which the child perceives the parents' fear. Specifically, disorganization can occur when the parent's fear arises in response to the child and when the parent reacts with physical withdrawal or a trance-like state. In sum, it is suggested that disorganized attachment may arise from the child's interaction with parents who are frightened, frightened, or dissociated. In contrast to the organized strategies of secure, avoidant, and ambivalent children, disorganized attachment is interpreted as a strategy breakdown by a child experiencing "insoluble fear" (Main & Hesse, 1992).

In differentiating between secure and insecure varieties, Ainsworth found that the quality of communication between child and caregiver was paramount in the attachment bond. In secure dyads, the child clearly expressed their need for comfort after the separation, the relief by their reassurance at the reunion, and their consequent readiness to resume play. It means that the mother accurately interprets the child's non-verbal cues (their approach with arms raised in tears, the adaptation to their body when the mother

held them in her arms, their eventual restlessness) and reacted accordingly (picking them up, holding them tenderly and letting them play). This sequence reflected a type of empathic communication characterized as collaborative and contingent. In insecure dyads, communication takes a very different turn. After separation, the avoidant children fail to express the intense distress revealed indirectly through rapid heart rate and increased cortisol levels. Also, they could not express their need for relief after the reunion. In short, the avoidant children inhibited almost all bonding communication. They expressed no desire for closeness and seemed oblivious to any affective overtures their mother displayed. An almost reverse situation occurs in ambivalent children, who amplify expressions of attachment. Almost from the beginning of the Ainsworth procedure, these children conveyed an unsettling concern about their mother's availability. Their anguish after the disappearance was extraordinarily acute, and the relief after the reunion was almost negligible. Ainsworth understood the various communication patterns in the Strange Situation as reflections of the infant's need to cultivate the best possible attachment to parents who exhibited particularly acute resistance and vulnerability. Mothers of secure infants are sensitive and responsive at home, with surprisingly erratic behavior depending on the infants. Thus, it is consistent for secure children to communicate their feelings and needs openly as if they assume that such communication evoked a corresponding response. The mothers of avoidant children reject attachment behavior at home. They are emotionally unavailable and uncomfortable with physical contact, and they tend to withdraw when the children are sad. It is not uncommon for children to react angrily to their mother's rejection. Thus, for these avoidant infants, inhibiting communication of attachment needs is an adaptive principle to avoid maternal rejection and anger that threatens to drive the mother away when the infant's needs are frustrated. The mothers of ambivalent children are not always receptive to their cues and display unpredictable emotional availability. This unpredictability seems to be a consequence of the mother's moods, which prevents her from adequately attuning to the child (Siegel, 1999). Given the unpredictable responsiveness of the mother, it is adaptive for ambivalent children to

communicate their attachment needs persistently and unequivocally as if the insistence guaranteed them the continuity of maternal care.

Ainsworth observed that ambivalent babies are born to mothers who were, at best, only unpredictably and occasionally available. Moreover, although these mothers never reject their infants verbally or physically (unlike the mothers of the avoidant infants), their receptivity to the infants' cues is likewise insensitive. Finally, the mothers of the ambivalent infants, subtly or more explicitly, interfere with the child's autonomy, which perhaps explains the exploratory inhibition that characterized these babies (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

The attachment patterns documented by Ainsworth (Ainsworth et al., 1978) and by subsequent researchers have raised questions regarding the origins of individual differences in attachment. They have suggested a series of factors that would influence the specific manifestations of attachment style: individual experience, genetic makeup, and cultural influences (Ainsworth, 1989). Of these three factors, attachment researchers have focused more intensity on the first two. That is, research on determinants of attachment quality has emphasized the mother's role and the child's temperament. Traditional attachment theory recognizes that the quality of the child-mother attachment depends on the biases that each of the parties brings to the relationship and the direct influence that each of them exerts on the other (Bowlby, 1984, p. 340). The theory states, however, that the role of the infant’s behavior in determining patterns of interaction is overshadowed by the caregiver’s behavior (Goldsmith & Alansky, 1987). This statement is reflected in Bowlby's (1984) emphasis on the role of early caregiving experiences. A large body of empirical evidence supports the relationship between attachment quality and variables related to the mother. Specifically, the attachment style has been related to various indices of care quality, such as receptivity to crying, frequency of feeding, receptivity, psychological accessibility, cooperation and acceptance of the mother (Ainsworth, 1979, 1982; Bates, Maslin & Frankel, 1985; Isabella, 1993; Peterson et al., 1990; Roggman, Langlois & Hubbs-Tait, 1987). The most recent research within this tradition has been expanding toward studying children's interactions with their parents and mothers. Cox, Owen, Henderson, and

Margand (1992) found that a measure of child-mother security at 12 months of age was related to the scores given by observers to the quality of the interaction mother-child at three months of age and with the interview measures of the time that mothers spent with their child at three months of age. In a similar way, son-father security is also related to the father's attitude toward his son and the parental role. These results support the relationship between caregiving behavior and attachment security. Nevertheless, not all studies that attempted to link attachment patterns with aspects of care behavior have found clear relationships between both variables (for example, Miyake, Chen & Campos, 1985). Recently, researchers have argued that testing the effect of maternal behavior on attachment quality requires a careful definition of the independent variable: measures of maternal behavior should emphasize the role of maternal responsiveness, as dictated by attachment principles (Isabella, Belsky & von Eye, 1989). Following this position, Isabella et al. (1989) developed a measure of interactional synchrony or satisfactory reciprocal and mutual exchanges between child and mother. The results confirm the association between interactional synchrony and attachment type and suggest that this association cannot be explained in terms of the child's temperament or behavior (Isabella & Belsky, 1991; Isabella et al, 1989). The influence of the caregiver's behavior on attachment quality has also been addressed by studies comparing the quality of the child's relationship with each of their parents. In terms of the rankings of attachment obtained from the "strange situation technique," a child might establish a secure attachment with one parent and an insecure attachment with the other (e.g., Main & Weston, 1981). This difference between attachment relationships with mother and father has been cited as evidence for the dominant role of caregiver behavior. Contrasting with the position of traditional attachment theorists, several investigations have proposed that individual differences in the quality of attachment have their origin in differences in the characteristics of the children (in addition to differences in the behavior of the caregiver, or instead of them). The effect of the child's temperament on attachment has been investigated using various operational definitions: emotionality, nervousness or "difficulty," irritability, level of activity, the tendency to anxiety, and sociability. The resulting empirical evidence is mixed; some researchers have

found evidence for the effects of infant temperament (Calkins & Fox, 1992; Miyake et al., 1985), while others have not found any (Egeland & Farber, 1984). In any case, most researchers who have studied this topic have received criticism of a methodological nature. First, many studies of the role of infant temperament have taken a simplistic approach, relying on correlations between scores on temperament measures and ratings of the attachment. This approach ignores the fact that infantile temperament could influence the attachment system in several ways: by exerting a direct effect on child-mother interaction; or, conversely, by indirectly affecting attachment behavior through its effects on child separation anxiety (Thompson, Connell & Bridges, 1988). Vaughn, Lefever, Seifer, and Barglow (1989) found a relationship between child temperament and child anxiety during episodes of separation from the strange situation. The role of the infant's temperament in predicting attachment might depend on the measure used to assess the attachment styles. Belsky and Rovine (1987) emphasize that attachment subgroups can be divided in several significant ways and that different classification methods may reveal different influences on attachment. Vaughn and colleagues (Vaughn et al., 1992) also suggest that measures of different attachment styles differ in their degree of coincidence with the measures of child temperament. Specifically, they find limitations in the relationship between the child's temperament and attachment evaluations.

Bowlby's attachment theory focuses on the bonds between infants and their caregivers. Despite this, as pointed out by adult attachment researchers, Bowlby argues that attachment plays a fundamental role throughout the life cycle and that Attachment behavior is a characteristic of human beings "from birth to death" (Bowlby, 1979, p. 129). Consistent with this view, Morris (1982) argues that because of the primacy and depth of the early attachment relationship between child and caregiver, this bond will likely serve as a prototype for later intimate relationships. Morris further points out the striking parallels between anxious attachment and poor choice of romantic partners, and dysfunctional marriage. The idea that attachment principles extend beyond childhood and early childhood also receives support from the theoretical works focused on the definition and description

of attachment relationships. Ainsworth (1989), for example, proposes criteria for defining attachment relationships throughout life. Specifically, he suggests that attachment relations are a particular type of affective bond; that is, they are ties of a relatively long duration characterized by the desire to maintain closeness with a partner who is seen as a unique individual not interchangeable with any other. Compared with other affective ties, the distinct features of attachment are that the individual obtains or seeks closeness in the relationship and, if he finds it, it awakens in him feelings of comfort and security.

It should be noted that the fundamental aspects of this analysis of attachment relationships are maintaining closeness and security felt, which is consistent with Bowlby's (1979) ideas about the goals of attachment behavior. Similarly, Weiss (1982, 1986, 1991) argues that traits central to child-mother attachment, as described by Bowlby (1979), suggest three criteria for attachment: first, the person's desire to be an attachment in childhood and later on with the attachment figure, especially when subjected to stressful conditions (proximity seeking); second, his or her obtaining comfort and security from the attachment figure (base safe); and third, his or her protest when the attachment figure is not available or threatens not to be (separation protest). Again, this discussion of attachment bonds draws directly on Bowlby's work. Weiss's description of proximity seeking includes the notion of safe heaven (with the person turning to the attachment figure in seeking comfort in times of anxiety), and researchers from the attachment often consider the characteristic protest of separation to be included within the broader proximity search tag. In his later work, Weiss (1991) identifies other fundamental properties of childhood attachments. These could be summarized as follows: threat elicitation (when children feel threatened, look to attachment figures as sources of security); the specificity of the attachment figure (once an attachment to a figure has been established in particular, the proximity of that figure provides a security that is not achievable with others); inaccessibility to conscious control (feelings of attachment do not go away even if the person is aware that the attachment figure is not available); persistence (attachment behavior is not habituated and persists even in the absence of reinforcement) and

insensitivity to the experience with the attachment figure (security is linked to proximity to the attachment figure, even if that figure is neglectful or abusive). Based on his analyzes of the criteria of attachment relationships, Ainsworth (1979) and Weiss (1991) conclude that it is valid to consider that some adult relationships are attachment relationships. Relationships between adults and their parents and between patients and therapists are likely to present the properties of attachment links; some friendships can work similarly (Weiss, 1991). Weiss especially points out that the criteria for attachment relationships are met in most relationships. Similarly, Ainsworth points to the relationship with a sexual partner as a primary example of adult attachment. These arguments are part of the foundations of empirical studies on adult attachment.

1.3 Attachment Styles and Romantic Relationships

It is of interest for the present research to explore the connection between attachment styles and romantic relationships. Infidelity in couple relationships has been the subject of many investigations. Statistics were demonstrated by the University of Talca study center in 2004 (CEOC, 2004). According to respondents, 53% acknowledged having been unfaithful on some occasions, and 74% indicated they believe that men are more unfaithful than women. In the same sense, in Western countries, the latest estimates of its frequency indicate that 60% of men and women have lived infidelity or are in that circumstance (Sarquis, 2002, p.10). From the point of view of the effects of infidelity, this can represent a learning experience for the couple, strengthening the relationship. However, in others, it can jeopardize the stability and quality, damaging the bond irreparably. Other authors, such as Rizzato & Villanustre, point out that infidelity and other couple problems represent 30% of the total consultations in psychotherapy, which propones a reflection and understanding of infidelity as a relational phenomenon, which implies the inclusion of both members of the couple. Therefore, it is necessary to have interpersonal theories that allow us to address this issue relationally. One of them is the

attachment theory formulated by John Bowlby, who recognizes the universal human need for an existential bond and a safe resort in moments of suffering or stress. Although initially, this theory was focused on the bond formed in early relationships, Hazan and Shaver (1987) applied it to couple love, arguing that the behavior of the adult in close relationships copies the model of the child-mother relationship. The theory has been modeled by mental representations whose origins lay in the child's relationships with the primary caregivers. These representations, called Internal Operant Models (IOM), are an internal system of expectations and beliefs about the self and others, which allow for predicting and interpreting the behavior of the figures of attachment. These models are integrated into a personality structure and provide a prototype for future social relations (Bowlby, 1979, cited in Martinez & Santelices, 2005). IOMs are articulated in the so-called attachment styles, which predict the emotional regulation strategies implemented to manage nearness and distance in intimate adult relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1996). Bowlby points out that attachment is a motivational system that originates in childhood by the innate need to form a close bond with others to provide care, affection, and assistance to one’s protection and survival in situations of threat or stress. The attachment theory is part of social behavior because it extends to interpersonal relationships, such as family, friends and partners. These links are presented throughout life, and their features are mediated by formations of the attachment adopted in childhood. Adults also show the desire for proximity to their attachment figures in situations of discomfort or threat and experience absence of such a figure in a way similar to how it was linked earlier in the childhood (Garrido, 2006). Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to apply the attachment styles in adulthood, focusing their study on the relationships of couples seen with similar characteristics of closeness and intimacy, considered attachment bonds. Within this framework, Sperling and Berman (Millikin, 2000) refer to the concept of adult attachment as a person's stable tendency to do efforts to seek and maintain proximity and contact with individuals who provide the subjective potential for physical development or psychological safety. They further suggest that this trend is governed by internal models of linkage that are cognitive-motivational-affective driven and built from the individual's experience in their interpersonal world.

These mental representations are internalized and were related to the above as Internal Operating Models (IOM). They are different in each individual and are formed through repeated experiences with the significant figures that were taken into childhood. Therefore, the IOM enables a person to identify or discriminate from attachment figures. It also allows us to form expectations regarding how available they will be in a situation of fear, stress or helplessness (Pinedo & Santelices, 2006). It should be noted that the insecure attachment style is generally associated with dependency since the predominant belief is negative towards themselves and others, which puts immense importance on dependent behaviors. The avoidant attachment style shows a tendency towards less importance of relating to others and implies difficulty maintaining contact. On the other hand, the fearful attachment combines avoidance and dependency, thus being much more vulnerable to loneliness or emotional changes such as isolation, depression, or conflict in a relationship (Feeney & Noller, 1996). Anxious attachment, in general, is due to the lack of confidence the individuals show about themselves, resembling each other in their desire to have intimate relationships marked by a strong dependency need. However, the insecure attachment styles differ in that the anxious seek to approach others to satisfy their dependency needs, and the avoidant defensively keeps away from the proximity to steer clear of discomfort caused by the rejection or loss of a relationship (Feeney & Noller, 1996). In this way, the attachment styles are associated with different strategies to deal with stressful situations generated in their relations. A secure attachment style uses the proximity search and support called primary strategy, unlike the insecure attachment styles using the well-known hyper-activation or deactivation as secondary strategies.

1.4 Attachment Styles and Approaches to Infidelity

Infidelity is a common reason for consultation in the psychotherapeutic field. When infidelity is revealed, the couple can be emotionally affected. Trust as a core of the relationship is damaged. The intensity one lives through infidelity, and its consequences will depend on each couple's particularities; some can get out forward alone, mitigating the suffering and regaining confidence over time. Others achieve a pseudo solution: they

continue the relationship, although not trusting. Other couples decide to end the relationship and look for a better match. Infidelity has been defined from different perspectives. For the present work, infidelity will be understood as: “The unilateral breach of a pact of exclusivity, giving entry to a third party which they are prioritized, or at least share some important aspects of the relationship” (Campo & Linares, 2002 p.150). The social consensus indicates that exclusivity in the couple should be based on loving and sexual interaction. However, this is not decisive. Some couples agree on freedom of sexual encounters with third parties, provided that no emotions are implied, giving rise to two types of infidelity: emotional and sexual. In this regard, Rosenzvaig (2008) points out that such differentiation is arbitrary since it is not supposed to be possible to act sexually emotionless, so it is more accurate to call it affective infidelity. In the same sense, Campo and Linares (2002) propose that the affective, relational aspects associated with infidelity can be much more important from the psychological point of view than the sexual act per se. In the first place, the fundamental motivation to start an affair is sexual dissatisfaction with a stable couple. In the second place, a more complex psychological and relational dissatisfaction drives the contract of infidelity. Two fundamental modalities have been defined previously regarding the relational dynamics that precede infidelity. The first one is primary and is defined as a “relative independence of the evolution of the couple, at the initiative of subjects who feel the need to seduce” (Campo & Linares, 2002, p.151). Here the reasons for unfaithful behaviors lie in the subject's personality, characterized by internal insecurity. Primary infidelity usually occurs in complementary pairs, with the infidel in the position of superiority, under which they demand total surrender, but he or she commits to it partially (Campo & Linares, 2002, p.152). For this reason, they need to maintain multiple relationships regardless of the satisfaction they get from their stable relationship. On the other hand, secondary infidelity arises in the very heart of the relationship, in the dissatisfaction with one's partner, "when the relationship begins to be perceived as frustrating and lacks the resources necessary to modify it” (Field & Linares, 2002, p.152). Whether the precedents of infidelity occur mainly in the subject's personality or the evolution of the couple's relationship, the central point that drives to love affair is the

difficulty of reconciling the desire and commitment in one person in the same relationship. It is aided by the couple's failure to meet the relational needs they were able to satisfy previously. It should be noted that sex is just one of those needs and not necessarily the most important. According to Campo and Linares (2002), the tendency to proximity in excess can distort the perception of the needs of the other, confusing it with their own and reducing the ability to respond appropriately to the wishes and requirements of the other. In the same way, the dissatisfaction with one's expectations by the couple can lead to extreme distancing beyond the necessary personal space so that the needs of the other are not perceived. In both cases, there is no meeting in the satisfaction of the relationship's psycho-affective needs, such as love, which would result in a low physical and emotional availability in terms of attachment. The latter would also affect the stress coping strategies. The insecure attachment individuals would react by hyper-activating their love interactions. That is, they exert an over-involvement in the relationship because of the negative vision they foresee. That would lead them to want to merge with their partner for fear of abandonment or vulnerability. This would cause a faulty perception of the partner's needs because their own needs are confused with those of the other, which they cannot fully satisfy. This can lead to one or both breaking the fidelity agreement. On the other hand, extreme distancing, typical of individuals with an insecure-avoidant attachment style, is characterized by deactivation, discomfort before the closeness, or dependence on the other. The disposition to distance could result in poor recognition of the needs of the other because the distance does not allow them to perceive the psycho-affective needs of the couple. Such a failure to meet physical or affective expectations could lead them to the establishment of infidelity. Infidelity has been addressed from different points of view. One of the significant ones for this study is linked to research carried out by college students from the University of Adelphi. They allow us to see the connection between adult attachment styles and infidelity in romantic relationships. It was found that people with a secure attachment used to lie less, showed more satisfaction, and had less probability of infidelity than the ones with insecure attachment (Cohen, 2005). On the other hand, there is a significant difference between women and men in the type of infidelity. Men choose

more often to commit sexual infidelity than women. Furthermore, the results show that, independently of the attachment style, men often enter situations of infidelity. However, it occurs more often when the individual shows insecure attachment styles (anxious, avoidant, dismissing) (Cohen, 2005). In addition, the avoidant attachment of both samples (students and adults) tended to report that the reason for having an extra dyadic relationship was to obtain more space and freedom (Cohen, 2005). Some research suggests no difference between the attachment style and the probability of cheating and being cheated (Fricker, 2006). However, other authors suggest that attachment styles are indeed correlated with infidelity (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; Bogaert and Sadava, 2002; Knox; Thompson, 1983). In turn, Hazan and Shaver (1987) indicated that romantic relationships in adult couples could be explained from the perspective of affective bonding. In these investigations, the influence of attachment on quality and relationship stability has been explored. In some of them, it is deduced that people with secure attachment styles are confident and receptive. They enjoy intimacy, naturally accept the dependency on their partner while tolerating without difficulty that their partners depend on them, and feel comfortable in intimacy, making their relationships more stable. In contrast, people with insecure attachment styles are characterized by a lack of confidence and instability due to the fear of rejection or abandonment and are displayed as defensive and uncomfortable in intimacy. The specific forms of defense will depend on the insecurity profile, reacting anxiously or avoidant (Feeney & Noller, 1996). In general, the results of the historical research supports the hypothesis that attachment styles are related to the regulation of intimacy in extra dyadic relationships particularly when evaluating the reasons a person has for getting involved in another relationship. Johnson suggests that damage to the attachment bond such as infidelity occurs in couple relationships where one of the members does or says something to the other that damages the nature of the link between them (Millikin, 2000). It occurs so when one of the partners is perceived as not accessible or does not meet the psycho-physical need of the other. The specifics of each couple attributes the evaluation of the severity of the damage in the affective bond. The ability to respond to a stressful event, being available or not when the other needs it is a constituent

part of an attachment disablement. It can lead to distress, loss of confidence, and cycles of negative interaction between couples. In this context, infidelity, perceived as a stressful event in the couple's life, could sometimes damage the attachment. In turn, this can be a symbolic marker and damage the bond in the couple's relationship. In other words, it acts as an alarm system that sends the message that something is wrong inside the couple. This allows for identifying whether or not the other will be available when required, and experience a decrease in the level of trust, which could promote cycles of negative interaction (Millikin, 2000). The meanings associated with infidelity, from the perspective of the subjects, collects worldviews and systems of social and family beliefs, together with the ways of testing the reality in terms of possible explanations or attributions. Dallos states that the so-called " believes " concept includes the idea of an enduring set of interpretations and premises about what is considered to be truly affectively charged with a clear emotional component (Dallos, 1996). The concept includes other terms such as anticipation, attitudes, and explanations. Therefore, we are distinguishing an enduring set of interpretations and assumptions about what is considered infidelity by distinguishing the meanings. These premises are implicit in relationships between people and their environment and would account for the rules by which each individual builds their own experience.

Chapter 2. Theoretic Foundations of the Early Maladaptive Schemas

Jeffrey Young's schema-focused therapy was initially created to optimize Beck's traditional cognitive therapy, integrating elements of John Bowlby's attachment theory to deepen the understanding of emotional development in children. Throughout the years, it has been well contributed by the systemic procedural therapy of Vittorio Guidan, who also highlights the importance of the role played by the first years of life and the relationship with caregivers in the development of one’s psychological self. The schema-focused model contains several significant modifications to Beck's original work (Caro, 1997). Over the years, this model has established itself as one of the most complete and integrating

proposals of the cognitive school at an international level. On the other hand, the traditional explanations of the etiology of psychological disorders have taken into account concepts such as the "underlying assumptions" of Aaron Beck and the irrational ideas of Albert Ellis. However, it is necessary to investigate further the role that the early maladaptive schemas play in the genesis of psychopathology. There are several descriptive studies on fears in childhood and adolescence (Méndez, 2003), but these do not take up the early maladaptive schemas (EMS) variable. In this research segment, an approximation is made from the theory of the early maladaptive schemas to broaden the understanding regarding the relationship between EMS and some psychological concepts. Amongst them are the conflict resolution styles and romantic relationships, a reference that, according to obtained results seems fundamental from the first years of life, since it is achieved, from the data obtained and its subsequent meta-analysis. This doctoral work addresses a significant connection between these schemas and possible psychological malfunctioning. Schema processes include specific styles of thinking that are not viable, as well as patterns of self-defeating behaviors. Schemas also include rigidity and difficulty in internal rules, thus generating excellent resistance to change (Young, 1999).

The review of the area of cognitive-behavioral therapy helps us explain the reasons that led Young to develop schema therapy. Cognitive behavioral researchers and therapists have made tremendous strides in developing effective psychological treatments for disorders. Amongst them are many which refer to mood, anxiety, eating, and substance abuse disorders. Most treatments offer a limited time (an average of 20 sessions). They have focused on reducing symptoms, developing skills, and resolving the everyday problems of the patients. However, although these treatments benefit many patients, they are not for many others. For example, in depression, the success rate equals 60% immediately after treatment. However, the rate of relapses is 30% approximately one year later (Young, Weinberger & Beck, 2001), thus leaving a significant amount of unsatisfactorily treated patients. Often, patients with underlying personality disorders do not fully respond to traditional cognitive-behavioral treatments (Beck & Freeman, 1990). One of the

challenges facing cognitive-behavioral therapy today is the development of effective treatments for these patients with chronic disorders, which are more challenging to treat. Personality issues can reduce the effectiveness of traditional cognitive-behavioral therapy in multiple ways. For example, a patient with agoraphobia goes to cognitive-behavioral treatment. While the program consists of breathing training, the challenge of catastrophic thoughts, and graduated exposure to phobic situations, the patient significantly reduces their anxiety symptoms and overcomes their avoidance of numerous situations. However, once the treatment is over, it is typical for the patient to resume their agoraphobia. A lifelong dependency, along with feelings of vulnerability and inadequacy – what we call the schema "vulnerability and dependency" – keeps one from venturing out into the open world for oneself. A person might lack enough self-confidence to make decisions and fails to acquire practical skills. Without the therapist's guidelines, the patient often cannot organize the necessary outings to maintain treatment gains. For the reasons described above, Young (1990, 1999) developed schema therapy to treat patients with chronic characterological problems that were not adequately helped by traditional cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Young developed schema therapy as a systematic approach that extends cognitive behavioral therapy by integrating techniques drawn from multiple schools of therapy. Schema therapy can be brief, intermediate, or long-term. Often the duration depends on the patient. Based on cognitive-behavioral therapy, it is expanded to give much more importance to the childhood and adolescent origins of psychological problems, introduce emotive techniques, and contemplate the therapist-patient relationship. Once the symptoms are eliminated, schema therapy is ideal for treating many characterological themes. Therapy is often undertaken with other modalities, such as cognitive behavioral therapy and psychotropic medication. Schema therapy is designed to treat the chronic characterological aspects of disorders, not the acute psychiatric symptoms (such as a depressive attack or recurrent panic disorders). Schema therapy is helpful for treating chronic depression or anxiety, eating disorders, complex relationship problems, and

persistent difficulties in maintaining good intimate relationships. It has also been helpful for the treatment of abusers and the prevention of relapses in patients with substance abuse.

According to Young (1999), EMS are stable and enduring structures of the subject's personality, which develop early and are associated with various psychopathologies. These beliefs or cognitions are formed in childhood or adolescence and trigger emotional and bodily reactions (Behary, 2011). Many schemes arise in the child's pre-verbal stage when only emotional memories and bodily sensations are stored. Later, when the child begins speaking, we develop cognitions and thoughts (Young, 1999). Although it is already clear that autonomic systems are involved in endocrine and motor disorders during emotional activation, the evidence on the neurobiology of EMS are still pending. Based on the advancement of neuroscience, recent studies make assumptions about the possible mechanisms for developing and forming these maladaptive emotional and cognitive patterns. Neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux carried out research on the nature and origin of emotions, published in his book “The Emotional Brain” (Le Doux, 1996). Based on LeDoux's findings, Young (2008) pointed out the existence of an unconscious system proposing hypotheses about the neural mechanisms related to the biology of EMS. According to LeDoux, emotion and cognition are distinct mental functions mediated by interactive brain systems. There has been talk of “systems of emotions” to confront the old idea of a single emotional system. These mechanisms seem to have their own “brain networks,” which interact with each other in a complex way and are not hierarchical (Cosenza, 1990). Emotions are part of that intricate neuropsychological circuit that allowed our ancestors to survive and procreate (Young, 2008). The various environmental situations, such as, for example, the food search, coping with danger, or forming a family, demanded specialized structures to develop distinct sensations, such as fear, pleasure, anger, and joy. In other words, these different emotion states exist for specific reasons (Ekman, 1994).

Based on studies of traumatic childhood memories, Young deepens the review of LeDoux's findings on the brain network associated with fear conditioning and trauma. Two systems related to the processing of learning information and fear operate in parallel: the

system of consciousness, mediated by the hippocampus and cortical areas, and the unconscious, mediated by the amygdala (Young, 2008). This two systems store different types of information related to human experiences. When the individual comes into contact with stimuli present in the original trauma, each system can recover its cognitive and emotional memories through memories and gets adjusted as per the event. According to Young, the difference in storage sites of conscious and unconscious memories explains why the EMS are not modifiable by simple cognitive methods. The amygdala is part of the limbic system and is mainly responsible for forming and storing emotional memory (Mega, Cummings, Salloway, & Malloy, 1997; Siegel, 1999). this complex amygdaloid, or amygdala system (cluster of subcortical matter located in the temporal lobe) (Broglio et al., 2005), acts in the interaction between several mental processes, such as mediation of emotions, evaluation of outcome and processing of social experience (Siegel, 1999). The tonsils also participate in recognition of facial expressions of fear and stimulus processing, emitting appropriate responses to situations of threat or danger (De Gelder, Snyder, Greve, Gerard, & Hadjikhani, 2004; Höistad & Barbas, 2008; Phan, Wager, Taylor, & Liberzon, 2002). It is known that injuries to this structure can impair the ability to recognize fear and modulate emotions. In contrast, stimulation of the amygdala can increase the state of attention and vigilance, generating fear and anxiety (Bear, Connors, & Paradiso, 2002).

In a nutshell, the early maladaptive schemas are thought of as always dysfunctional - self-sabotaging - patterns of thought and emotion that began at an early age and are repeated throughout life. According to this definition, maladaptive behaviors are not components of the schemas but are the responses to them. The schemas cause the behavior, but it is not part of the schemas themselves. However, Cid (2009) prefers to call them ‘Maladaptive Early Schemas’, defining them as large and persistent themes made up of memories, emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations that refer to the analysis of oneself and the relationships with others. These originate during childhood and are elaborated throughout the individual's life, being dysfunctional significantly. EMS originate from reality-based representations and may initially generate responses adapted to them. Their

dysfunction shows up later in life when those perceptions or appreciations are already adjusted to reality. The schemes can have different degrees of severity and rigidity or resistance to change. The severity can be defined by the number of situations that trigger them. The greater or lesser severity and resistance to change will depend on how early or late the age at which they were generated, the number of significant figures that generated them, and the number of situations that influenced them. For example, it will be more severe and rigid a schema generated by both parents, from the age of 4 or 5 and throughout childhood, in comparison to the one generated by a single parent, or only by a teacher, in a single episode when a person was 12 years old (Young & Klosko, 2007).

Broadening up on the theoretical model of the EMS, it could be added up that they originate from unsatisfied emotional needs in childhood. Every child would try to compensate for these basic needs through their parents, family and peers to achieve optimal development and adaptive functioning throughout life. The five universal needs, according to Young and Klosko (2007) are stated as follows:

- Belonging which is integrated with the feeling of security, stability, affection, and acceptance
- Autonomy, competence, and sense of identity
- Freedom to express valid emotions and desires
- Spontaneity and play
- Realistic limits and self-control.

Finally, it is essential to point out that Young and Klosko (2007) have observed that four types of life experiences promote the appearance of schemas. The first is what they call toxic frustration of needs that occur when the child receives 'too little of a good thing' and acquires schemas, such as Emotional Deprivation or Abandonment/Instability due to certain deficiencies in their early environment. This way, the child's environment loses stability, understanding, or love. The second type of toxic experience refers to

traumatization; in this sense, the child is harmed, criticized, controlled, or victimized. These experiences lead to schemas such as Abuse/Mistrust or Vulnerability to danger.

Regarding the third type of toxic experience, the child receives too much of a good thing; that is, the parents give the child too much of something that, in moderation, is healthy for the child, which in turn contributes to generating schemes such as Functional Dependency or Grandiosity. Finally, the fourth type of toxic experience consists of selective internalization or identification with significant others. Regarding this kind of experience, the child selectively identifies with and internalizes the thoughts, sensations, and experiences of their parents; in other words, what the child does is internalize the schemes of their parents, which gives rise to the origin, for example, of the Vulnerability scheme.

2.1 The Maladaptive Schema Coping Styles

There are three maladaptive coping styles in terms of the frustration of emotional needs mentioned above. They can be defined as ways of coping with basic needs, conflicts, and stressful situations, which reinforce and maintain EMS. They are developed early in one's life to allow an adaptation to the schemes so as not to experience the intense and overwhelming emotions that these engender (Young & Klosko, 2007). The three maladaptive coping styles refer to the three primary responses to threat: fight, flight, and stay put. Specifically taken, fighting in case of danger is seen as overcompensation. Flight is an example of avoidance, and standing still is surrender. It is important to note that although these response styles were possibly functional and helpful in childhood, in adulthood, they could be dysfunctional because they do not allow one to adapt healthily and, therefore, prevent the satisfaction of the basic needs of all human beings (Young & Klosko, 2007). Patients often refer to these things as 'what makes us stumble over and over

again, with the same stone.' The three coping styles described by Young and Klosko (2007) in detail are:

1. Overcompensation.

It refers to behaviors, thoughts, and feelings the subject tries to overcome and cope with by the schema. They can often manifest as behaviors or styles utterly contrary to what we expect according to the schema in question or the predominant schema. They are partial attempts for oneself to face the emotions that are activated. Although they are excessive or exaggerated, they usually activate the schema. So if a person was subdued in childhood, now it is defiant; if one has been over-controlled, now would try to defy all forms of influence over them. If someone is living a completely self-sufficient lifestyle and pretending to never need anything, it may be an attempt to compensate for feelings and beliefs of inadequacy.

2. Avoidance.

It consists of cognitive, emotional, or behavioral strategies by which the subject attempts to avoid thoughts or situations that might activate the schema and experience an intense emotion or an emotional tone that accompanies it. Its establishment would be carried out by aversive conditioning. These processes can be automatic or intentional and are developed throughout the individual's life. They would explain, for example, the lack of emotional expression in the face of traumatic events or the forgetfulness of significant autobiographical elements, such as mistreatment, sexual abuse, etc.

3. Surrender.

It consists of fully accepting and favoring compliance or confirmation over the schema. Such individuals search for relationships that will reiterate the schema-generating situations or react with excessive emotional intensity when the schema triggers appear. For example, they repeat abusive or disqualifying partners or generate adverse reactions in

others and respond with exacerbated resentment or depression in the face of these reactions. (Young & Klosko, 2007).

Young and Klosko (2007) regrouped maladaptive coping styles into two basic operations of the schematics:

1. *The perpetuation.*

Includes everything the patient does (i.e., thoughts, emotions, or behaviors) that sustains and perpetuates the schema.

2. *The healing.*

Includes everything the patient does that causes a decrease in any of the schematic components. This would be the goal of therapy, which involves decreasing the intensity of the memories connected with the schema, the emotional charge, the intensity of bodily sensations, and the maladaptive cognitions. This also entails a change in behavior, where the person replaces maladaptive coping styles with adaptive behavioral patterns.

People do not have their schemas permanently active but are activated at certain times. In turn, people have different coping styles but are not always using them. Faced with specific triggers, the person activates one or more of their schemas. A person could display specified schemas in different situations. However, we can observe that particular schemas and coping styles go off together. These schemes or grouped coping styles have been called modes. The so-called modes refer to parts of the self that contain an individual coping style that has not been integrated into a consistent personality. The modes thus consist of related thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that are part of a recurring pattern in the subject life. The modes are temporary and are activated by specific stressors (Young, Klosko & Wheishar, 2003). People change their reactions to triggers at various times and under various circumstances. Also, the concept, in some ways, is related to a degree of dissociation, its most extreme examples being multiple personality disorder and borderline personality disorder. On the other hand, although they exhibit different schemas, healthy

people are quite typical in their coping styles and modes, which allows their identity to remain intact.

According to the schema model, we can think that the child's modes are innate and represent the emotional field of human beings (Young & Klosko, 2007). It could be assumed that temperamental variables also influence the personality. Although childhood events or circumstances can reduce, nullify or increase the early modes, all people are born with the ability to manifest them. The so-called vulnerable child mode is considered nuclear for the approach of the modes and the most important to heal. This mode can be seen as the behavior of a frightened, sad, or helpless child in need of care, although it has grown up as an adult. The schema and the cause of this mode has been stated as being: 'Abandoned' (i.e., having been left alone), 'abused' (i.e., having been severely punished or mistreated), 'lack of affection' (i.e., not have received love) or 'defective' (i.e., having been heavily criticized or disqualified), 'vulnerable' (i.e., at risk of suffering harm or becoming ill), 'dependent' (i.e., unable to cope without help) or 'failed' (i.e., incapable of success, never successful). That is, in short, the vulnerable child mode, which is categorized in one domain called Early Disconnection and Refusal. It usually originates from a cold, distant, explosive, abusive, or unpredictable family environment. Another domain group called 'Impaired Autonomy' generally originated in over-protective family environments, which discourages independent performance or self-confidence. In terms of that, the so-called 'Angry Child Mode' arises as a response to the need for fair treatment, which has not been obtained or to situations that activate schemas of abandonment, abuse, submission, or lack of affection. In this mode, the patient becomes enraged, screams, or reacts violently (e.g., the child who has a 'tantrum' over not getting something). - The 'Impulsive' or 'Undisciplined Child' mode exhibits little tolerance for frustration or little ability to procrastinate, carrying out any desire or 'need' without foreseeing consequences, without limits or consideration towards others. This mode often appears in conjunction with another domain of schemas, such as 'Grandiosity' or 'Insufficient Self-control or Self-discipline.' A mode that refers to these domains is the so-called 'The Happy Child', which is the typical mode for more recent

generations. Maladaptive coping style modes are understood as coping styles that are learning to deal with ‘Child Modes’ and refer to how people resolve conflictive situations and manage associated emotions (Young & Klosko, 2007). They also correspond to the three coping maladjustments described above: - The Submissive mode corresponds to the 'surrender' style. In it, the person is passive, does everything that other people want him to do, and can be obedient to the point of allowing abuse or disqualification to retain the relationship or avoid adverse reactions or retaliation. The distanced mode corresponds to the 'avoidance' style. The person adopts withdrawal behaviors, avoidance of situations, disconnection of emotions, isolation, etc. The Overcompensation mode corresponds to the 'overcompensation' style. In this way, people work as if the opposite of their misfit schema were true. If they think they are defective, they act like they are perfect or superior to others. If they think they are guilty, they accuse others. The 'Parental Dysfunctional Modes' arise when the patient incorporates their parents' dysfunctional behaviors by internalizing their parents' voices, which correspond to teachings. Such requiring incorporation of the parent in adult life does not allow adequate adaptation. The two most common ways of this happening are The punishing father, who criticizes and sanctions errors or represses the expression of the child's needs. The demanding father, who does not punish but seeks perfection or the highest levels of achievement, is quickly disappointed when they are not fulfilled, generating guilt or shame in the child. These dysfunctional parenting modes are often found in severe depression and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Finally, within the 'Functional mode,' the healthy adult mode would correspond to all the good things of the patient's self-concept, which allows for generating a sense of self-efficacy in one's abilities, self-esteem to advance, and compassion to Being able to accept negative life experiences. In healthy people, this mode is activated more frequently. It is almost always present and is strong enough to moderate the other modes when they appear. The purpose of therapy is to develop and increase the presence and strength of the healthy adult mode by teaching the patient to moderate, soften or 'heal' the other modes (Young & Klosko, 2007).

Exercises in which a person emotionally relives disturbing situations have proven to be very useful. Regenerating emotions lived in actual situations is the most reliable resource to access the thoughts associated with them (Young & Klosko, 2007). Although the situation is not happening in the exercise, emotions are real, and if emotions are real, they are connected to the cognitions that generate them. In a few words: the exercise of imagination triggers the schema present in the person. Imagining the situation makes it possible to have the corresponding emotion and cognition as it first occurred. In practice, this can be implemented in many ways. For example, a frequently valuable form consists of having the person first relive in imagination the situation that generated the dysfunctional response. Then they are asked to recall previous situations until they come to an experience from their childhood in which they felt the same. This usually connects the patient with the traumatic situation that gives rise to the early schema. The recognition of this situation, the comparison and differentiation of the current one, the redefinition of the primitive situation, and other exercises with strong emotional content, characteristic of psychodrama, usually exceed in effectiveness to traditional cognitive strategies. The most frequent obstacle to this resource seems to be the avoidance style, which manifests when the person has difficulty, resists, or 'cannot' do these exercises (Young & Klosko, 2007). First of all, this difficulty is helpful so that a person knows their schema style. Thus, it can also be overcome slowly, with the discussion of the problem and exercises less committed at the beginning. After having carried out, together with the case, an adequate evaluation of the central aspects raised, a second phase will take place called the change process (Young & Klosko, 2007). This stage has as the primary treatment objective a change in the coping schemas and styles identified, which would lead to a greater or lesser degree: (a) a change in the way of seeing oneself; (b) an achievement of some more flexible life patterns such as modification of coping styles; (c) a more optimal adaptation to its environment and (d) a decrease in psychological distress. This usually involves using different strategies depending on the different components of the schemas. To do this, the therapist deploys a wide range of techniques and resources that they must try to mix flexibly and creatively, according to each case and patient.

The different types by which the schema is usually maintained over time are by repeating behaviors in actual life events such as surrender, overvaluation or magnification of the information, self-defeating behaviors; avoidance, automatic or voluntary attempts to block out thoughts or images that can activate the schemas, depersonalization, affective avoidance, avoidance of real-life situations; overcompensation or counterattack (Young, 1999). Parenting styles relevant to these maintaining the schemas strategies have been studied by various authors, among which the works carried out by Baumrind (1966, 1967), Darling and Steinberg (1993), Maccoby (2000), and Maccoby and Martin (1983). Later on, the schema theory was developed by Young, Klosko, and Weishaar (2003) within the scope of the conceptual model of therapy of schemas. In modern times and through many meta-analyses performed, Young proposes the existence of 18 schemes called previously in this work “early maladaptive schemes” (EMS), distributed in five domains or categories. Young defines EMS as “a broad and generalized concept made up of memories, emotions, cognitions, and bodily sensation, related to oneself and one's relationship with others, developed during childhood or adolescence, elaborated throughout life which are dysfunctional in a significant degree” (Young, 1999). In short, they are emotional and cognitive patterns which are counterproductive and start at the beginning of our development and go repeating throughout life” (Young et al., 2013, pp. 36). When Young references the schemes' origins, he says they are derived from unmet core emotional needs during childhood. These needs are to 1) secure a bond with others, 2) build autonomy, competence, and a sense of identity, 3) have the freedom to express valid needs and emotions, 4) express spontaneity and play, 5) create realistic limits and self-control. According to Young (2003), toxic childhood experiences constitute the primary origin of EMS. Within them, four types of early life experiences are included: toxic frustration in needs, trauma or victimization, the child's experience of an excess of something good, and, finally, selective internalization or identification with other significant people. Young proposes a taxonomy of parenting styles where he describes 17 styles, each of which theoretically corresponds to a type of early maladaptive schema, and they receive the same name as the latter (Young et al., 2003). For example, the parental style of abandonment

would be, following this model, the origin of the EMS of abandonment. The only EMS that is not included in the parenting model is social isolation since Young suggests that it generally originates as a consequence of a link within a group of equals rather than as a consequence of the link between father and son. As with the EMS, Young (2003) organizes parenting styles into five domains related to unsatisfied basic needs. These domains correspond to five prominent family and parental styles (Young et al., 2003). The first domain, called "disconnection/rejection," describes the cold family, distant and unpredictable, lacking stability, understanding, or love. The second is called "impaired autonomy," which refers to the type of overprotective family which has difficulty building trust and competence for the child. The third is called "insufficient limits" and corresponds to a permissive family with a lack of guidance, which does not establish limits. It is the one that gives the child everything they ask for. The fourth is named "other-directedness," and it is focused on others. The fifth is called "over vigilance/inhibition" and implies a family style that is demanding, punitive, and more concerned with avoiding mistakes than stimulating the child. Sheffield, Waller, Emanuelli, Murray, and Meyer (2005) conducted a preliminary validation study from the Young Parenting Inventory (YPI) with a sample of students (n= 422). They also explored the relationship between parenting styles and EMS and found significant associations, generally corroborating the association proposed by Young et al. (1999, 2003). According to the study's authors, these results are consistent with the hypothesis that parenting styles constitute a risk factor for developing a variety of EMS rather than for a specific EMS.

On the other hand, from the factor analyzes performed in other studies, the authors developed a shorter version as a part of the YPI, which they named YPI-R (Sheffield et al., 2005). This version is made up of nine standard scales for both parents, which demonstrated good psychometric properties. The nine parenting style scales are as follows: parental emotional deprivation style, overprotective style, dismissive/critical style, perfectionist style, pessimistic/fearful style, controlling style, emotionally inhibited style, punitive style, and conditional/narcissistic style.

Other studies have also examined the relationship between recalled parenting styles and early maladaptive schemas. For example, Estévez and Calvete (2007) explored such a relationship in a sample of people with pathological gambling behavior. Their study yielded information on how the parenting styles proposed in the original theory are associated with Young and the development of EMS. The results showed that the parenting style based on conditional acceptance, approval-seeking, and emotionally inhibited parenting style were significant predictors of all EMS domains, except the insufficient limits in the case of the emotional inhibition style. Both parenting styles (approval seeking and emotional inhibition) belong to the domain of "over vigilance/inhibition" of Young's model. Several other authors have found that the overprotective parenting models were the main predictors of these symptoms (Harris and Curtin, 2002; McGinn, Cukor, and Sanderson, 2005; Shah and Waller, 2000; Soygüt and Cakir, 2009). Other studies have linked the development of depressive symptoms with EMS. For example, as found in a nonclinical sample, the only significant predictors of depressive symptoms were the EMS of imperfection, failure, and self-sacrifice (Calvete, Estévez, López de Arroyabe, and Ruiz, 2005). Stopa, Thorne, Waters, and Preston (2001) found that the EMS of abandonment, imperfection, subjugation, and self-sacrifice were significant predictors of depressive symptoms (Estévez & Calvete, 2009), based on a review of studies on the relationship between EMS and depression, point out that although the findings between various investigations differ, the EMS that have been most closely associated with depression correspond to the domains of disconnection/rejection and impaired autonomy. The proven association between EMS and depression is consistent with Beck's model of depression in that depressed subjects have a negative view of themselves. Cámara and Calvete (2010) suggested that the presence of EMS would predict the increased symptoms of anxiety and depression through inappropriate forms of coping with stress, evaluating whether the latter acted as mediators.

Regarding the results of the EMS as predictors of the symptoms of depression, it was concluded that the impaired autonomy domain of EMS was significantly associated with

depression, although coping strategies were not mediators. The domains of disconnection/rejection, insufficient limits, and other-directedness were also significant predictors of depression, while the over-vigilance/emotional inhibition domain was not. Regarding anxiety symptoms, all domains were predictors except for over-vigilance/emotional inhibition. The strategies of distancing as a coping style mediated the relationship between EMS and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Another line of work has focused on the analysis of EMS as mediators in the relationship between parenting styles elaborated in the developmental stages of early childhood and depression and anxiety. Shah and Waller (2000) analyzed the role of EMS as mediators in the relationship between parenting styles from childhood (assessed through the "Parental Involvement Instrument" (PBI); Parker, Tupling, and Brown, 1979) and major depression in Adulthood. They compared a group of patients with depression (n= 60) with a non-clinical outpatient sample (n= 67). The depressed subjects differed by presenting a poorer parental perception (less care and more overprotection) and presenting scores significantly higher on the three EMS: imperfection, self-sacrifice, and insufficient self-control. In addition, the results indicated that five schemes partially mediated the relationship between low maternal care and overprotective paternal levels of depression. These schemes are dependence, emotional inhibition, imperfection, unattainable goals, and vulnerability. The authors concluded that low care and parental overprotection are associated with these EMS, which causes greater vulnerability to depression. Following the same line of research, Harris and Curtin (2002) studied the relationship between recalled parental parenting experiences and the influence of EMS on the development of symptoms of depression in a sample of 194 university students. The results showed that the imperfection schema, insufficient self-control, vulnerability, and dependence were significantly associated with the perceived parental styles (low care and parental overprotection) and depressive symptomatology. These four EMS partially mediated the relationship between the parenting styles themselves and the depressive symptoms. McGinn et al. (2005) examined the mediating role of EMS in the relationship between

parenting styles (low care, excessive control, abuse, and neglect) and psychopathological symptoms in a clinical sample. The results indicated that three of the five domains posited by Young mediated the relationship between childhood abuse and depression: disengagement/rejection domain (within this, the EMS are: abandonment, emotional deprivation, mistrust, imperfection, and isolation), impaired autonomy domain (within this the EMS of failure, vulnerability to harm, and dependency) and the domain of Impaired Limits (insufficient self-control). Thimm (2010) studied the mediation of EMS between the perception of style parenting and personality disorder symptoms in a clinical sample (149 Outpatient).

The results supported the theoretical model based on schema therapy, showing that EMS were mediators between parental styles of paternal rejection and low maternal warmth and the symptoms of personality disorders. They also acted as mediators but only partially between parental rejection and lack of maternal emotional warmth. Soygüt and Cakir (2009) studied the mediating role of schemas relationships (assessed with the ISQ, Hill & Safran, 1994) between Young's parenting styles and psychological symptoms). It should be noted that, in this case, Young's parenting styles were evaluated through the short version of the YPI (YPI-R) developed by Sheffield et al. (2005). The analyses indicated the predictive power of the parenting styles perceived in interpersonal schemas. As to maternal and paternal styles, the perception of parenting styles of both differed in relation to psychological symptoms. In the mother, the analyzes of regression showed that the interpersonal schema of hostility mediated the relationship between normative, dismissive/critical, pessimistic/fearful parenting styles and psychological symptoms.

In contrast, in the father, the interpersonal schema mediated the relationship between normative parenting styles, dismissive/critical, pessimistic/fearful, punitive, emotional deprivation, and the restrictive/emotionally inhibited and psychological symptoms. In a more recent study, Saritas Atalar and Gencoz (2015) explored the role mediator of EMS in the relationship between maternal rejection developed during childhood and anxiety and depression in Turkish university students. They concluded in the

first instance that perceived maternal rejection is associated with the EMS domains of disconnection/rejection, impaired autonomy, and other-directedness. The mediation analysis showed that the domain of the disconnection/rejection EMS mediated the relationship between rejection, perceived maternity, and anxiety but not with depression. In contrast, EMS domains of impaired autonomy and other-directedness acted as mediators between the style of maternal rejection perceived in relationship with anxiety and depression.

In conclusion, schema therapy is a modern psychotherapy model that combines elements of various psychological schools such as cognitive-behavioral, attachment theory, gestalt, constructivists, and dynamic elements. Based on a vast historical heritage, Jeffrey Young has been developing schema therapy for the last 20 years. The therapy of schemas emerges as a coping alternative for patients with consolidated chronic psychological disorders, considered difficult to treat, including patients with emotional disorders. The central concept of Young's model is the dysfunctional early maladaptive schema. In all of his work, Young has defined the early maladaptive schema concept as being very stable and durable concepts developed and elaborated throughout the life of individuals. Young argues that schemas are the sequence of interaction between central emotional needs that were not satisfied in childhood, early childhood experiences, and the child's innate temperament.

He has postulated five core emotional needs:

1) Safe affection with other people.

2) Autonomy, competence, and sense of identity.

3) Freedom to express valid needs and emotions.

4) Spontaneity and play.

5) Realistic limits and self-control.

According to the schema model, a psychologically healthy individual can adaptively satisfy these needs and core emotions. Early life experiences that develop earliest and have the most significant impact typically originate in the family. Other influences, such as peers, school, community groups, and surrounding culture, are as important as the child matures and can lead to schema development. However, later schemas are not as widespread or as influential. In clinical practice = 4 types of early life experiences are observed that promote schema acquisition. The first relates to the need to heal frustration, which occurs when the child experiences "too little of something good" and acquires schemes such as emotional deprivation or abandonment/instability due to deficiencies in their early environment. The child feels they are losing something important, such as stability, understanding, or love. The second type of early life experience is traumatization. Here, the child is harmed, criticized, controlled, or victimized and develops schemas such as mistrust/abuse, imperfection, or vulnerability to danger. In the third type, the child experiences "too much of a good thing." The parents give the child too much of something that, in moderation, is healthy for the child. For example, with schemas such as dependency, the child is pampered too much. The fourth type of schema - creating life experience is a selective internalization or identification with significant others. The child identifies himself selectively and internalizes their parents' thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They internalize the parent's schemas. This is a common origin of the vulnerability schema where the child collects the fears and phobias of the parents. It is believed that temperament largely determines whether a child identifies with a specific characteristic of a father and internalizes it.

2.2 Detailed Characteristics of the Early Maladaptive Schemas

In addition to early childhood experiences, the biological temperament of the child plays a vital role in the development of schemas. Numerous investigations support the importance of biological underpinnings of personality. For example, Kagan generated extensive research data on the temperamental traits present in childhood and observed that they were very stable in time. One might think temperament is the mix of individual unique points in this set of dimensions. Temperament interacts with childhood events in

the formation of schemas. The different temperaments selectively expose children to different life circumstances. For example, an aggressive child would be more likely to cause physical abuse by having a violent father than a passive, appeasing child. In addition, the different temperaments make children differentially susceptible to life circumstances. The shy child hides from the world and becomes more withdrawn and dependent on their mother each time, while the sociable child ventures out and engages in other more positive connections. Indeed, it has been shown that sociability is a prominent trait of resilient children despite suffering abuse or negligence. Below, Young's eighteen early maladaptive schemas are presented and grouped into five dimensions. Each of these dimensions reflects a critical need of children related to adaptive functioning. The dimensions describe, in turn, early relationships which are dysfunctional with parents and friends.

The disconnection and rejection dimension includes individuals raised in environments lacking feeding, affection, acceptance, and stability. The adults raised in this environment assume they will not find their desire for love, acceptance, security, and empathy in life. The schemas within this dimension collect the various “possibilities” or “consequences” of this type of deprivation. The schemas within this domain are presented below.

Abandonment/instability refers to the belief that others cannot give us reliable and stable support. Mistrust/abuse shows the individual expectation that others would hurt or take advantage of them. Emotional deprivation reflects the belief that we will not meet our needs for emotional support concerning food, empathy, and protection. Imperfection/shame collects the vision of oneself as unfriendly and socially undesirable. Social isolation describes the belief that one is not part of the group or the community, that one is alone and different from the others.

The impairment in autonomy and performance dimension reflects a complex and overprotective childhood environment. In meaningful relationships as an adult, these

individuals are overly dependent on others and believe they lack the adequate skills to deal with situations themselves. The schemas in this domain are the following.

Dependence/incompetence supposes the belief that the individual is incompetent and helpless and therefore needs the assistance of others to function. Vulnerability to damage or disease makes patients expect negative experiences that are not controlled, such as medical, emotional, or natural. Entanglement is found in individuals who relate too much to significant people at the expense of their development, that is, in those who fail to develop a secure individual identity apart from others. The failure reflects the view that the individual has failed in the past and will continue to do so due to an inherent absence of intelligence, talent, or other skills.

The dimension of inadequate boundaries are typically raised by permissive and overly indulgent parents, which could have contributed to believing themselves to be superior, as adults lack self-discipline and may have a feeling of authority in their relationships with others, even becoming insensitive to the needs and wants of other people. The specific schemas in this domain are seen below.

Grandiosity is the belief that the individual is superior to others, being able to become highly competitive or dominant. Poor self-control/self-discipline is found in individuals who do not demonstrate adequate self-control. They may be impulsive, have difficulty with self-discipline, and have trouble controlling their emotions.

The dimension of the other-directedness is fostered by early experiences in which the needs of the child are secondary to the needs of others. In their interactions in adult life, they are more concerned with the well-being of others and gaining their approval than with their own needs. Clear examples of the domain are presented below.

Subjugation means giving up control because of external feelings that the other would harm us. These individuals expect others to be aggressive, retaliatory or abandon them if they express their needs or feelings, so they suppress them. Self-sacrifice appears

in individuals who neglect their own needs to save the pain of others. Approval seeking/recognition seeking appears in individuals who want to gain the acceptance of others at the expense of developing their own identity.

The last dimension, over-vigilance and inhibition, develops when children are educated in perfectionism in a rigid family. In their adult life, they present an excess of control, with extremely high standards or rules. For example, it is normal for an individual raised in that environment to develop an early dysfunctional schema that leads them to interpret their experiences regarding success or failure. The specific schemas are seen below.

Negativity/pessimism reflects attention to negative aspects of life and the expectation that nothing will go right. These individuals are characterized by pervasive pessimism, sadness, and worry. Excessive control/emotional inhibition is found in individuals who avoid spontaneity to maintain a sense of anticipation and control over their lives or avoid embarrassment. Unrelenting standards include the belief that one should comply with strict rules of conduct, self-imposed, usually to avoid criticism. Condemnation shows that individuals should be heavily punished for their mistakes. These Individuals do not tolerate their own mistakes or those of the rest.

The schemas are maintained through time by three primary mechanisms: cognitive distortions, self-defeating life patterns, and schema coping styles. Through cognitive distortions, individuals misperceive situations, such that the schema is reinforced by accentuating the information confirming the schema and minimizing or denying any information that will contradict them. An individual can block emotions connected to a schema quite effectively. When the affect is blocked, the schema does not reach the level of consciousness. Concerning vital patterns, behaviorally, the individual performs wrong patterns, is selected unconsciously, and remains in situations and relationships that trigger and perpetuate the schema, thus avoiding situations or interpersonal relationships that will make it easier to cure or modify the schema. For example, a person with the mistrust/abuse

schema will interact by demanding or controlling to abuse the other to some extent, leading to the perpetuation of the schema. Young distinguishes in his model between the components of the schema and the underlying behaviors. The schematics are composed, as we have seen, of memories, emotions, bodily sensations, and cognitions, but not behaviors. The behavior would be part of the style of coping. For Young, the schema triggers the behavior. People develop coping styles and maladaptive responses early in life to adapt to schemas. These strategies or these maladaptive responses make it easier for us not to experience the intense and overwhelming emotions that schemas typically cause. These types of responses can serve to avoid the schema but not cure it; therefore, they only facilitate it to perpetuate or maintain the schema. Three maladaptive coping styles are essential for the scheme's maintenance: Surrender to the scheme, schema avoidance, and over-compensation. In the current work, the fundamental basis of the schemas is applied to the theoretical design and model of the investigation.

Chapter 3. Conflict Resolution Styles

Everyday conflicts are understood as situations in which there are disagreements between at least two figures, partners, or family members (Rodriguez & Hernandez, 2014). The most frequent topics that couples usually face are finances, caring for children and dependents, housework, lifestyle, leisure time, freedom, family relationships, sexuality, communication, and dissatisfaction in the couple (Luján, 2006; Oggins, 2003; Musitu and Cava, 2001). Nevertheless, knowing the couple's conflicting issues is just as important as knowing how to manage them (Reboredo, Mazadiego, and Villegas, 2011). For the resolution strategies that couples adopt, it is crucial to promote the continuity of the family projection and the well-being of its members. Numerous studies show the correlation between conflicts and marital satisfaction (Bradbury et al., 2000; Wheeler, Updegraff, & Thayer, 2010). Frequent use of behaviors based on attacking, making demands, controlling, or rejecting conflict increase marital dissatisfaction and causes a high frequency of criticism, hostility, and actions of harm toward the partner (Birditt et al., 2010). Unresolved conflict and the lack of social and communication skills usually lead to divorce. Additionally, another

line of work shows the impact of inter-parental conflicts on the development of children, warning of how the use of destructive strategies in parents affects the interaction with their children (Cummings and Davies, 2010) leading to greater inconsistency and inefficiency in the educational guidelines, decrease in the emotional quality of relationships (López, Escudero and Cummings, 2009; Justicia and Cantón, 2011), and low perception of parental support and school adjustment (Musitu, Martínez and Murgui, 2006), among other short- and long-term effects. These data lead us to immerse ourselves in the analysis of the strategies used by couples to deal with everyday situations of disagreement. Canary and Cupacho (1988) had already classified conflict resolution strategies in the couple into three broad categories: integrative, distributive, and avoidance-rejection. In the integrative ones, the members of the couple negotiate about the problem, pointing out positive aspects, expressing the truth, and exposing their points of view until an agreement that satisfies is established for both parties. The interventions are usually sarcastic, hostile, and harmful regarding the partner. These strategies produce an escalation in the conflict that can make it destructive. Lastly, avoidance and rejection strategies are not usually directed to confrontation but are perceived as negative when it is understood that the other party ignores, rejects the problem, or would be competitive if the discussion is opened. Kurdek (1994) analyzes conflict resolution styles in different types of couples, referring to four styles: positive problem solving based on understanding the position of the other and the use of argumentative tactics or constructive reasoning to reach compromises and negotiate; the combative style (conflict engagement) characterized by verbally abusive behaviors, anger, attacks, being defensive, and losing self-control; the style of evasion or withdrawal that implies the rejection and avoidance of the problem, refusing to speak, and leaving the place; and finally, the style of obedience (compliance) is the one that accepts the other's solution without discussing it or without defending their position. More recent studies continue to refer to the same general strategies for conflict resolution (Hojjat, 2000). In positive-active strategies, couples try to resolve the conflict with an equitable search for solutions, expose the problem, analyze it, and try to reach a mutually acceptable solution. In positive-passive strategies, couples are interested in finding a fair way out but

are passive in solving the problem. They ignore the conflict and do not say anything negative to their partner but rather show to be quiet. Negative-passive strategies, in which a satisfactory solution is not sought for both parties and passivity is shown to resolve the conflict: they reject communication and keep distant. Negative-active strategies involve engaging in active behaviors with unfair and satisfactory results for the parties: lying, forcing the partner to accept their opinion, and causing physical and verbal damage. On the other hand, aggressions in intimate relationships constitute one of the most common forms of violence in our society (Wolfe, et al., 2001). A few aspects are known about this problem in adulthood; however, this line of research is still very incipient in adolescence. In 1957 Kanin warned, for the first time, on the existence of violent behavior in relationships of young people finding in their retrospective study that 30% of the women had suffered sexual assault at the hands of their partners. However, it would not be until the decade of the years eighty that this phenomenon of social nature began to be seen as such by the scientific community. The also pioneering work of Makepeace (1981) contributed notably to this. Since then, it has been assisted to a considerable increase in studies on this population, and there have been very significant advances. However, understanding this problem is still insufficient (Molidor and Tolmann, 1998). The study of violence within couples in the teenage years is crucial. On the one hand, in those first love relationships, people will form their initial ideas about what to expect from a relationship and how to behave in private, which will affect their adulthood experience (Dion and Dion, 1993; Furman and Flanagan, 1997). On the other hand, it must also be taken into account that this type of conflictive scenario can pose a serious risk to the psychological and physical well-being of young people and negatively affect their social relationships, including those that establish with equals. Many professionals agree that it is essential that these first experiences are positive, but this is something that unfortunately does not always occur. For years, many researchers have focused on the analysis of the presence of violent behavior in dating relationships between young people, understood as predecessors of violence in later, more stable relationships. As a result, numerous data support that the onset of violence is usually in younger couples (Kury, Obergfell-Fuchs, & Woessner, 2004; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001,

O'Leary & González, 2007) where both psychological aggression and physical are part of interpersonal relationships, in many cases, these behaviors are considered as a "normal" practice within the couple. It has been repeatedly found that the proportion of young people who admit to assaulting their brides/girlfriends ranges between 10% and 50% of the study samples (Billingham, Bland, Leary, 1999; Hird, 2000; Jackson, Cram, and Seymor, 2000; Munoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary and Gonzalez, 2007; Silverman, Raj, Mucci and Hathaway, 2001; Swart, Garth and Ricardo, 2002; Gonzalez Lozano, 2008) obtaining ranges of victimization (percentage of those who admit to being victims of aggression in their dating relationships) between 12% and 45% (Avery-Leaf, Cascardi, O'Leary and Cano, 1997; Bergmann, 1992); Hird, 2000; O'Keefe, 1997; Lozano, 2008). Furthermore, several investigations within international organizations point out that the frequency of violent behaviors, both psychological and physical, is significantly higher in pairs (dating relationships), being two to three times more likely than in married pairs. Given the situation described in these works, which is quite similar to that of other countries in our environment (Medina-Ariza and Barberet, 2003), the scarcity of studies addressing this problem may be surprising. Many factors can influence violence in adolescent couples. However, in this paper, we will analyze emotional dependence since, after reviewing several studies, we have appreciated, among other things, that it can lead to aggression in the relationship with the partner, mainly exercised by the male gender. In addition, on the other hand, we have analyzed the sexism variable since, following Gwendolyn Gerber (1995), it exists in currently a widespread consensus highlighting as one of the most important causes of gender violence the differences that still exist among women and men in status and power, and that sexism can be used to legitimize and maintain these differences. Hence the interest in analyzing is also variable. To conclude, the most remarkable finding is the normalization and consequent invisibility of violence among young people, which probably prevents it from appearing in the official statistics on gender violence, which are mainly based on complaints and requests for help and access to services. For the other part, this standardization, possibly greater in young men, makes it difficult for them to take responsibility for the violence exercised and help it. This highlights the need to address such

violent actions in the population. As an important factor, emotional dependency could be defined as the extreme affective need that a person feels towards another throughout their different relationships. However, its chronic character is not based on the succession of these relationships but in the personality of these subjects; that is, the emotionally dependent person is also emotionally dependent when has a partner, although this is not the most common because their pathology causes them to seek another desperately (Castello, 2005). Two distinctive aspects emerge from the definition: first, the need is excessive and therefore not reduced to that of a love relationship. Secondly, the need is affective and not of another type (let us think of the classic dependent personality disorder, in which indecisiveness and a sense of uselessness or personal helplessness unite the person on whom one depends). Such dependence on another person would include a marked need for protection and support, even in situations where the person can function autonomously and overcome challenges independently (Bornstein, 1993). Numerous characteristics of dependent people have been identified, whereas the most prominent could be the following:

- *Tendency to exclusivity in relationships.*
- *The constant need to have access to the person with emotional dependency*
- *Excessive need for the approval of others.*
- *An illusion at the beginning of a relationship of a unique or "interesting" person.*
- *Subordination in couple relationships. They idealize their partners and choose them with specific characteristics: egotistical, with great self-confidence, emotionally cold, etc.*
- *Relationships reduce their need, but they are still not happy*

- *Panic before rupture and the great possibility of suffering from mental disorders in case such occurs. They have a terrible fear and intolerance of loneliness, fearing breakups*
- *They present a particular deficit of social skills, such as a lack of assertiveness*
- *Very low self-esteem and distorted self-concept*
- *They show that they are sad and worried*

As synthesis of these characteristics, an extract could be done for those we consider emotionally dependent. These must be necessarily present:

- *Fear and intolerance of loneliness.*
- *History of severely unbalanced dating relationships or a single relationship that has occupied most of the subject's adult life due to its length.*
- *Low self-esteem*

The causes of emotional dependency are pervasive and complex. However, we can anticipate that, among other factors, the mixture of early affective deficiencies and maintaining emotional bonding towards unsatisfactory people are responsible for the genesis of the dependence. People dependent on their partner consider them as the center of their existence, idealize them, submit to them, and be capable of practically anything to avoid breaking the relationship (Castello, 2005).

3.1. Dependence and Sexism

Overdependence can act as a factor that increases tolerance towards abuse by the other partner and can make it difficult to end such a relationship (Hendy, Eggen, Gustitus, McCleod, & Ng, 2003). Many papers have shown that battering men are highly dependent on their partners compared to men who do not use violence in their partner relationships. This is clearly related to the concept of the dominant emotional dependency of which Jorge

Castello (2005) speaks. Dependency occurs when the affective need coexists together with aggressiveness toward the partner. Dominant dependents are characterized, as their name suggests, by having relations of domination instead of submission while simultaneously feeling dependent on their partner. Recent studies show that younger adolescents consider giving others an important factor. However, often, it includes only pleasant aspects avoiding the pain, which leads to entering a dependency, many times without realizing it (Leal, 2007). On the other hand, the most common aggressive behaviors are psychological and less physical. 45-50% of adolescents have suffered and exercised insults (Sánchez, Ortega Rivera, Ortega Ruiz, and Viejo, 2008). Another 52% of women disagree that if the couple makes one suffer, it is that they do not care; among men, this belief is appreciated by 31% (Izarra, Pinto, and Arroyo, 2008). Sexism, in this matter, is an attitude directed toward people based on biological sex (male or female). In practice, however, sexism is often identified with negative attitudes (the term prejudice is sometimes used to refer to a positive predisposition toward group members) directed toward women. However, this term is often used to refer to men (Moya, 2004). Peter Glick and Susan Fiske (1996) attempt to advance a better understanding of modern sexism and introduce the concept of ambivalent sexism, the result of the coexistence of positive and negative affects and attitudes towards women. This kind of sexism refers to the combination of two elements with negative affective charges, which result from complex relationships that characterize the sexes. Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that the literary tradition on sexism has conceptualized it as a reflection of hostility towards women but omits a significant aspect of sexism. They view sexism as a multidimensional construct encompassing two types of sexist attitudes: hostile and benevolent. Hostile sexism coincides with the old definitions of sexism, to which Gordon Allport (1954) alluded in his classic definition of prejudice, understood as antipathy. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is defined as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women who are sexist in terms of stereotyped and limited roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This benevolent sexism is not good because it masks prejudiced attitudes towards women and can mislead women with its affective and positive tone. Benevolent sexism can be even more harmful than hostile one since it can be used to

compensate or legitimize it, and given that whoever is benevolent sexist does not usually consider themself a sexist. These authors assume that the ambivalent sexists originate from the simultaneous influence of two types of sexist beliefs because they are two constructs subjectively linked to opposite feelings towards women. The sexist man can be ambivalent in that their attitudes indicate a tendency to respond very favorably or unfavorable towards women. According to Peter Glick, Jeffrey Diebold, Barbara Bailey-Werner, and Lin Zhu (1997), ambivalent sexism is capable of reconciling hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs without conflicting feelings, which is suggested by the high correlation between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Sexist men avoid conflicts between their positive and negative attitudes towards women, classifying women into good and bad subgroups, which include positive and negative aspects of ambivalent sexism. Hostile sexism is applied as a punishment to non-traditional women, such as professional women and feminists, because these women do not assume traditional gender roles and try to alter power relations between men and women. While benevolent sexism is a reward to women who fulfill traditional roles because these women accept male supremacy. Therefore, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism act as an articulated system of rewards and punishments to let women know where they stand in society. In this way, Glick and Fiske (2001) suggest that hostile and benevolent Sexism revolves around social power, gender identity, and sexuality. Thus, the authors propose that hostile and benevolent sexism are articulated around three common components: the first has to do with the distribution of power and is called paternalism. In the case of hostile sexism, paternalism is the dominant type, while benevolent sexism is a protective type. The second component refers to the differentiation of gender, whether competitive (hostile sexism) or complementary (benevolent sexism). The third component of sexism concerns sexuality, in which women lack sexuality or have a powerful sexuality that makes them dangerous for men (hostile sexism). On the other hand, relationships of heterosexual couples are essential for achieving true happiness (benevolent sexism). Many authors also mention the so-called economic violence, in which one controls the entire economy, leaving the other powerless to handle money freely. This type of sexist discrimination tends to appear together with other forms

of control, such as clothing, by which the person who suffers is tied to the tastes of the other. In the same context, some exercise control over personal relationships, schedules, leisure time, outings, trips, etc. This is another way to exercise dominance over the other person by absorbing their life under continual scrutiny, demanding one's approval for any activity, and censoring the initiative of the other. These attitudes are not usually considered when dealing with discrimination and sexism, even less in teenagers. Attention is usually paid to violence and mistreatment without appreciating that the attitudes indicated, if they become radicalized, can lead to violence and abuse. Glick and Hilt (2000) propose a speculative model on the development of prejudice in gender to explain how it evolves from an aggressive form of prejudice typical for childhood to a set of ambivalent attitudes in adulthood towards people of the other sex. They consider that this transition is driven by sexual interdependence that enhances the appearance of benevolent sexism. The key moment for change is puberty. To conclude, it could be said that ambivalent sexism reflects the characteristics of the relationships between men and women. However, it is not exclusive to gender groups, where power differences coexist within the interpersonal attraction.

Good relationships are generally characterized by effective conflict resolution and reparation strategies, which favor adequate coping and prevent hostile exchanges (Rholes, Kohn, and Simpson, 2014). On the contrary, dysfunctional interactions reduce subjective well-being and increase the probability that conflicts will worsen (Siffert and Schwarz, 2011). Conflict resolution strategies are interpersonal behaviors that allow disagreements to be controlled. Initially, they were classified into two categories: constructive and destructive. While the last reflects a positive emotional tone and helps preserve affection, the latter harms individuals and relationships due to signs of hostility and disrespect (Flora and Segrin, 2015). Starting off from this point, research has attempted to describe the styles of handling conflicts in greater detail. Kurdek (1994) designed the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI) to measure the strategies used by both partners. His questionnaire has been adapted and used in this investigative work as well. Initially, the scale was made up of

four problem-resolution styles. They were: positive, involving compromise and negotiation; (2) conflict engagement, referring to the use of personal attacks and loss of control; (3) withdrawal, which means refusing to discuss a complex topic, disconnecting from the couple; and (4) conformity, which happens when the person gives up and does not defend their own opinion. In two later studies, Kurdek described three styles in place of four. In both cases, there was involvement in conflict and withdrawal, but the third factor was combined into one called positive conforming (Kurdek, 1998). Research on teenage couples has shown that positive strategies, withdrawal, and involvement in conflict are common strategies in this type of relationship (Shulman, Tuval-Mashiach, Levran, & Anbar, 2006). The questionnaire has been used in romantic relationships (heterosexual and homosexual, with or without children) and has been able to predict changes in couples. For example, the communication pattern in which one member of the couple is involved and the other withdraws has been related to dissatisfaction and poor subjective well-being (Siffert and Schwarz, 2011).

The scale also has two versions (CRSI-Self/ CRSI-Couple), which makes it possible to evaluate the styles of resolution of conflicts in both members of the couple. Training in conflict resolution strategies is an essential objective in different intervention contexts. It is also a common objective in programs for preventing violence in adolescent couples (known in English as teen dating violence). In this sense, the CRSI has proven to be a valuable tool for assessing improvements in these skills (Antle, Sullivan, Dryden, Karam, and Barbee, 2011). Since dysfunctional early relationships can have numerous negative consequences for health and development (Exner-Cortens, 2014; Fernández-González, O'Leary and Muñoz-Rivas, 2014), it is essential to have instruments for this purpose. Some questionnaires, such as the CADRI (Fernández-Fuertes, Fuertes and Pulido, 2006) or the M-CTS (Muñoz-Rivas, O'Leary and González, 2007) contain a few items that indicate conflict resolution strategies. However, those instruments do not discriminate between the different strategies, and some of the items are interpreted as indicators of psychological aggression (for example, "leaving the room in an annoyed way" or "refusing to talk about a

subject"). In terms of intervention, it is essential to have measures that distinguish between dysfunctional forms of resolution of conflicts and other more complex forms of emotional abuse (Cortés-Ayala et al., 2014; Ureña, Romera, Casas, Viejo and Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). On the other hand, the evidence also indicates that adolescents show some cultural differences concerning groups of other countries in the severity of the violence manifested in their relationships as a couple (Viejo, Monjes, Sánchez, and Ortega-Ruiz, 2015).

Another important aspect of conflict resolution is the idea of forgiveness. The study on forgiveness in love relationships has been increasing in recent years, especially within the framework of the identification of those variables that would contribute to the maintenance of a satisfactory link within the couple (e.g., Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich & Fincham, 2007; Fincham & Beach, 2007; Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon & Litzinger, 2009; Karremans & Van Lange, 2009). Forgiveness is contingent on a relational transgression, understood as interpersonal stress caused by the perception of being wronged or offended by another (McCullough, Root & Cohen, 2006). Within the framework of love bonds, these offenses are part of daily interactions because, even unintentionally, something can be done or said that hurts the couple, for example, an oversight or a comment made without thinking. However, on some occasions, these transgressions can leave deep and lasting emotional scars that affect the psychological closeness in the couple. These issues are frequently seen in the psychotherapeutic field (Gordon, Baucom & Snyder, 2005). Although there are a series of definitions about forgiveness, one of the most used conceptualizations is the one originally proposed by McCullough, Worthington Jr. and Rachal (1997), who conceive it as a set of prosocial changes through which the offended person decreases their motivation to avoid and seek revenge from the person who hurt them. Based on the idea of the reciprocity of ties, these authors point out that, when faced with an offense, people tend to distance themselves from the person who offended them and experience feelings of pain and anger that translate into thoughts of revenge. According to these authors, such reactions would be part of a basic and natural response of human beings that prevents them from being damaged and allows them to control aggression, thus protecting the self

(McCullough, Root, Tabak & Witvliet, 2009). The aspects of avoidance and revenge constitute what has more recently been conceptualized as the negative dimension of forgiveness (Fincham & Beach, 2002). Subsequently, given that forgiveness would also imply the presence of positive feelings towards the person who committed the transgression, the component of benevolence was added (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). It refers to the reestablishment of conciliatory and positive feelings towards the offender. This aspect, currently called the positive dimension of forgiveness, is especially relevant in close relationships, such as a couple of bonds, on which it has been postulated that the absence of negative motivations would not be enough by itself to account for forgiveness. It is so as it requires, in addition, the achievement of a more balanced and positive vision of the other (Fincham & Beach, 2002; Paleari, Regalia & Fincham, 2009). The discussion about the beneficial potential of forgiveness as a strategy to invariably face transgressions is still subject to debate by some authors (e.g., Legaree, Turner & Lollis, 2007). It is especially relevant when it is confused with other related concepts, such as forgetting (forgiving does not imply removing from consciousness the event which occurred). Forgiving does not necessarily imply the reestablishment of the relationship, and the justification of the offense does not imply accepting the reasons why the other acted in a hurtful way (Guzmán, 2010a). Despite this, there is extensive empirical evidence about the direct association between forgiveness and satisfaction in couple relationships (e.g., Fincham & Beach, 2007; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Orathinkal & Vansteenwegen, 2006; Tsang, McCullough & Fincham, 2006). Various studies have concluded that the ability to forgive is associated with higher levels of dyadic adjustment (Gordon, 2003). It includes more constructive communication patterns and lower levels of psychological aggression in married couples (Fincham & Beach, 2002) and the achievement of higher levels of closeness and intimacy in the relationship (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro & Hannon, 2002). Likewise, forgiveness has been associated with better indicators of mental health and psychological well-being (e.g., Bono, McCullough & Root, 2008; Casullo, Morandi & Donati, 2006; Riek & Mania, 2012). There are three ways of understanding forgiveness. Firstly, episodic forgiveness is identified, which is conceived as a state concerning a specific transgression at a given time

(McCullough et al., 1998; Paleari et al., 2009). Among the instruments developed to measure episodic forgiveness is the Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations (McCullough, 2006). Secondly, there is the so-called dyadic forgiveness, which is defined as the willingness to forgive within a particular relationship (Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2006; Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004). One instrument that measures dyadic forgiveness is the Interpersonal Resolution Scale (Hargrave & Sells, 1997). Thirdly, dispositional forgiveness is understood as a personality trait that alludes to the tendency to forgive in various interpersonal circumstances. The Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness is one instrument that evaluates it (Berry, Worthington Jr., Parrott III, O'Connor & Wade, 2001). Based on this conceptualization and focusing on episodic forgiveness in close relationships, McCullough et al. (1998) developed the TRIM-12, whose objective is to evaluate forgiveness, encompassing the two dimensions described above, avoidance and revenge. Subsequently, the benevolence dimension was added to these subscales (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), giving rise to a new version, the TRIM-18 (McCullough et al., 1998). This is one of the most widely used instruments at the international level to assess forgiveness and encompasses conflict resolution. In the scientific field, terms such as satisfaction, quality, adjustment, and happiness have often been used interchangeably to describe the overall quality of an intimate relationship. However, the term satisfaction is used more and more frequently to refer to the subjective assessment of a person in a partner relationship (Graham, Diebels, & Barnow, 2011). A series of variables are identified in the search for the factors that regulate all these aspects, such as categories of emotions, behaviors, and beliefs that influence marital quality, stability, satisfaction, and adjustment. In this line, Karney and Bradbury (1995) analyzed the results of 115 longitudinal studies and examined more than 200 independent variables influencing marital quality and stability. One of the strongest predictors of marital satisfaction in men and women was the exchange rate of positive and negative behaviors. Also, in descending order of importance, other significant predictors were: the length of the marriage, negative reciprocity, stress, and income level. Regarding the length of the marriage, the authors concluded that marriages tend to be more stable but less satisfactory over time. Some data support that stability and marital

satisfaction is interrelated but not interchangeable. Adler-Baeder, Higginbotham, and Lamke (2004) conducted a systematic review of research published in 1990 on the factors that influence marital quality. These authors took as reference the "Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptability Model" ("Vulnerability-Stress Adaptability": VSA) proposed by Karney and Bradbury (1995) and selected 178 studies that had focused on interaction variables. In short, it identified three categories in the literature reviewed: (a) Positivity (factors of protection). Factors included in this category are: positive emotions, affect and feelings, affective behavior, the behavior of support, shared time, identity in the relationship, expressiveness and acceptance of oneself; (b) Negativity (risk factors). The factors included in this category are negative affect, emotions and feelings, overt behavior, negative behaviors, demanding or critical behavior, avoidance and demand-withdrawal patterns, and (c) Beliefs (protective factors). Factors that fall into this category are realistic beliefs and perception of fulfilled expectations, knowledge and understanding of the couple, consensus, perceiving equality and justice, positive attributions, and prejudices. Given these results, the authors concluded that Building positive emotional bonding is an important factor in promoting high levels of quality in the relationship. Results that support the conclusions of the study are carried out by Karney and Bradbury (1995). In a later study, Bradbury and Karney (2004) reviewed the factors that positively influence marital satisfaction and stability. The study showed no differences between the couples who presented good and bad strategies in conflict resolution and satisfaction in the first four years of marriage if they expressed positive emotions such as affection, sense of humor, interest, and curiosity about their partner. Changes in marital quality over time relationships have been related to various social changes such as traditional attitudes toward couple relationships, interpersonal processes, and certain sociodemographic variables (age, educational level, employment, and income level). However, Amato, Johnson, Booth, and Rogers (2003) argue that satisfaction in the relationship can improve with time since younger couples tend to have more work difficulties, family pressure, or problems of coexistence than couples who have been together for a longer time. Finally, some results have shown that the intensity of romantic love correlates significantly with

satisfaction regardless of relationship time (Acevedo and Aron, 2009). The importance of psychological aggression in couple relationships lies in its implications for physical and mental health (Coker et al., 2002) and general personal well-being (Umberson, Anderson, Glick, and Shapiro, 1998). Various investigations maintain that psychological aggression is a "normalized" and "usual" practice in married couples who live together (Caetano, Field, Ramisetty-Mikler, and Lipsky, 2009; Follingstad and Edmundson, 2010; Karney, 2006; O'Leary and Williams, 2006; Taft, Torres, Panuzio, Murphy, O'Farrell, Monson and Murphy, 2006). In clinical samples of couples who come to therapy to solve their relationship conflicts, aggression is a significant predictor of separation or divorce (Henning and Klesges, 2003). Regarding possible gender differences, some results suggest that gender is a moderating variable critical in understanding the relationship between marital satisfaction, conflict, and partner aggression (Stith, Green, Smith, & Ward, 2008). Likewise, the researchers in this area allude to the need to analyze the context in which psychological aggression occurs to determine the degree to which these behaviors are perceived as normative versus abusive in men and women (DeHart, Follingstad, & Fields, 2010). Regarding age, psychological aggression tends to be more stable or persistent over time than patterns of physical abuse (O'Leary, 2004). Conflict resolution strategies represent one of the most important factors related to marital adjustment. Some experimental psychologists, such as Gottman (1993), argue that conflict management and certain interaction variables at the level of the couple, such as criticism, defensiveness, contempt, indifference, and lack of response, are the most important predictors of relationship dissolution. Likewise, of all these variables, contempt triggers an accumulation of negative feelings towards the partner, and contempt is a significant predictor of separation or divorce. Other interaction variables that have been associated with an increase in psychological aggression are determined as destructive patterns in the couple, such as mutual avoidance, mutual negative interaction, and the demand-withdrawal pattern (Jacobson and Christensen, 1996). Other studies highlight the importance of communication skills in conflict management and satisfaction. For example, certain patterns of avoidance are defined as active avoidance, passive avoidance, and unwillingness

to actively discuss a topic (Windle and Smith, 2009). The link between dyadic adjustment and psychological aggression has been adequately established in the scientific literature through the "Model of Actor-Partner Interdependence" (Kenny and Ledermann, 2012). This model was influenced by Bretz (2010), who conducted a study with 92 married couples to determine whether attachment representations in adult life, psychological aggression in the couple, and the strategies used in conflict resolution were related to dyadic adjustment in the first years of marriage. The study's results showed that the avoidant attachment style had stronger associations with dyadic adjustment than the anxious attachment style, given that high levels of avoidant attachment were associated with less dyadic adjustment in the couple. The analysis of aggressive behaviors in couple relationships is a priority target for researchers in the field of domestic violence (Desmarais, Reeves, Nicholls, Telford, & Fiebert, (2012); Esquivel Santoveña, & Dixon, 2012). Physical aggression has been associated not only with important consequences for physical and mental health (Coker et al., 2002) but also with a deterioration in the satisfaction, quality and adjustment of the couple which increases the likelihood of separation or divorce (DeMaris, 2000; Lawrence & Bradbury, 2007; Marcus, 2012; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005; Testa & Leonard, 2001). However, existing longitudinal research is sparse. In order to be able to establish definitive conclusions, some results show that physical and psychological aggression are not the only predictors of dyadic adjustment in the couple (Schumacher & Leonard, 2005; Stith et al., 2011). In a recent study, the perpetration of physical aggression in the couple has been related to the degree of commitment, satisfaction, and stability in the relationship (Rhoades, Stanley, and Markman (2012). Several studies have examined the dyadic adjustment in relation to the phenomenon of domestic violence. Caceres (2002) examined the influence of variables such as gender, marital status, and degree of relational harmony in domestic violence. The study's results showed a low level of relational harmony and the ability to reach agreements with the participants who requested assistance or advice for marital or emotional problems derived from a separation process. Caceres (2004) examined the role of the context in the phenomenon of intimate partner violence. They observed that the group with low violence presented a high degree of dyadic adjustment. In contrast, the

group with high violence obtained a low score indicating serious conflict, similar to the one which gets couples separated. In addition, in the rest of the subscales, the capacity to reach agreements, general satisfaction within the relationship, or an expression of affection in the dyadic cohesion, quite high scores were obtained, and, in all cases, statistically significant differences were observed between the two groups (Caceres, 2006). The results also showed that the couples with high scores in dyadic adjustment also showed high idealization of the relationship. Married couples generally scored low on the dyadic adjustment, the same being indicative of major conflicts in the relationship. Finally, Cáceres (2012) examined the degree of abuse/violence in couples with relationship problems. The study results showed low scores on the adjustment scale, indicating conflict and unhappiness in the relationship. Meta-analysis of the scientific literature through the "Model of Actor-Partner Interdependence" mentioned above and carried by Langer, Lawrence, and Barry (2008) examined the longitudinal course of physical aggression in 103 married couples. The results of the study showed, among other aspects, that the presence of dysfunctional personality traits in men and women was a significant predictor of their aggression, experienced stress levels, as well as the stress levels of their partners, and the physical attacks suffered. In addition, variations in the level of stress predicted changes in physical aggression over time and, ultimately, marital satisfaction. Godbout, Dutton, Lussier, and Sabourin (2009) used attachment theory as a conceptual framework to highlight the importance of early exposure to violence in predicting representations of attachment in adulthood (fundamentally of the anxious and avoidant type) and the effect on the perpetration of physical aggression and dyadic adjustment in a sample of 644 adults of both sexes. In a recent study, Reddy et al. (2011) found that conflict prevention paradoxically can increase the probability of using aggressive physical or psychological methods to resolve relationship conflicts. Furthermore, given the potentially negative role that experiences emotional avoidance may have on communication and conflict management in the couple, the study results showed that higher levels of emotional avoidance decreased dyadic adjustment and increased aggressiveness in both partners. In summary, psychological aggression, conflicts, conflict resolution strategies, the

representations of attachment in adult life, and certain dyadic patterns of interaction are some of the most explored variables in the investigation of physical aggression and dyadic adjustment.

All the studies presented so far offer us a set of strategies that can be classified as positive-constructive or negative-destructive. Constructive processes include interactions that give rise to cooperation, problem-solving behaviors and intention to learn about each other's needs, confidence to discuss disagreements, and focus on the relationship more than on individual aspects. In contrast, destructive processes often refer to interactions of manipulation, coercion, escalation, dominance, subordination, and rejection or avoidance of the problem (Fincham, 2003). This knowledge of conflict resolution strategies and their constructive or destructive nature has been crucial in research on conflicts in couples and, in general, the family. However, another of the remarkable findings has been the understanding of the complexity of the strategies in terms of their mediations. Cognitive dimensions, referring to beliefs, attributions, and perceptions, play such an important role in conflicts that they deserve more attention. It is usual that within the same family, different visions of the conflict coexist (Rinaldi and Howe, 2003) because the fact of maintaining an intimate relationship does not guarantee an agreement (Acitelli et al., 1993) nor the use of the same conflict resolution strategies (Canary and Spitzberg, 1987). These discrepancies motivate the interest in analyzing the relevance and intensity that family conflicts take on for the different members of one family (Rodrigo et al., 2005). Logically, the strategies in this context are filtered by the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors of each one. In other words, the different perceptions about the same conflict create a cognitive and emotional distance that increases the difficulties in reaching agreements. For example, the discrepancies in the importance given to the topic of a specific discussion correlate with the use of more destructive tactics by both partners (in the strategy of demands-rejection). The distribution of domestic and family chores is a clear example, being a relevant topic for the woman (who perceives an injustice due to inequality) and therefore entails demands for her partners. At the same time, men usually respond with strategies of rejection or

avoidance (Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert, 1996). The lack of emotional control is another essential ingredient in conflicts, which usually leads to difficulties in implementing constructive strategies and reaching agreements. For example, Papp, Cummings, and Goeke-Morey (2009), analyzing the management of conflicts over money, find this topic of discussion relevant, recurring, and stressful for both members of the couple. They express negative emotions associated with the conflict (rejection, anger, fear, and insecurity), more intensely localized in the male partner (hostility, anger, and insults). These harmful emotional components explain why no agreements are reached in most cases and why they are postponed until a new discussion. Examining the internal dynamics during a conflict episode is another essential component of understanding marital conflicts (Gottman & Driver, 2005). In other words, the course of the conflict (e.g., initially constructive) can change diametrically based on the behavior displayed by a coupling member (e.g., a mockery), triggering an unexpected outcome. These same authors highlight some efforts to address the knowledge regarding the multiple influences and transactions that occur during conflicts. In this direction, observational studies allow us to know the sequences of behaviors developed in the course of action of a conflict and its impact on each of those involved in the discussion. Analyzing the sequences, Lee and colleagues (Lee et al., 2013) observe, for example, that couples often fail to access an understanding of the partner's perspective of the other, giving rise to a sequence of monologues that escalate towards negativity and frustration in the conflict. Medina (Medina et al., 2004) add to the analysis by making observations that both parties usually get stuck in the positioning phase, giving rise to patterns of complaints and attacks. Negative emotional tension prevents progress toward the resolution phases of the conflict (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

Conflicts exist wherever and whenever cognitions or emotions are incompatible within individuals or between groups of individuals. It arises in personal relationships, in business and professional relationships, in organizations, between groups and organizations, and among nations. Notably, the definition of a conflict implies a perceived or fundamental interdependence. The conflict itself can be natural or perceived. That is

where the concept of cognition or knowledge comes in the definition. Thoughts or cognitions include what we believe. Those beliefs are what we think we know based on reality. In personal interactions, perception is more important than reality. Thoughts or perceptions affect our behavior, attitude, and communication. The cause of the conflict is the perception or belief that there are conflicting needs, desires, ideas, interests, and goals. It is everywhere, and it is unavoidable. It arises from many sources. In addition to being the background to the negotiation, conflict also arises during the negotiation. The issue of conflict is extensive and complex. A misdiagnosis or misdirection of it leads to an antagonistic interaction and destructive and harmful behaviors. The conflict is generally considered constructive or destructive, but the approach can also be constructive or destructive. As mentioned, we unconsciously learn to hold a destructive view of conflict through our interactions and prevailing cultural beliefs. The destructive patterns we have developed result in missed opportunities, frustrated goals, and other negative repercussions. In organizational contexts, negative repercussions include low productivity, low morale, destructive political behavior, decreased cohesion, absenteeism, and desertion. A simple example of a destructive conflict would be when two departments within the same organization might not be able to work together. Such situations can arise from disagreements motivated by a personal dislike, a misunderstanding, a previous bad business interaction, or many other sources. Another example of a destructive conflict arises from the reward systems in which some must lose so that others win. When there is a fixed amount that must be divided based on the perspective of one or more people on the recognition of performance, employees are put to compete. In such a context, many negative behaviors can emerge. The concept of handling or management implies using the conflict for constructive purposes so that they are approached through a committed or collaborative style. Conflict resolution can be approached from three styles of interaction: competition, commitment, and collaboration. From the interactionist point of view, it is sometimes better to avoid specific conflicts. Maintaining and managing a conflict, even creating conflict, is appropriate when trying to create constructive results. Avoidance, at least temporarily, may be the best option when emotions are running high, when tempers

are aggravating, when one does not feel very safe about what action to take, or when the fundamental issue is minor. Avoidance can also be the most effective strategy when the conflict is constructive and there are no destructive consequences. For example, if two workgroups have a conflict similar to the team spirit that makes them compete against each other for better productivity, and the conflict does not rise to a level that prevents communication, then the conflict is constructive. In selecting the best target and strategy, it is necessary to focus on interdependence rather than power over others, mutual empathy and communication, and potential constructive effects. Sometimes, even when avoidance is the appropriate external strategy, one may need to manage or resolve the conflict internally. When there is no interdependence in reality, the conflict tends to be internal only in one of the two sides. One of the parties may wish things were different from facing the choice of evasion, management, or resolution to deal with internal conflict. For example, if one is on the losing side of a competitive interaction, one has to resolve the internal conflict. If one harbors resentment, anger, and disagreement, it opens the door to a negative personal scale. In resolving the conflict, one has three potential goals: 1) try to change the other person's perception and beliefs; 2) try to change the situation; 3) try to change themselves.

Chapter 4. Emotional Expressivity

Emotions are present in everyone's life, practically in everything we do. We are usually with a friend because we feel comfortable with them, we visit our grandparents because we love them, and we go to the beach at the weekend intending to have a good time. We get angry when things do not work out for us, and we are happy and satisfied when we succeed in what we have set out to do. We are afraid to fly by plane or visit the dentist's office. We feel grieved and hurt when a relative dies or happy when the person we are attracted to reciprocates. There are days when we can work or study with interest and enthusiasm and others who only feel lazy or annoyed. These and other situations in our daily life reveal the influence that emotions exert on our lives.

We can affirm that emotions are inherent to the condition itself and that, to a large extent, determines its existence. However, despite its continued presence in our lives, it is challenging to make a precise definition of a phenomenon as complex as emotions. The definitions have always depended on the theoretical position of the researchers who have dedicated effort to studies. Hence, for example, from a biological perspective, neuroscientists have stressed the importance of the brain or hormonal mechanisms, such as neurotransmitters involved in emotion, without taking so much into account the subjective-experiential components. From a cognitive perspective, the importance of cognitive processes has been emphasized (evaluation, thinking). The physiological and behavioral aspects have been left aside. For example, researchers who have focused on the expressive aspects of emotion, particularly facial expression features, have highlighted the communicative aspects of these and have left in a second plan other aspects. Faced with this diversity of points of view on emotions, it is possible to opt for general descriptions taking into account the components or response systems that intervene. In this sense, it can be said that emotions are responses to stimuli that are significant and occur in three systems or components: (1) the neurophysiological-biochemical, (2) motor or behavioral (expressive), and (3) cognitive or experiential (subjective). Responses of neurophysiological and biochemical components occur, for example, when we feel fear: the heart rate increases, breathing quickens, the pupil dilates, hands sweat, the muscles tense, adrenaline is secreted, and there is an increase in blood glucose, etc. As can be seen, many changes take place so that the organism is prepared to face the demands of the environment.

The behavioral or expressive component of emotion comprises a set of external behavior factors such as facial expressions, body movements, avoidant behavior, and verbal aspects (voice intonation, intensity, sounds, etc.) Thus, for example, if we see a person with their mouth open, their eyebrows raised, and their eyes wide open, at the same time that they emit an exclamation, for example, we would qualify without great difficulties their emotional state. This emotion component is highly influenced by sociocultural and educational factors that can modulate emotional expression. In this way, emotional

expression varies throughout the ontogenetic development of the person, and it is the adults who exercise higher emotional control compared to children. On the other hand, social rules modulate emotional expression because they facilitate or inhibit the manifestation of agreement with the context in which the emotional experience occurs. So, for example, we cry, feel sad at a funeral and inhibit our anger or dissatisfaction at work in front of a superior. As its name indicates, the cognitive-experiential component of emotion includes two fundamental aspects of emotion. The experiential aspect relates to the affective experience, with feeling and experiencing the emotion properly. It refers to the hedonic tone of the emotional experience, that is, to the subjective states qualified by the subject as pleasant or unpleasant, positive or negative, or experiences when one is the object of emotion. The cognitive aspect is related to the conscious recognition that we make of our emotional state that is within the "label" that we put to identify them, for example, saying that "I am happy," that "I have fear," or that "I feel guilty." When emotions are studied, other concepts are usually proposed whose meanings, for their semantic proximity can lead to confusion. This is the case regarding the ideas of affect, state mood, temperament, and feeling, which we will try to define below. Affect is the term used to describe the hedonic tone or valence of an emotional state, that is, its positive quality pleasant–unpleasant, and its intensity, which can be high or low. In this sense, the effect is related to preference, with the value one has for a specific subject or the situations one faces. Moods, unlike emotions, do not have specifics; they have a global character and do not have a particular object.

On the other hand, emotions are intentional. They are directed towards some object or fact, which can be external or internal, that causes them. That is, they are specific reactions to particular events. Moods tend to last longer than emotions and be less intense. They are always in our lives and provide the affective background, the “emotional color” to everything we do. Temperament is formed by the set of traits or individual differences or characteristics which are stable over long periods concerning how people experience and express their emotions. In other words, it would be the trend to respond emotionally in a

particular way. The concept of feeling explains the propensities or inclinations that people have to respond emotionally either in front of particular objects or under certain circumstances. Such an example is the xenophobic attitude towards immigrants. In this sense, love or hate would be understood more as feelings than emotions.

Feelings and emotions refer more to seeing and treating an object than to a transient response. In any case, the two terms are closely related: feelings are the basis for emotions when something happens involving an object. With the publication of the book „The expression of emotions in animals and man, "Darwin was the first to show the functional importance of emotions. The According to Darwin (1984), emotions fulfilled two functions: (1) they facilitated adaptation from the organism to the environment and, therefore, its survival when it reacts appropriately in emergencies (for example, fight or flight); (2) They served as a means of communication of future intentions to other animals through the expression of the emotional behavior. In relation to the adaptive function of emotions, they prepare the organism (activate it) to face the demands or demands of the environment and direct it towards a goal (approach avoidance). In this sense, it is affirmed that each emotional behavior has a target: fear is related to protection, rage to destruction, excitement with reproduction, sadness with reintegration, acceptance with affiliation, disgust with rejection, anticipation with exploration, and surprise with orientation. All these emotions and their functions represent adaptive behavior patterns related to survival. The social function of emotions refers to the role that emotions play in adapting the individual to their social environment. The primary means of communication of the emotional state to others are facial expression, posture movements, and verbal expression. In this way, one indicates their states and intentions to others (whether they are members of the same species or a different one); thus, they affect behavior or actions. In other words, emotional reactions express our affective state, but they also regulate how others react to us. Emotional expressions also facilitate social interaction. A clear example of this function is the smile that spontaneously manifests when we are happy. However, at the same time, on many occasions, this emotional expression is socially motivated and not emotional. We

smile when we are introduced to someone, which is a social expression of acceptance, recognition, or simply good manners. Another illustrative example of the facilitation of the social relationship can be observed in the loss of a loved one; their death produces suffering, grief, and sadness, among other emotional states. The ritualization of the mourning process is intended to promote re-adaptation and social cohesion of the family members. Positive emotional states (happiness, joy) also facilitate social interaction because they promote prosocial behaviors. People under the influence of a positive affective state are more likely to be prosocial—more social, cooperative, and inclined to help others.

On the contrary, emotionally negative states (sadness, anger, boredom) often hinder communication and put into practice prosocial attitudes. It is said that a happy person finds it easier to be good than a person who is sad or desperate. Of course, this last statement can be qualified according to the specific circumstances of each case. An aspect closely related to the functionality of emotions is their regulation or control. To fulfill the functions mentioned above, emotions must be manifested in an appropriate context and with adequate intensity. Both biological and emotional mechanisms are involved in emotional regulation. Optimal emotional regulation occurs when a person can control their emotions concerning themselves and others and to the established social norms, presenting competent psychological functioning. Emotional regulation is closely linked to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000).

In terms of the biological and cultural aspects of emotions, any scientific discipline that tries to understand what the human being is like ends up encountering, sooner or later, the general question referring to the opposition of genetics versus the environment. As previously mentioned, Darwin insisted on the biological nature of emotions. However, it is not difficult to suspect that mental processes with as much social relevance as emotions must also be deeply connected with cultural aspects. Accordingly, it is generally proposed that the biological basis of emotions is not incompatible with recognizing environmental influences. It is possible to affirm, following the evolutionist model, that a good part of the essential features of emotions, such as their expression, are universal and innate.

At the same time, it can be argued that cultural and social issues deeply influence other aspects of emotions. As far as the 4th-century Greek philosopher B.C. Plato affirmed that one should be wary of emotions, which would lead us to deception since they belong to the irrational part of the soul. Similarly, the 18th-century French philosopher XVII, Descartes, warned about the danger of letting emotions carry oneself away. For Darwin, the existence of emotional expressions proved that we are descended from mammals. According to many evolutionists, inherited emotions from our animal ancestors force us to act irrationally and make us forget our ability to reason. We finally turn out to be guided by our most primitive impulses. During the 19th century and even before, more "romantic" authors such as Pascal, Rousseau, Fichte or Shelling tried to “rescue” the emotions from the rationalism of the Enlightenment that continued with the platonic line of thinking.

According to it, the emotions would be direct, intuitive ways of knowing, which would not be related to reason, but would reject it to offer a more "integral" form of thought. According to the romantic vision of emotions, these mental states are "alternative pathways" of knowledge, different from reason, and that also distances us from arguments and considerations of the facts, which makes the leading guide when making decisions by our intuition. Within this vision, the so-called romantic “self” occupies a predominant place, inspired by the artist, and concerning which Nietzsche's philosophy is not alien. The romantics imagined a powerful self, not open to any social constraint, which has to assert its individuality and originality in front of everyone. In this task of differentiation and individualization, emotions have a preponderant role. After everything, the reason is universal, and what is sought here is the opposite, stand out from the herd. Other cultures, however, may have a different view of what emotions are; therefore, comparing the emotions felt by members of one culture to another could partly distinguish what is cultural in our emotions.

To give an example of such differences within the cultures, we could take the Western culture compared to the Far East. The first contrast is the nature of the Self. In western culture, the Self is inherently romantic as individuality or the desire to stand out

from others is distinctive. In many eastern cultures, it is usually the opposite. For Asian cultures, for example, succeeding is also essential. However, it is still common to find other values considered more critical, such as living in harmony with others and adjusting to the group as much as possible: work colleagues, classmates, family, and social groups. This distinction can be traced to the different ways of expressing emotions. Let us think for a moment about anger. In the western world, anger is usually a way to self-affirm one's individuality. Instead, in many oriental countries, irritable behavior is not so frequent or widely accepted.

It could be admitted that there are a few universal emotions with typical patterns of expression and performance. However, at the same time, the same emotions are very plastic biological processes about the environment, so both the emotional stimuli and a good part of the responses that are generated depend very strongly on the culture in which we are formed. Emotions that humans experience play a fundamental role in the dynamics of all social phenomena. For this reason, they must be incorporated into the analysis of emotions and their practical implementations in the work of psychologists. This incorporation process, which has been an interest for decades.

We all know from experience that emotions are essential in our lives, and human beings can only experience life emotionally. However, there are still many unanswered questions about the nature of emotions, which explains the difficulty of arriving at a satisfactory definition (Marcus, 2000: 224). The profound complexity that characterizes human beings is reflected in our emotions' vast and subtle universe. For this reason, understanding the complex nature of human emotions constitutes a prerequisite for the proper development of psychology.

Denzin (2009) defines emotion as “a living, truthful, situated and transient bodily experience that pervades a person’s stream of consciousness, which is perceived within and running through the body, and that, during its experience, engulfs the person and their companions in a new and transformed reality – the reality of a world constituted by

emotional experience." Kemper's definition of primary emotion adds to the theory: "a complex of organized predispositions to participate in certain classes of biologically adaptive behaviors characterized by peculiar states of physiological arousal, peculiar feelings or states, a peculiar affective state of receptivity, and a peculiar pattern of expressive reactions" (Kemper, 1987). Lawler defines emotions as "evaluative states, whether positive or negative, relatively brief, which have physiological, neurological and cognitive elements" (Lawler,1999). Brody sees emotions as motivational systems with physiological, behavioral, experiential, and cognitive components, which have positive or negative effects and vary in intensity, usually caused by interpersonal situations or facts that deserve our attention because they affect our well-being (Brody, 1999). Although, at present, the most general term used is emotion, it is essential to distinguish between different kinds of affective states. Primary emotions are considered universal responses, fundamentally physiological, evolutionarily relevant, and biologically and neurologically innate. On the other hand, the secondary ones, which can result from a combination of the primaries, are highly socially and culturally conditioned. Some authors include among the primary emotions fear, anger, depression, or satisfaction (Kemper, 1987), while others include satisfaction-happiness, aversion-fear, assertion-anger, disappointment-sadness, and startle-surprise (Turner, 1999). As discussed before and after developed by Gordon, emotions and feelings could be distinguished, which according to him, would be a social pattern constructed of sensations, expressive gestures, and cultural meanings organized around the relationship with a social object (Gordon, 1981). Lawler distinguishes between global emotions, or generic responses to the outcome of an interaction, involuntary and unconditioned by an interpretation or cognitive attribution, and specific emotions, that are associated with particular objects and defined through an interpretive effort (Lawler, 2001). He also distinguishes between structural emotions, situational and anticipatory. Jasper states the following typology of emotions: bodily impulses, such as sexual desire or reflexive emotions, which are short-lived reactions to our immediate environment, whether physical or social, such as anger, fear, or joy and reflexive emotions, called 'affective loyalties, such

as love, respect or trust, or whether they are 'moral emotions,' which imply feelings of approval or disapproval, (Jasper,2011).

In short, it could be affirmed that emotions constitute the bodily manifestation of the subject in a social environment. Emotions bring bodily awareness that points out and marks this relevance, thus regulating the relationships that a specific subject maintains with the world, and physical arousal expresses that. According to Denzin, the link between emotions and the self is a matter of definition (Denzin,2009). However, the subject of emotions is not an organism or a body hermetically isolated from the environment but a subject forced to achieve its goals by interacting with others and other things existing in our environment.

4.1. Different Historical Definitions of the Emotions

The apparent simplicity of human emotions contains many complexities, problems, and paradoxes. The emotions felt by the subject should never be considered simple mechanical responses or physiological impulses to the variations produced in the surroundings. As highlighted by various theories, the subject's emotional experience will depend on many factors, specifically how emotions are consciously valued. According to the appreciation theory, human beings are not mere sentient biological systems but cognitively appraise elements of the environment before experiencing or expressing an emotion (Brody, 1999). According to Freud, anxiety warns people of danger to their mental health in a way that all emotions function as messengers for the self, serving a function of a signal, and therefore are adaptive and useful in the long term of the evolution and the short term of the interaction (Stryker, 2004). Nevertheless, in addition to fulfilling a signal function, emotional experiences also impact the subject's future dispositions. According to attribution theories (Lawler et al., 2008), emotion does not depend only on the actual environmental stimuli but also on the causal attribution made by the subject. Suppose the subject believes that another has been the cause of an undesirable act. In that case, they

will feel anger, guilt, or shame if they consider that they are responsible and sadness or despair if they assume that fate is irreversible (Brody, 1999). According to expectancy theory (Turner and Stets, 2006), the valuation of the same object, fact, or person will depend on the previous expectations that the subject has, which can modify the resulting emotional experience. In social interaction, a key factor is whether individuals live up to the expectations they arouse according to their position of power or status. Identity theories (Stryker, 2004) recognize and attend to the fact that both role identities and social or group identities operate in culturally defined positions of the social structure. They also link emotions with the expectations that the subjects have in each social interaction: to the extent that whether they verify their identity will lead to positive or negative emotions (Burke and Stets, 2009). Some theories, such as intergroup theories of emotion, show that the subjects experience emotions not only because of what happens to them personally but also to what happens to the social groups they belong to and with whom they identify (Devos et al., 2002; Mackie et al., 2000; Yzerbyt et al., 2003). Hence, as Durkheim maintains, there are collective and socially shared emotions (BarTal et al., 2007; Braithwaite, 2004) and emotional contagion processes (Hatfield et al., 1994). In the world of emotions, the distinction between internal emotional experience, or subjective feeling, and emotional expression, or a set of external manifestations, is fundamental. We can express our feelings through words, facial gestures, vocal tones, behaviors, and physiological changes. However, the relationship between experience and expression is confusing and problematic (Brody, 1999). First, emotional expression cannot be reduced to a simple and mere manifestation of an internal state. It is so since the expression, communicatively oriented towards the other, emerges in the context of social interaction (Marinetti et al., 2011: 32). A child who has fallen to the ground may cry because the impact hurts them, or they can cry to claim the attention of their parents. Secondly, the child is not shown that inner feelings produce physiological or external bodily changes. For Damasio (1994), physiological changes trigger the subjective feeling: we do not tremble because we feel afraid, but we are afraid because we tremble. In short, the external demonstrations fulfill an expressive-emotional function but also a socio-communicative function (Marinetti et al., 2011: 32). The study of emotions

is never easy because the emotions are part of a living process and they can undergo multiple and enigmatic transmutations, voluntary and involuntary, consciously and unconsciously. Shame can turn into rage, joy into tears, or pain into pleasure. Repression, denial, displacement, projection, or sublimation are defense mechanisms that can alter emotions (Turner, 2008). Furthermore, it is obvious that we do not experience emotions in isolation, one by one, nor do they constitute static states in time. Our affective life is a dynamic process with multiple chains and emotional structures. Finally, the complexity of emotions also manifests itself in their composition. The multidimensional theory of emotions (Scherer, 2001) considers that emotion has five components: cognitive, neurophysiological, motivational, expressive, and subjective. Shott (1979) argues that at least two elements, physiological arousal, and cognitive reasoning, are necessary for the subject to experience an emotion. Thoits (1989) distinguishes between the assessment of situational stimuli, physiological changes or bodily reactions, expressiveness of gestures, and cultural specifics. In a nutshell, conscious subjective feelings constitute only one of the essential elements involved in the emotional experience.

In order to understand and explain emotions, a broad set of theoretical perspectives have been established. Turner and Stets (2006) have compiled and classified emotions as part of cultural theories, emphasizing that emotions are not mere biological responses of the organism but social feelings. These feelings are conditioned by the society's culture (its norms, values, ideas, beliefs, etc.). They emerge through patterned social interactions and are learned in socialization (Gordon, 1981). Societies have a vibrant culture, an emotional vocabulary, emotional norms, and rules of expression that define, in each situation and for each social position, what the subject should feel and how it should express feelings (Hochschild, 1983). For the theories of symbolic interactionism, the ego identity constitutes the dynamic underlying emotional arousal. Individuals always try to confirm their public image of themselves (self-concept), such as the particular identities with which they act in any interaction episode (role identity). In the theory of affective control by David Heise and Smith-Lovin, emotional dynamics derive from the degree of correspondence between real

and transitory feelings in a particular situation (Smith-Lovin and Heise, 1988). When others confirm the image of themselves, they experience positive emotions. When it is denied, one experiences negative emotions, such as anguish, anxiety, anger, shame, or guilt (Burke and Stets, 2009; Turner and Stets, 2006: 30). Stryker's Theory of Identity (2004) emphasizes the existence of multiple identities, some more important than others depending on the social situation and the social network in which they are activated. Collins (2004) distinguishes between positive emotions and moral feelings directed towards one's group, configuring their solidarity, and the positive emotions and trust the participating individuals feel in the form of emotional energy (EE). The structural theories of emotions, whose pioneering formalization we owe to TD Kemper (1978), explain the type of emotion felt by subjects in an interaction according to specific relational characteristics. For Kemper, there are two basic relational dimensions: power and status. The subjects with power, or who gain power in an interaction, will experience positive emotions, such as satisfaction, confidence, or security. Subjects with a low relative power level may experience negative emotions, such as fear. Individuals with a high level of prestige will feel positive emotions like pride, while those who lack sufficient prestige may feel negative emotions, such as shame. Thamm proposes to universalize the theory of Kemper about the structural conditions associated with the specific response-emotion model (Thamm, 2004). These would depend on whether the self and the other do or do not meet expectations and whether they receive rewards. Barbalet has developed the structural theory of emotions from a macro-sociological perspective (Barbalet, 1998). Exchange theories, developed by George Homans and Peter Blau, also have tried to understand the complex world of emotions (Lawler, 1999). Social interaction is when subjects exchange valuable resources to obtain advantages or benefits. Individuals try to get rewards and avoid punishments, maximizing as far as possible the utility of behavior by calculating investments and costs (Turner and Stets, 2005). Individuals 'feel good' (positive reinforcement) when the benefits exceed the investments and costs and 'feel bad' (negative reinforcement) when the opposite happens. However, the intensity and type of emotions that provoke a social exchange depend on many other factors: the type of exchange (productive, negotiated, reciprocal, widespread); the characteristics of the

structure or social network (degree of coordination between subjects, network density); the power and relative dependence of the subjects; compliance or not of expectations; the pertinent rules of justice (equity and equality); wave cause to which the results of the exchange are attributed (Lawler, 2001).

Emotional processes are organized in a temporal sequence in which two periods can be distinguished. At first, there would be the primary processes, where the stimuli give rise to an evaluation of the situation (appraisal) and subjective responses, expressive and physiological. The evaluative component designates the processes by which the stimulus or situation is interpreted as an emotion. The subjective component is defined as the subjective experience of emotion. The expressive factor includes facial and postural movements and responses. These primary processes are followed by secondary processes that elaborate cognitive and social levels of information derived from the evaluation of the primary processes. These processes are constituted by the interpretation, memorization, and attempts to regulate primary processes and their consequences. The secondary processes are the ones that would deal with the strategies that would allow coping with the psychological and social consequences of the emotion. In summary, an emotion is a set of phenomena that includes the interpretation of a situation leading to phenomenological, expressive, and physiological outcomes. These primary processes are followed by the processes of interpretation and regulation that also shape emotion (Philippot, 1993).

Theories about emotional appraisal suggest that emotions are elicited and shaped by the subjective evaluation that people make of a given event or situation (Frijda, 1988). This evaluation consists of the cognitive processing of environmental stimuli on the basis of a number of criteria and dimensions linked to the significance of the event for the organism (Scherer, 1997). Literature from different disciplines and historical traditions reveals a surprising degree of convergence regarding the nature of the dimensions of the appraisal. In recent empirical research, support is given to the notion that a limited number of evaluative or appraisal dimensions are sufficient to explain the elicitation and differentiation of emotional states. Given the highly subjective nature of evaluating the

situation or event, cross-cultural and historical differences should be expected in the evaluation process. Anthropologists and historians have pointed out that the most remarkable differences in motivational values, structural values , and normative or moral prescriptions are due to definitions of the self in different cultures or historical periods (Wallbott and Scherer, 1988). Thus, one should expect marked or noticeable differences in the evaluation processes between cultures and historical periods; since the motivation values, self-concepts, and norms occupy central positions in the order of evaluation criteria and dimensions. It is evident that the question of potential cross-cultural differences in evaluation schemes leads to the current debate on the universality of emotions (Mesquita and Frijda, 1992; Scherer, 1997). It is essential to study how emotional elicitation processes differ between different cultures in this context. In the work of Scherer (1997), emotional dimensions were found in a summarized way by he most frequently used in appraisal measurement, namely: novelty, intrinsic pleasure, significance to goals (relevance to interests, probability of the outcome, expectations, conductivity to goal and urgency), coping potential and the patterns or norms of comparison (external or internal).

For Russell and collaborators, the most prototypical model of emotions would be the relationship between the person and the environment. Thus, emotions can be explained through the adaptive functions they fulfill for individuals and groups (Barrett, 1984). This functionality can be interpreted in levels. For example, the emotion of joy functions as a successful strategy, facilitating the testing of new skills and supporting or initiating responses to new challenges. Anger has the psychological function of restoring progress toward an object. Sadness has different adaptive functions, such as conserving energy and redirecting resources toward other, more viable objects. At the macro-social level, which mainly encompasses groups, joy's function would go around the social message, whether it initiates or continues interactions. In the case of anger, the adaptive functions would be a change in the behavior of the other and revenge. Finally, the sadness would have an adaptive interpersonal function of inciting support and compression. To summarize, the social functions postulated for emotions generally offer regulation of deviant behaviors and

promote behaviors that reinforce dominant social practices and values (Armon-Jones, 1986).

On the subject of the prototypical representation of emotions and attributes that are made of affective states, authors mainly offer four fundamental factors which influence emotions: a) antecedents or events that cause emotions; b) internal reactions of motor and bodily changes, c) mental or subjective changes, d) felt states of readiness to action or tendencies to act, e) coping and regulation tendencies. The empirical work shows clear evidence of the cross-cultural similarity in dimensions such as general background, facial expressions, changes perceived in the body, and tendencies to immerse into action. The verbal reactions are subjective, and the regulation and emotional coping processes appear strongly related to cultural variability (Mesquita and Frijda, 1992). Questionnaire research on typical attributes of emotions has found a series of specific characteristics for sadness, happiness, and anger (Scherer, Rimé, and Chip, 1989; Páez and Vergara, 1992). In this regard, the attainment of a desirable goal and the tendency to continue reinforcing the action would be the most prototypical in the case of joy. According to this, joy is associated with success in tasks or achievements and when it comes to good relationships with others.

Within the different perspectives, cross-cultural research has demonstrated that in addition to phenomena of emotional overload and personality traits, contextual phenomena can favor the symptomatology of alexithymia. It can be observed, for example, that the differentiation between physical symptoms and feelings is not present in non-Western cultures. Asian-type collectivist cultures emphasize or underline the existence of a somatic language for pain or emotional distress (Kleinman, 1986). This influence of culture on the levels of alexithymia is then the one that leads the research in the field of culture and emotion to make a psychosocial contribution to the study on the differences between feeling and expressing. In other words, the different cultural communication patterns accompanying the emotion are broad. Cross-cultural research indicates, explicitly or implicitly, that among experience and emotional expression, four relationships may be established. These are: a) express certain emotions when they are experienced; b) inhibit

certain emotions when experienced; c) express certain emotions even when they are not experienced; d) do not express emotions that are not experienced. Although no given culture emphasizes one of these relationships, most cultures prescribe a mixture, depending on the type of emotion and the context. We may encounter individuals who feel uncomfortable expressing emotions that are expected to be inhibited or simply having to express emotions that they do not feel (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). It is undeniable that culture influences the emotional experience. In particular, the secondary processes of communication and coping with emotion will be heavily influenced by culture. For example, the verbal and nonverbal expression of emotion can have different meanings depending on the group's culture.

In some societies, talking about emotions is a sign of interpersonal interest; in others, it is a lack of respect. Cultural differences in how people think or express emotions could be inhibited and reinforced in other parts of the world. It is interesting to review how the cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, power distance, and avoidance of uncertainty influence secondary alexithymia (Hofstede, 1991 and 1998). In other words, there are differences in how people of different nations express themselves verbally about emotions. They have a deficit for the physiological responses typical of each emotion and elaborate subjectively on their mental responses. There is a hypothesis that the subjects of collectivist cultures, given that they value less the internal aspects of the person, including emotions, practice less introspection and make more use of contextual, interpersonal, and external control over their emotions. This would result in people from these cultures giving less accurate reports about the physiological activation of emotions - that is, they would perceive sadness through physiological symptoms that are more associated with anger, for example. On the other hand, they might elaborate less on the subjective, mental, or internal aspects of emotions.

However, the boom in the history of emotions we are witnessing today is the product of a different conjuncture that can be placed chronologically at the turn of the millennium. In the field of life sciences, especially in recent works which use neuroimaging

techniques (MRI being the most famous), emotions appear in the foreground of the amygdala. In such a manner, recent technology broadens the topic to new levels.

The topic of emotional expressivity contains vast cultural and gender differences. According to Shileds (1998) the theory of emotional expressivity focuses on the evaluation of cultural stereotypes and the need to start from some assumptions that contribute to broadening the understanding of the relationship between gender and emotion. For this, the author maintains the convenience of including in the analysis the following contexts: interpersonal, cultural, historical, and political. They work as a framework for interpreting emotions and gender; emphasize the importance of interpersonal interactions to account for emotions. According to him, they determine how interactional factors produce and maintain gender differences in emotional expression, considering the ideological discourse of power as an explanatory variable difference (Fischer, 2000; Burman, 1994; Walkerdine, 1990; Parker, 1993).

As many researchers have noted, it is essential to distinguish between two dimensions in the gender-emotion stereotype: the internal subjective experience of emotions and the external, as a visible manifestation of the emotion. For example, Fabes and Martin (1991) found that although women are perceived as more emotionally expressive than men when assessing the perception of the emotional experience of each, there are a few differences among them. Similarly, Johnson and Shulman (1988) found that men and women believe that they differ more in the external emotional manifestation than in the intensity of the subjective experience. They consider that the same situation raises similar feelings but express them differently. For example, if both report feeling sad when something terrible happens and happy when something good happens, the differences become evident in the expressiveness, not in the emotion itself (Kring & Gordon, 1998; Lanzetta, Cartwright-Smith & Klek, 1976). While it is clear that most studies find that women express themselves more emotionally than men, this does not mean that such differences are necessarily correspondent to their perceptions of the emotional experience (Ashmore, 1998; Brody and Hall, 2000; Fischer, 2000; LaFrance and Banaji, 1992).

Consequently, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the external dimension, namely the emotional expression rather than the internal emotional experience, may be an area in which men and women differ. However, it should be noted that the consistency in the findings of gender differences recorded in the literature analysis on the stereotype of emotional expression is based more on assumptions about overt emotional expression than on beliefs about subjective experience. Regarding the social consequences of gender-emotion stereotypes, Shields and Geer (1996) found that when women face an event, they are more often in a situation marked by the emotions they express. The consequences of them are often questioned (double-blind). Men are seen more in maintaining a certain "emotional distance" as an indicator of objectivity. In more recent research, the researchers Kelly and Hutson-Comeaux (2000) studied the “double-bind” hypothesis by asking participants to rate the social relevance of the manifestations of exaggeration or indifference in events of happiness, sadness, and anger in men and women. They found that exaggeration and indifference in women's emotional expressions were considered less appropriate than when men attributed them to them.

In contrast to the findings, in the cases of happiness or a situation of "double-bind," it was detected that in situations of anger, males reacted less appropriately than females. Another fascinating and original study in a school context is the one by Liljestrom, Roulston, and de Marais (2002). They qualitatively explore how teachers experience the emotion of anger. They found that gender stereotypes linked to the teaching profession lead to inhibiting the expression of anger or other negative emotions and that teachers "learn" to control anger as a demonstration of professionalism by restricting their emotional repertoire and experiencing guilt, embarrassment, and frustration instead.

A large study conducted in 25 countries in which data was collected through self-reports verified that women express themselves emotionally more intensely and varied than men (Pennebaker, Rime, & Blankenship, 1996). Similar results were obtained with the administration of evaluation scales in which women reported more intensity in emotions than men (Barrett, 1998). In addition, when specific emotions are evaluated through scales,

they report more fears than males and more sadness, shame, and guilt (Brody, 1999; Grossman and Wood, 1993). However, these differences are not verified when other instruments were used, such as requesting a daily record of emotions aroused by certain situations or interviews conducted immediately after a given emotional experience (Seidlitz & Diener, 1998). These authors argue that the different patterns of results may be due to different causes.

On the one hand, it is conjectured that women remember events and the emotions attached to them in much more detail than men. However, immediately upon a specific situation, both similarly report their emotions after a while. However, women were shown to have a more intense representation of emotional experience in their memory. A second assumption is that after an emotional event, women usually reflect on what happened, which implies reliving the situation and perhaps remembering it in more detail (Brody, 1999). On the other hand, when measuring scales of the intensity of emotions, significant differences are found between emotional expression and emotional experience. Finally, self-reports of events that occurred reflect stereotypes of gender as a result of characteristics that are inherent in the preparation of the questionnaires in which emotions are implicitly attributed and, as a consequence, participants tend to hide or magnify their emotional expressions as a way of responding to the consistent gender-emotion stereotype.

How emotions and feelings are transmitted acquire different expressions in men and women; it is naive to believe in the neutrality and impartiality of speech for both genders. The exact words convey different meanings as long as men or women speak them. In the sociocultural construction of gender, we learn to communicate what we feel and think differently. What we think must enter the framework of the rational, which will be what will validate it socially, while the expressions referring to feelings and emotions are often undervalued. It is so because, from this subjective point of view, the emotional content of what is expressed is appreciated as minimizing their social objectivity. The representations about the differences in emotional expressiveness between men and

women often function as a projection screen on which they inscribe fantasies about their human nature and its relationship with society. Evolutionary stereotypes and assumptions relate the biological to the social self, providing a cultural terrain in which evolutionists and biologists' ideas are repeated and legitimized to the detriment of class, gender, and race differences. The critical movement within psychology represented primarily by the authors such as Parker and Shoter (1990), Burman (1994), and Walkerdine (1984) argue that in modern psychology research has been characterized by the omission of the category of gender as a structuring dimension of the development. Psychology participates and transmits the social and cultural representations about the origins and nature of emotional expressiveness expected of men and women. There is a socially organized discourse as a set of meanings that define the categories and specify the domains of what can be said or done. This has a significant impact on daily life and the ways of thinking about us as human beings. Therefore, the power of speech functions in determining the conditions of the questions to be investigated and in the selective structuring of the "data." It should be noted that it is not yet clear whether emotional attribution is linked to gender and heritage or whether they are the result of historical or cultural conventions. It is clear that the hegemonic discourses on the feminine and the masculine and their emotional attributions fundamentally influence the structuring of subjectivity and are full of social meanings. Nowadays, there is a growing recognition that behind an objective investigation, there are influences the way of which we are unaware (Burman, 1994).

Chapter 5. Relationship Satisfaction

In 1947, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not simply the absence of disease or ailment," thus formulating a broad, inclusive, and positive view of health. In 1975, the organization went one step further by considering that people's health also incorporates sexual health, defined as "the integration of somatic, ethical, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of the human being including sexuality." Likewise, they stated three essential elements for sexual health: (a) the chance to enjoy sexual activity and reproductivity in

balance with personal and social ethics; (b) the exercise of sexuality without fears, shame, guilt, myths, or fallacies; on the essence, without psychological or social factors that interfere with sexual intercourse; and (c) the performance of a sexual activity free of organic disorders, diseases or alterations that hinder it. Thus, the WHO considers sexual health as an integral part of general health and quality of life, including human rights. However, sexual health has not been fully incorporated into health care, despite the recommendation of international organizations and the critical changes that have taken place. Sexuality, like other areas of life, has developed socially and culturally over the last decades. Life expectancy has risen above the age of 75, and the style of life has changed, being more physically, intellectually, and sexually active. These processes of change in sexuality have resulted, among other things, in a decrease in the age of onset of sexual intercourse, an increased number of sexual partners, and an expansion of sexual practices, which gives an account of a global phenomenon of transformations of sexual behavior, particularly accentuated in women and in the younger generations. In this scenario, those who work on issues of sexual health have extensively investigated sexual difficulties or dysfunctions and the effects of sexual risk behaviors (HIV, AIDS, etc.) and have progressively focused their attention on sexual satisfaction. In sexual medicine and psychotherapy, measurements of sexual satisfaction are currently used as one of the standard indicators of disorders of sexual health. One of the objectives of this doctoral work is to present the main individual and community aspects of couple relationships that are related to sexual satisfaction and the most common instruments in its evaluation.

The couple is defined as a relationally alive system, which is in constant interaction with the environment and evolving over time and at different stages, a phenomenon that could be called the life cycle of the couple (Campo and Linares, 2002). It is generally believed that at first, the dyadic connection begins when both parts of the couple are building fantasies of starting a relationship, thus getting to know each other. At this stage, they begin to develop projects together through different expectations about the future with the partner. As a second stage, the consolidation of the couple comes with the expectation of

the engagement, and a social ritual can generally accompany it; wedding, civil partnership, or move-in together. Rituals have the function of giving a feeling of social legitimacy and rootedness to the members of the couple. At this stage, the new system should be disassociated functionally to provide content from the families of origin. The third stage occurs with the arrival of the children when the couple has to integrate and reconcile their parental and marital functions (Campo and Linares, 2002). When the children grow up, a new stage begins, in which the couple must continue to find the balance between parental and marital systems. The fifth stage comes with the empty nest syndrome when the children leave home, and the couple must reconcile again, reviewing and renegotiating their projects and bond. It is the most complicated stage, possibly because it is one of the most prolonged, and more conflicts occur (Campo and Linares, 2002). The last stage comes with the latest adultery of the members of the couple. It is then when it must be coping progressively with losses, reconstructing their relationship with children, and coping with negative ideas linked to old age, which is sometimes very different from one member to another (Campo and Linares, 2002). Neuburger (1998) defines a couple as “two people who meet and choose each other for different qualities; physical, intellectual and moral, but also for reasons unconscious, related to the past of each one.” The couple's formation allows the members to construct belonging and an identity as members of a set, which assigns security and recognition. It is, therefore, a unit of life (Neuburger, 1998). The life of the couple and the satisfaction of its members are established by their ability to preserve their difference while maintaining ties with the family of origin and the outside world. The couple's health is determined by the quality and satisfaction of the relationship, as well as the degree of marital adjustment (Neuburger, 1998).

Marital satisfaction is defined by Spanier (1988) as the frequency and intensity of the discussions and the commitment to continue together from both members of the couple. The couple members' subjective and general evaluation of their spouse and their relationship plays another role. Therefore, this evaluation depends on the personal perceptions of each member (Miranda and Avila, 2008). Van Laningham, Johnson, and

Amato (2001) state that the satisfaction of the spouses in their marital relationship varies throughout the marriage. It usually decreases over time to increase later in the last years of marriage. They related variables such as relationship time, children, life cycle stages, and transition between stages. Skowron (2000) wanted to examine the usefulness of Bowen's systemic family theory (Bowen, 1978) in predicting and studying marital satisfaction and quality. The results supported Bowen's hypothesis that the ability of a couple to have intimacy and connection with each other, as well as maintain autonomy and individuality, is an essential factor influencing marital satisfaction (Skowron, 2000). In this line, Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal, and Muñoz (2016) confirmed in their study in Spanish samples the significant association between the differentiation of the self and marital satisfaction. Bowen's systemic family theory (1978), which we will later be named BSFT, defines the family as an emotional unit and pays attention to the processes underlying emotions in interpersonal relationships. Bowen (1978) defines the family as "an intergenerational network of relationships in which the interaction between two forces occurs vitally through autonomy and bonding." The family would therefore balance between these two forces, joining and separating the dyad (Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2019; p. 161). Both autonomy, such as the bonding, is given by elements of the emotional system and is instinctive and innate. For Bowen (1978), both parts of the couple continually balance each other, which supposes a homeostatic process that is modified with time to achieve balance in interpersonal relationships. To achieve more functional relationships, both members of the family should adapt positively to different circumstances and stages to achieve balance (Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2019). In addition, the BSFT is considered by various professionals one of the most comprehensive explanations of the development and maintenance of marital relationships (Skowron, 2000; Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014).

Murray Bowen (1978) proposes eight basic constructs related to the family concept. These are the following: triangles, emotional processes of the nuclear family, family projection processes, processes of multigenerational transmission, emotional distancing,

socio-emotional processes, sibling processes, and different dimensions of the self. The triangles are a crucial element in Bowen's theory (1978). For him, triangles function as the central molecule of any system since they are more flexible than dyads. They are a predictive element of interpersonal relationships because they can mobilize the emotional dynamism of a family (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The Triangles work according to the principle of circularity, also called the principle of reciprocity. That is, the reality of the family relationship differs over time and the situation (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The triangle is made up of two internal positions and one external position. All that could be illustrated as follows:

1. In situations where the emotional tension is very high, the external position will be chosen and preferred.

2. When the emotional tension diminishes, this external position will become uncomfortable since it will produce a sensation of isolation in the triangle concerning the other members that form it.

3. When the emotional tension is moderate, the two internal positions will be the most comfortable and the external one the most uncomfortable (Kerr and Bowen, 1988; Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014).

The emotional process of the nuclear family refers to how the family works emotionally. The nuclear family (parents and children, normally living together is organized over relationship patterns they develop in long periods of high tension. Bowen (1978) argues that four relationship patterns are put into operation in situations of tension (Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014):

1. The emotional distance of the couple: the physical or psychological distance between the members of the couple reduces the intensity of the relationship and gives a sense of resolution. However, this emotional distance does not solve a possible conflict but prevents it from advancing.

2. The marital conflict is presented by anxiety regulated in the family system by channeling it through a low level of differentiation of the self-giving space to empathy. Consequently, using all energies in the conflict ends up becoming the way they have to seek affection from the other.

3. The alteration of the functioning of one of the members of the couple: a member of the couple seeks to maintain the homeostasis of the family system, canceling and adopting a passive and dependent role.

4. The focus of both members of the couple is a third element: it refers to the mechanism or relational pattern that seeks to stabilize the system through the focusing on one or several children, generating a triangle, which causes the anxiety to be borne by this third party which will probably develop some kind of symptom or dysfunction.

These forms or patterns of relationship are put into operation when the tension is elevated and prolonged. In most cases, they are activated in parallel, although at times, only one pattern is activated. These relationship models seek to preserve the homeostasis of the family system (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014). The family projection process explains how parents transmit undifferentiation to their children. The low level of differentiation of the family members (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014) is related to higher anxiety for the children as they are mostly part of the whole family organism and have little autonomy when it comes to decisions. In the case of a higher level of projected parental self, the less intense family projection which is generated has a greater degree of independence for the children. On the contrary, if the degree of differentiation in the family system is low, the family projection will be more robust, and children will be negatively affected (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014).

The multigenerational transmission process is a concept that indicates how a family manages its emotional processes and is transmitted to their children. In this way, it goes passing from generation to generation. For this reason, Bowen (1978) understands the

family as a multigenerational emotional system (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014). The multigenerational transmission would be related to the proposal that people choose partners with similar levels of self-differentiation. The emotional break refers to how people handle the unresolved merger with their family of origin, that is, the emotional fusion with their family members. The emotional break with the family of origin and the fusion or lack of autonomy shows the same lack of differentiation. The emotional break can appear in different ways: total physical withdrawal to moderate, keeping some family gatherings, avoiding loaded emotional content, or even geographical distancing may occur (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014). The emotional process in society is understood as a cultural system containing processes of tension and adaptation. The sibling relationship defines their position in the family, which has important psychological implications. Being born in a specific order to your sibling implies developing one or the other psychological traits. This is called functional positioning within the family since each individual has different fulfilments and functions.

Furthermore, within each family system, different rules shape the character of the members according to their functions and their position (Bowen, 1978, as cited in Rodríguez-González and Berlanga, 2014). For Bowen (1978), the position in the sibship can predict how a couple's emotional adjustment will develop. In his research Toman (1961) discovered that the sibling position occupied by each member of the couple is a significant factor in predicting divorce. Also, he found marriages that had a more positive fit and better marital quality compared to those who complemented each other according to their position in their fraternity. The author establishes ten types of positioning between siblings: the older brother of the brothers; the youngest brother of the brothers; the older brother of the sisters; the youngest brother of the sisters; the older sister of the sisters; the youngest sister of the sisters; the older sister of the brothers; the younger sister of the brothers; positions of intermediate siblings, only children (as in the case of twins) and he explains various types of combinations in his book.

Based on this research, Bowen (1978) states that couples in which both members complement each other in terms of their position in the sibship will have a greater fit than when they do not complement each other. Therefore it seems that if couples complement each other, they will have a more favorable prognosis. An example that Bowen (1978) points out, which reflects the above explained, is that when one of the couples is older, it is expected that they will feel more comfortable when it comes to responsibility and would transmit value to the couple. The differentiation of the self is often defined as the capacity for emotional self-regulation. It is expressed in the degree to which a person modulates the bonding and autonomy in interpersonal relationships adaptively and can balance emotional and intellectual functioning. It is a multidimensional construct containing intrapersonal and interpersonal components (Bowen, 1978; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Differentiation of the self, therefore, would be related to the degree to which an individual differentiates emotionally from their mother or primary caregiver. The person is physically separated from their mother at the time of birth.

However, separating and emotionally differentiating is a much longer process and depends on several factors. At an early stage of development, these factors would be, on the one hand innate in the mother, and on the other, the capacity that she has to let her son or daughter grow and get away from her. Other deeper factors would be the level of differentiation the mother has regarding her family of origin, her ability to withstand stress and strain, and the nature of her interpersonal relationships; with her husband, a family of origin, friends, etc. (Bowen, 1978). For all this, the concept of differentiation of the self is understood as the process of separating from the initial fusion of the individual with the mother to arrive at his emotional autonomy (Bowen, 1978). Bowen (1978) explains that there are two types of self, the basic self, and the pseudo-self. The essential self refers to the “true self.” It is stable and determines the functioning of a person in the long term. The development of the essential self begins in childhood, a determining stage for their development, and ends in adulthood. The level of differentiation that a person achieves depends on the degree of the primary self of the parents and their respective families of

origin, the degree of chronic anxiety that is present in the family during childhood and adolescence, and the relations of the nuclear family with other systems (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal and Muñoz, 2016).

On the other hand, the pseudo-self is changeable and adjusts to the moment's circumstances. It is made up of principles, beliefs, and knowledge that have been acquired through the family system when it has been required or needed. The functional self changes according to external circumstances and depends on the degree of the essential self. That is, the lower the degree of the essential self, the more external circumstances would influence the pseudo-self (Bowen, 1978).

Different Dimensions of the Relationship Satisfaction

According to other authors, the differentiation of the self is built by two dimensions or components: intrapsychic and interpersonal (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). The intrapsychic domain is the individual's ability to distinguish between feelings and thoughts (or intellect) and where to find and position the self. Emotional reactivity refers to the degree of individual awareness that a person has and their ability to regulate their affects without responding to the environment in a hypersensitive or automatic manner (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). The position of the self, on the other hand, is defined by Skowron and Friedlander (1998) as the person's ability to maintain and express their thoughts, positions, and beliefs and adhere to situations of anxiety or pressure with others, maintaining a clear sense of the own self. For Skowron (2000), having a high level of differentiation supposes at this level that the person knows how to maintain the sense of self in an interpersonal relationship involving high levels of emotion, such for example, a relationship or marriage, and in turn, knowing how to differentiate the anxiety of the other member and not be overwhelmed by it. The interpersonal domain refers to the ability to experience intimacy and independence in relationships. Within the pair, a differentiated individual can establish autonomy without fear of abandonment or resorting to emotional break in case of disagreement and, simultaneously, achieve intimacy without merging or suffocation

(Skowron and Friedlander, 1998). In turn, Skowron (2000) points out that a more significant differentiation in a stable couple or marriage allows both members to maintain their own opinions regardless of their differences and not jump into an emotional break to maintain their sense of self. However, on the opposite side, couples with a low level of differentiation present a limited capacity for intimacy and autonomy. This leads to the fact that both members of the couple have to sacrifice their growth so that the couple remains stable and has difficulties receiving and responding adaptively to the emotional response of the other. That is, there are more difficulties in controlling emotional reactivity. Within this component, the couple activates the dimension of emotional fusion with others. Emotional withdrawal refers to the degree to which people reactively distance themselves from others to calm their anxiety. It means that there is a tendency of a person to keep independence from others rigidly and present high emotional discomfort in intimacy (Skowron and Friedlander, 1998). Fusion with others is defined as the degree of emotional over-involvement of the person with significant others and the tendency to remain in the position they held in their family of origin, constantly seeking the emotional fusion with their significant others and their approval (Skowron and Friedlander, 1998).

A high level of differentiation of the self means having high levels of ego and low emotional reactivity. Some people adapt better and cope with possible stressors to remain calm in the face of emotionality, unlike others (Bowen, 1978). On the other hand, highly differentiated individuals feel comfortable in their relationships' intimacy and autonomy. People with a high level of self-differentiation freely engage in interpersonal relationships through flexible limits and allow themselves to enter physical and emotional intimacy without reaching fusion. Therefore, highly differentiated individuals regulate their emotions better and adaptively live them to establish good interpersonal relationships. The degree of differentiation of a person will determine their lifestyle and the nature of their relationships as it is finally achieved in marriage. In addition, the level of differentiation is emotionally linked to the family of origin, the current partner, and the future children (Bowen, 1978; Kerr and Bowen, 1988). The level of differentiation explains the dynamics and development

of the couple's relationship (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Rodríguez-González, 2009; Skowron, 2000). A higher level of self-differentiation in both couple members predicts more significant marital adjustment and, therefore, greater satisfaction in the relationship for both parties (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal, and Muñoz, 2016). Likewise, the higher the average degree of differentiation in the couple, any difference or problem within the marriage will have less effect and impact on the adjustment of the couple because they have more emotional regulation resources (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal and Muñoz, 2016). Within this idea, a high degree of differentiation of the self will prevent the relational mechanisms or patterns that are activated when the family system goes through stages of high tension and emotional anxiety is activated, provoking wrong perceptions about the other. Within this idea, Bowen (1978) states that people choose partners with similar and even identical levels of differentiation. Skowron (2000) maintains that it is sacramental that a good level of differentiation of the self is fundamental to intimacy and reciprocity in a couple.

On the other hand, people with a low level of differentiation will feel the need to emotionally merge with their interpersonal relationships or, on the contrary, they will avoid emotional intimacy since they experience them as unpleasant. In addition, couples in which the members present low levels of differentiation are more vulnerable to stress, which implies that to channel it, the members of the couple activate triangular relational patterns, as well as the emotional estrangement and marital conflict explained above (Bowen, 1978). Bowen explains that people in the low differentiation zone have problems adapting to adversities or demanding situations and are very vulnerable to stress. Kerr (1988) refers that the level of differentiation of the self influences and manifests itself in marital conflict. The conflict between the couple members has the function of absorbing the anxiety in the couple since it is a way of commitment between the members, fighting to find a homeostatic balance within the marital system between autonomy and fusion (Skowron, 2000). The results of the study by Peleg (2008) support this idea and suggest that the balance between closeness or intimacy and separation promotes greater satisfaction. In the

study by Skowron (2000) on the role of the differentiation of the self in marital adjustment, it was confirmed that couples with a higher level of differentiation (less emotional reactivity, emotional isolation or cut-off, and emotional or physical fusion) presented greater levels of satisfaction in their relationship.

On the contrary, those couples less differentiated in their relationship presented more significant marital stress. Therefore, a higher level of differentiation of the self in the couple seems to work as a protective factor in the face of adversities or conflicts in the relationship since these couples have better emotional regulation (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal and Muñoz, 2016). The results also reflected that emotional breakdown is a predictive factor of a conflict, marital discord, and low levels of marital satisfaction (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal & Muñoz, 2016). The results showed that those couples that complemented each other in the level of differentiation, specifically in high emotional reactivity in women and high emotional cutoff in men, had less satisfaction and more marital discord (Skowron, 2000). Therefore, when one or both members of the couple withdraw emotionally from the marriage, they damage it in the long term. Couples with lower levels of differentiation are more emotionally immature and uncomfortable in moments of intimacy or autonomy (Bowen, 1978). The absence of emotional withdrawal and the similarity in the differentiation of the self for both members significantly influence the quality of marital adjustment and the experience of satisfaction in their relationship as a couple (Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal & Muñoz, 2016).

Along these lines, Skowron (2000) explains that couples who can be intimately connected and maintain their individuality will have better adjustment and greater marital satisfaction. When both are emotionally present and available to each other, they experience their marriage as fulfilling. Given that the studies by Skowron (2000) and Rodríguez-González, Skowron, Cagigal, and Muñoz (2016) have shown that a high level of differentiation of the self plays a vital role in good marital functioning. It increases the level of satisfaction in the relationship. It would be essential to apply those findings to the level of differentiation in therapy in order to improve marital adjustment and satisfaction,

strengthening emotional regulation and intimacy and connection between members (González, Skowron, Cagigal & Muñoz, 2016).

Conceptualizations about satisfaction have been diverse, but they agree that it has a physical and an emotional component. Some define it as the subjective evaluation of a person's liking or disliking regarding their sexual experiences and sexual activity. Others have emphasized their association with sexual frequency and orgasm or have highlighted the importance of affective and relational variables such as love, the post-sexual sensation, communication with the partner, or the initiative to have sexual intercourse (Barrientos, 2006). It has been recognized that the love scene is not the only context for sexual activity because new scenarios are currently emerging, new types of relationships, and new types of intimate orientations (Stulhofer, 2010). The sensations and feelings after the sexual encounter, especially joy or pleasure, are essential to sexual satisfaction, and the desire to have sexual intercourse is strongly associated with sexual satisfaction (Scott, 2012). Sexual satisfaction has also been conceptualized as the final stage of the sexual response cycle (Basson, 2001), as a sexual right and a key factor to people's quality of life, associated with better physical and mental health (Ortiz, 2005). Qualitative research indicates that women attribute multiple meanings to sexual satisfaction, for example, “the fulfillment of an erotic desire,” “the final manifestation of passion,” “feeling pleased and loved,” etc. (Lawrence, 1995). Thus, the subjective perception of this concept is significant since genital sexual activity, implicit in most definitions, would not be the only way to achieve sexual satisfaction (Fuentes, 2014). Although there is no commonly validated definition, one of the most accepted ones is the proposal by Lawrence and Byers in 1995, understood as “an affective response that emerges from a subjective evaluation of the positive and negative dimensions associated with one's sexual activity” (Lawrence, 1995).

Although the relevance of satisfaction is a recognized interest of this study, it is quite a recent phenomenon in the history of sexuality research. Some topics, such as orgasm, desire, or sexual dysfunctions, have emerged earlier and are widely studied. However, in the last 15 years, there has been a progressive interest in the subject. A systematic review

on sexual satisfaction published in 2014 (Fuentes, 2014) highlights the complexity and relevance of sexual satisfaction and its association with individual variables of the couple's relationship and the sexual response, so it is a critical factor to both the sexual health and well-being of people in general. Another important conclusion of this review is that due to the multiplicity of factors that influence sexual satisfaction, Henderson makes an excellent proposal for a model. It is based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, which allows organizations to the different dimensions of sexual satisfaction at different levels, such as individual characteristics, intimate relationships, and social and cultural aspects (Henderson et al., 2009). Concerning mental and physical health, various publications have reported a relationship between impaired romantic functioning and the presence of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and general psychological discomfort (Arrington, 2003). The use of antidepressant medications (Mosack, 2011), spinal cord injuries, and chronic diseases have been associated with decreased sexual satisfaction (Althof, 2010). Also, hysterectomy has been associated with less sexual satisfaction (Varma, 2011). Relevant associations have been reported between sexual satisfaction, better physical, psychological and general well-being (Zilbergeld, 1992), and a better quality of life (Davison, 2009). A significant association has been described between certain personal attitudes and the level of sexual satisfaction. A correlation has been observed between gerontophilia, understood as maintaining a positive attitude towards sexuality and eroticism, and sexual satisfaction (Hurlbert, 1993) as well as greater satisfaction among subjects with less sexual guilt, higher self-esteem, and positive body image (Higgins, 2011). Various international publications associate sexual satisfaction significantly with sociodemographic variables such as age, where satisfaction decreases through the later stages of life. Concerning gender, greater satisfaction would be observed in males. Higher educational level and experience contribute to greater satisfaction; the more religious the person, the lower the sexual satisfaction (Carpenter, 2007). However, the review by Sánchez-Fuentes indicates that the relationship between gender and sexual satisfaction is contradictory, which could be explained by the focus of the instrument used in each investigation. Also, these authors point out that the relation to the age variable that some studies account for is negative regarding sexual satisfaction in

older subjects, while others report otherwise. This disparity would be related to the adverse effects caused by age, such as a decrease in the frequency of sexual activity and thoughts, a more significant presence of dysfunctions, and chronic diseases. In couple relationships, most of those who consult for problems in this area report being unable to communicate as they would like with their partner. Thus, being sexually dissatisfied in the couple's erotic relationship is one of the causes of separation (Alvarez, 2002). Christensen and Wallace found that the higher the ability to understand the needs that satisfy the partner, the greater the sexual satisfaction (Christensen & Wallace, 1976). Likewise, greater sexual assertiveness among members of the couple is linked to greater sexual satisfaction (Haavio, 1997), and the better the communication, the greater the sexual satisfaction (Neil, 2009). Many studies have reported a strong relationship between sexual satisfaction and quality, stability, and satisfaction in the couple's relationship (Henderson, 2009; Byers, 2005). In turn, a stable, long-lasting, exclusive relationship would be related to greater sexual satisfaction (Carpenter, 2007).

Interestingly, couples therapy is also associated with increased sexual satisfaction (Bennun, 1985). Several studies have reported an association between sexual satisfaction and variables of sexual practices, such as greater frequency of sexual intercourse, greater consistency of orgasm, balanced distribution of initiative, and a greater variety of sexual practices (Haavio, 1997). Within adolescents, there is little development of research in this area of sexuality, even though numerous studies present significant associations between age and level of sexual satisfaction. Probably this is due to the predominance of a risky approach in the research on sexuality in this age group, which prioritizes issues such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, as well as ethics (Tolman, 2011).

Knowing the different elements of marital satisfaction will provide more information about the relationship itself and not only about its stability and temporality. From this observation, the need arises to study the internal elements of the relationship that help the composition and maintenance of a couple of relationships: the behaviors and individual characteristics that each member has and how each part contributes to the relationship, as

well as the coexistence or interaction that is established between both members of the dyad (Adler-Baedler, Higginbotham, & Lamke, 2004; Roche, 2006; Sánchez-Aragón, Rivera-Aragón & Díaz-Loving, 2001). However, it is necessary to consider that these individual and interactional characteristics are associated with and influenced by the physical and sociocultural context in which people find themselves and the couple's relationship develops (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). The behaviors and expectations of each individual, in this case regarding the couple's relationship, respond to the beliefs and social values transmitted through the socialization process to which they were subjected (Edwards, 1969). The socialization process is transformative over time, as it makes values and social norms change, so it is expected that people's beliefs and behaviors will also change (Díaz-Guerrero, 2003). This is how the expectations, values , and behaviors in the couple's relationship have changed (García-Meráz, 2017), managing to create new parameters that influence and respond to the social situation in which the couple finds themselves (Snyder & Stukas, 1999). Within our society there is in-depth work on the values, beliefs and norms by which they are governed in the aspects of the family and the couple and it has also been identified that these have changed over time (Díaz-Guerrero, 2003; Diaz-Loving & Sanchez-Aragon, 2002). These changes are identified through the decrease in the degree of agreement that people have with the norms and values of the culture, called historical socio-cultural premises (Cedillos, 2011).

Beliefs, norms, and values become parameters that help evaluate the relationship to decide to maintain or end relationship (Harris et al., 2008). These evaluation parameters consider aspects such as desirable characteristics of the couple, behaviors that should be included in the relationship, activities that the couple should carry out, characteristics of the place where they live, income and economic expenses, the behavior of their partner, work environment, among others (Amato, Johnson, Booth, & Rogers, 2003; Bradbury, Finchman, & Beach, 2000). This evaluation, made by the individuals about their relationships, is considered a fundamental component of the marital satisfaction construct

(Díaz-Loving, 1990; Díaz-Loving, & Sánchez-Aragón, 2002), this being an indicator of the functioning of the couple (Beltrán, Flores, & Díaz Loving, 2001).

One focus of the study on marital satisfaction consists of looking deeper into the relationships and the effects which some contextual aspects have on the maintenance of the couple (FouQuerau & Baudoin, 2002; Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2007). Some of the studies in this field report that variability in marital satisfaction is associated with cultural, social, and socio-demographic differences, such as the presence or absence of children, length of the relationship, economic problems, values, roles, and perception of what a couple is (Khalfani-Cox, 2009). This has made it possible to identify these elements as a chain of relationships and effects on partner satisfaction. However, all those studies are not born in the cultural heart in which we find ourselves responding to other contextual situations (Gottman & Silver, 2006; Roche, 2006).

These cultural differences can be reflected in the studies that refer to the discrepancies between men and women since these can be associated with the contextual characteristics in which people find themselves and were raised (Rocha-Sánchez, 2005). In the first instance, differences are found in the elements that people consider relevant for evaluating their marital satisfaction. The expectations they have in a couple of relationships, for example, closeness, behaviors of affection, and demands for the couple can lead to conflict in the relationship (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). However, these studies do not consider these differences within the socio-cultural context in which the couples find themselves, assuming they are due to sex (Capaldi, 2007; Kurdek, 2005; Means-Christensen, Snyder, & Negy, 2003). Therefore it is essential to analyze these differences from the socio-cultural context in which people find themselves.

Most married people know the impact of the quality of their couple relationship in different spheres of their daily life: work, the relationship with the extended family, health, and life satisfaction (Wallerstein, 1996). A good marriage is a process of continuous change as it reflects new issues, deals with problems that emerge, and uses resources available at

every stage of life. In reviewing the literature on marriages of long duration, it is identified that few studies were published before the 1990s (Roizblatt, Kaslow, Rivera, Fuch, Conejero, and Zaccaria, 1999). Concepts like marital adjustment, marital satisfaction, and marital happiness have been used to describe relationships in marriages, which are constituted at the center of the research proposed by the authors earlier on in terms of the present investigation. Satisfaction with marriage is a subjective evaluation of the relationship on the part of the married couple, so it is a dynamic concept involving an evolutionary dimension. Pick, and Andrade (1988) use that different scales to measure marital satisfaction and have given importance to attitudes towards the relationship and define marital satisfaction as “the degree of favorability (attitude) towards the spouse and conjugal interaction aspects ” (Pick & Andrade, 1988, p. 12). In recent decades, the literature has increased, especially in the study of couple relationships and couples therapy (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, Driver, and Tabares, 2002; Gurman and Jacobson, 2002). Today it is known more about the elements involved in building a lasting and satisfactory married life. Based on their investigative work, Gottman, Driver, and Tabares (2002) state that many couple therapists' previous work focused on marital conflict resolution misguidedly. They argue that it is important to build a positive attitude in the marriage, which is essential to ensuring lasting changes based on friendship which helps to work through challenging feelings and manage fear and anger. It serves as a tool to control affectivity and mitigates complex interactions. What distinguishes unhappy couples from happy ones is one of the most important questions in the field. In unhappy couples, there seems to be more negativity than positivity, as appears from the work of Gottman and Silver (2006), who calls "An Apocalypse" the following processes in the couple: criticism, contempt, defensive and evasive attitude; failure in repairing the relationship when a difficulty or conflict occurs; negative perception of the “subtext” that accompanies the interactions (negative feelings, negative attributions and negative recollection of the history of the marriage. Flooding (feeling overwhelmed by the partner's complaints and the process of "distance and isolation" that accompanies this flood diffuses the chronic physiological alertness. The failure of husbands to recognize the influence of their behavior, visible in the affective

withdrawal of both of them, as well as the mutual returns in the face of belligerence, mockery, and defensiveness, contribute to dissatisfaction (Gottman, Driver and Tabares, 2002). In such cases, most subjects declare that their relationship seems emotionally exhausted. There is no joy. There is no sense of humor or passion and much tension. When any couple does not feel happy, there is a high level of physiological activation in one or both spouses during a contentious argument. There are symmetrical escalations that do not facilitate the search for creative and empathic solutions. Unlike the above, couples who work well and describe themselves as happy show resolution and management skills useful for solving problems. The process is characterized by a "soft start", in which acceptance of mutual influence is evident. Each assumes themselves as an active protagonist in the situation, which contributes to a greater effectiveness in repairing any possible damage to the couple. In such cases, anger is not seen as a dangerous emotion. When problems are not solvable, these couples find the key in holding conversations about the problem. They communicate with acceptance of the partner as the confrontation is active instead of getting stuck. More importantly, positive affect is a single variable that predicts stability, such as marital happiness (Gottman, 1994; Gottman and Silver, 2006). It also identifies the importance of recognizing love and constructing a system of mutual appreciation and admiration. Such guidance maps have to do with the knowledge of the inner world of each member of the couple (Gottman, Driver, and Tabares, 2002), and the system of appreciation and admiration has to do with the dimensions of affection and respect within marriage. Friendship stands out as a process that includes love maps, a system of appreciation and admiration, and "going towards" instead of withdrawal when making connection requests (Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Young Nahm, and Gottmann, 2003). Some international studies on the topic of long-lasting couples made with different population groups and in different moments of the life cycle of couples attend to the issues of stability and marital satisfaction (Carteasen, Gottman, and Levenson, 1995; Kaslow and Hammerschmidt, 1992; Kaslow, Hansson and Lundblad, 1994; Roizblatt, Kaslow, Flores, Rivera, Duch, Zaccaria, Cerda, and Gonzales, 1999). There are extensive cross-cultural studies with married couples of more than 25 years of union. The psychologist and researcher Florence Kaslow as well as others

(Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992; Kaslow, Hansson, and Lundblad, 1994) surveyed 1,000 couples from seven countries (Canada, Germany, Israel, Holland, South Africa, Sweden and the United States United States) regarding what are the most important factors for a couple to stay together. Some of the main reasons mentioned in the studies are: that marriage is a contract for life; there is an established responsibility between the couple and the children; both partners profess the same creed; each one is getting along with the respective spouse's family; the partners are getting along with the couple's friends and their social circle; they can resolve crises that occur in the marriage; there is mutual trust and respect; there is love and ability to express it; the communication between both spouses is healthy; a good ability to solve problems is established; Both share the same conception of the world; they can let go and find space and time to have fun together. In other research (Roizblatt, Kaslow, Rivera, Fuch, Conejero and Zaccaria, 1999; Roizblatt, Kaslow, Flores, Rivera, Fuchs, Zaccaria, Cerda, and Gonzáles, 1999) it was found that several instruments were applied to study the relationship between spouses. A statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and economic or educational level was found. It was also found that love, trust, and loyalty are important elements that couples mention regarding their marital satisfaction. Men and women found love as the priority. Most people in the studies reported the conviction that crises are inevitable and that marriage is a relationship that should last forever.

5.1. Relationship Satisfaction and Modern Times

In recent decades, we have witnessed rapid social and political processes that contribute to society's transformation, affecting the evolution and interaction of intimate relationships. It is considered that the establishment and maintenance of effective and intimate relationships come from the youth. It is a component of psychosocial development with important implications for health, well-being, and psychological adjustment. Although sometimes couple relationships may involve some risk, when they function correctly, they are constituted as a source of emotional and social support in addition to contributing to the elaboration and construction of identity and the improvement of social competence

(Martínez-Álvarez et al., 2014). Throughout history, the concept of the couple has been evolving and has led to some social changes which increase diversity and variation of the aspects that configure couple relationships. The concept of the couple fundamentals for this research is not new. Many scientists have tried to broaden it by disassociating it from "couple with children" as the basic structure of the family model (Alberdi et al., (1984). This approach highlights the affective component, which replaces the institutional profile as a structural element of the couple, leaving behind the concept of the normative family more typical of generations away in history (defined as such by the legal and generally religious union). Despite the changes that have occurred, the couple's relationship remains unique within human relations, since it implies processes and expectations that are not found in other types of relationships. Such may be fidelity and romantic or emotional exclusivity. Specifically, a stable relationship and satisfaction imply positive effects on personal well-being. In contrast, a deteriorated relationship interferes negatively with family dynamics and the couple's mental health and environment (Capafons Bonet & Sosa Castilla, 2020). In addition, it is noteworthy that the fundamental functions that cover the couple within the family system, such as emotional support and cognitive regulation, are maintained throughout the life cycle of the family, even managing to maintain themselves during old age (Arias & Polizzi, 2011).

The quality of satisfaction in a relationship can be defined as the degree to which both members of the couple show intimacy, affection, and mutual support (Collins et al., 2009) or as an emotional state in which the person is pleased with the interactions, experiences, and expectations with the partner relationship (Ward et al., 2009). In any case, satisfaction with the relationship as a couple is a crucial element, being one of the most discussed topics when studying the factors that affect couples (Urbano-Contreras et al., 2018a). Since their constitution, couples have different expectations about their relationships, depending on gender, age, the duration of the relationship, the existence or not of children, and to a great extent, what they lived and learned in their families of origin (Martínez et al., 2011). These are all issues that will condition the couple's evolution and

determine the relationship's maintenance and satisfaction. Among the mentioned aspects, the arrival of offspring is one of the most important life events of adulthood, mainly because it involves a wide variety of changes, readjustments, and accommodations for future parents, both inside and outside the family.

Regarding satisfaction with the relationship and the arrival of children, it could be pointed out that this event produces some decrease in the intensity and satisfaction in the relationships, which coincides with numerous investigations (Urbano Contreras et al., 2018). However, one of the most relevant factors for the decline in satisfaction with the arrival of children is the problems that had already existed before becoming parents. Sociodemographic factors can condition the satisfaction and stability of the relationship of the couple. The family dynamics and interaction between the couple will also influence their well-being and continuity, since the presence of positive communication styles, along with the absence of conflicts, are factors that contribute to marital satisfaction (Armenta Hurtarte and Díaz-Loving, 2008; Flores Galaz, 2011). Regardless of the coupling structure, the time they have been together, or other characteristics that define a relationship, sexuality is usually a defining component of couple relationships. It is an aspect that conditions, in one way or another, the interaction of the two members and the way each one lives their relationship (intimacy, affection, trust, etc.). These characteristics have made this area a matter of concern as many couples are not maintaining a close relationship, or their relationship is based on huge omissions (Redondo, 2017). Each couple defines and projects their sexuality based on relevant issues like previous experiences. Socially, the explicit sexual desire to initiate a sexual encounter by a woman is less accepted, even by their partners, than in the case of men.

Regarding sexual satisfaction, the first differentiating feature that research usually picks up is gender. In this sense, it seems that men tend to report high levels of relationship satisfaction when their wives report greater sexual satisfaction, while the opposite is not the case (Yoo et al., 2014). Regarding other features, sexual satisfaction correlates negatively with age, low levels of education, and the duration of the relationship, while

positively correlating with overall satisfaction with the relationship. In this line, and combining gender and paternity, authors such as Carlson et al. (2016) detected, mainly in the case of women, a postponement of satisfaction in favor of raising children. It is especially true in cases where childcare is not shared since those couples who collaborated equally in this task are reported to experience higher rates of quality in their relationships and specifically in their sexual life.

Close relationships and, more specifically, love relationships also have a negative side derived from a series of myths or socially shared cultural beliefs about the nature of love, that is, what the couple's relationship implies. Among them, Barron (1999, cited in Yela et al., 2003) points to the myth of jealousy as a belief that is a sign of love. Buss (2000) defines them as fundamental psychological mechanisms activated in response to a threat to a valued relationship. These mechanisms are different for men (more affected by sexual infidelity) than for women (more affected by emotional infidelity). Theoretical explanations for the existence of this myth of jealousy focus on two aspects: the evolutionary theories that conceive jealousy as a psychological mechanism derived from evolution (Buss, 2000) and the culturalist theses that place gender differences in the process of socialization and the social and cultural influence (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). Different studies have tried to compare both theses, and the results show that it is necessary to highlight that both men and women are more stressed by emotional infidelity and what the social norms dictate (Gómez-Jacinto, Canto, and García, 2001). This evolutionary predisposition toward jealousy may exist in a natural (or imagined) situation of threat to the loss of the relationship. However, there are many cultural differences in how and when jealousy is expressed. For example, there are differences in the frequency, variety, and types of situations that provoke them in social legitimacy and in the reactions considered appropriate to jealousy (Puente and Cohen, 2003). In this context, the acceptance of violence in response to jealousy has been studied experimentally. Thus, violence out of jealousy is legitimized more in cultures of honor than in cultures of non-honor (Grandon and Cohen, 2002; Vandello and Cohen, 2008; Vandello, Cohen and Ransom, 2008; Vandello, Cohen, Grandon, and Franiuk,

in review). Differences are found in partner abuse depending on cultural concerns about women's purity or their role in the marriage and family (Ghazal & Cohen, 2002; Vandello & Cohen, 2002a). The authors summarize that when a case of violence is justified by jealousy, it is not viewed as negatively as when violence occurs with an absence of related justification with jealousy (Puente and Cohen, 2003).

In summary, satisfaction with the relationship as a couple leads to higher physical and psychological well-being, while dissatisfaction is more closely linked to phenomena such as family violence, substance abuse, or divorce. Both seem to influence aspects such as the behavior of children, the quality of relationships between parents and children, health, satisfaction, employment, and quality of life and well-being.

III. The Empirical Study

Chapter 6. Theoretical Framework

This study aims to explore the associations between adult attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles, emotional expressivity, and romantic relationship satisfaction. The specific goals of this work are stated below:

1. To investigate the adult attachment styles of a Bulgarian sample and their attribution to conflict resolution styles, early maladaptive schemas, emotional expressivity, and romantic relationship satisfaction;
2. To understand what role the early maladaptive schemas play in the connection between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution styles;
3. To provide information on whether emotional expressivity affects the connection between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction;

4. To test whether the early maladaptive schemas and the emotional expressivity mediate the relationship between attachment styles and conflict resolution styles;
5. To check whether the early maladaptive schemas and the emotional expressivity mediate between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction;
6. To find evidence of whether the attachment styles have an effect on emotional expressivity and conflict resolution;

In order to achieve these goals, the following tasks need to be performed:

- To study the theoretical aspects of attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, emotional expressivity, conflict resolution styles, and romantic relationship satisfaction.
- To adapt instruments for the measurement of the Bulgarian population - the short form of the Attachment Style Questionnaire (Chui & Leung, 2016), the Young Schema Questionnaire - Short Form (Young & Brown, 2005), Conflict Resolution Styles (Kurdek, 1994) and Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, S. & Hendrick, C., 1988).
- To statistically analyze the connection between attachment styles and the conflict resolution
- To analyse the connection between attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction
- To design a statistical model to test the mediating roles of the early maladaptive schemas between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution
- To design a statistical model to test the mediating roles of the emotional expressivity schemas between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution
- To design a statistical model to test the mediating roles of the early maladaptive schemas between the attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction
- To design a statistical model to test the mediating roles of the emotional expressivity between the attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction

- To compare different groups on the demographic factors age and gender in terms of their relationship satisfaction
- To analyze significant correlations between the subgroups of the variables
- To analyze the predictor model(s) of the variance which explains the relationship satisfaction using multiple regression
- To lay out the clinical conclusions and implications for the practitioners in the field of psychotherapy.

6.1 Hypotheses

Considering the variables of interest, the following observations have been made before specifying the hypotheses.

The direct connection between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction has been widely studied. The general conclusions of many cited papers show an overall tendency for secure attachment styles to be associated with higher relationship satisfaction. At the same time, the opposite is also proven to be true - insecure attachment styles are related to overall lower relationship satisfaction, as previously observed in the literature. Similarly for the conflict resolution styles: the secure attachment leads to positive conflict resolution, and the insecure attachment leads to negative conflict resolution. Emotional expressivity has been merely studied in this context, especially within the Bulgarian population. In Western literature, many sources find correlations between attachment styles and early maladaptive schemas. However, it would be a significant

contribution for the Bulgarian scientific literature in Psychology and therapeutic communities to explore the relationships between these variables that are not directly observed. That is why the mediating roles of the early maladaptive schemas and the emotional expressivity are a novelty and a central focus of this investigation. To achieve those specific aims, the following hypotheses have been established:

1. The secure attachment styles will correlate negatively with the early maladaptive schemas, the negative emotional facets, and the problem withdrawal style for conflict resolution but positively with the relationship satisfaction.
2. The insecure attachment styles will be positively correlated with the early maladaptive schemas and the conflict withdrawal resolution style but negatively with the positive emotional facet and the relationship satisfaction.
3. The early maladaptive schemas will correlate negatively with the relationship satisfaction.
4. The early maladaptive schemas will play a significant mediating role between attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction.
5. The early maladaptive schemas will play a significant mediating role between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution.
6. The positive emotional facet will play a significant mediating role between secure attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction

The present study is guided by a theoretic model, which summarizes the above mentioned hypotheses and the study's design. It is represented on the following figure (figure 1).

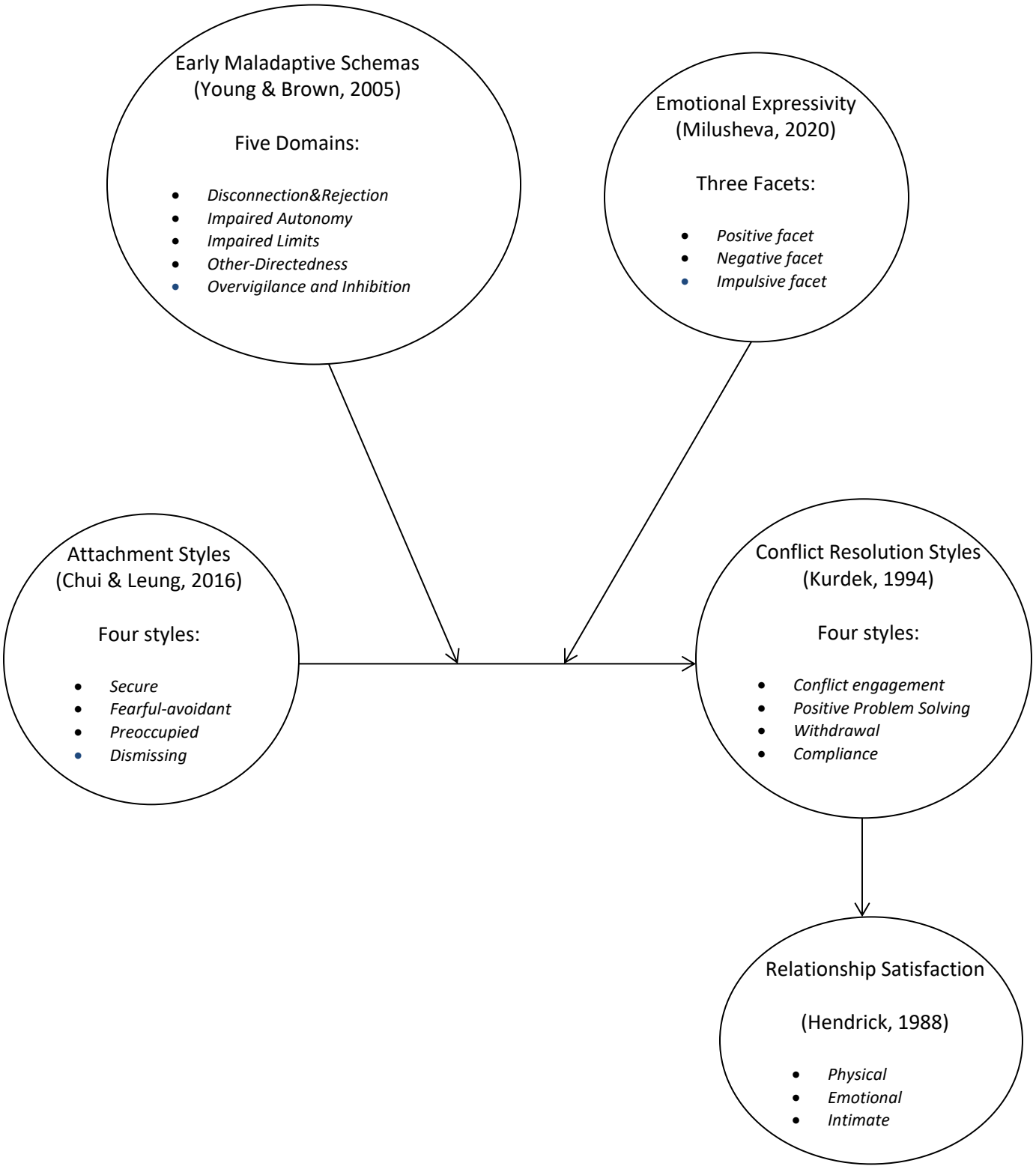

Early Maladaptive Schemas
(Young & Brown, 2005)
Five Domains:
Disconnection&Rejection
Impaired Autonomy
Impaired Limits
Other-Directedness
Overvigilance and Inhibition
Emotional Expressivity
(Milusheva, 2020)
Three Facets:
Positive facet
Negative facet
Impulsive facet
Attachment Styles
(Chui & Leung, 2016)
Four styles:
Secure
Fearful-avoidant
Preoccupied
Dismissing
Conflict Resolution Styles
(Kurdek, 1994)
Four styles:
Conflict engagement
Positive Problem Solving
Withdrawal
Compliance
Relationship Satisfaction
(Hendrick, 1988)
Physical
Emotional
Intimate

Figure 1. Theoretical Model and the Design of the Study

were used.

6.2 Instruments

Attachment Styles

In order to measure attachment styles, the Attachment Style Questionnaire Short Form was used (Chui & Leung, 2016). A Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was applied. The questionnaire is multifactorial and based on four attachment concepts: secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied and dismissing. Subjects were instructed to choose the number best describing them on the scale. The measure is derived from the instrument designed by Bartholomew and Horowitz (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1989). The latter lays on the theoretical finding of Ainsworth and her descriptions of the four attachment categories seen in infants. The theoretical validity met universal interest in the field of psychology in the late 50s of the last century with the work of John Bowbly during his stay at a child psychiatric department where he observed the behavior of orphans after the Second World War (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Although it is broadly accepted as a valuable concept in the modern psychological realm, attachment theory has some controversies regarding the instruments used to apply measurements (Simpson, 1990). Some people tend to show a mixture of attachment styles when filling out the questionnaire, while in theory, the categories are exclusive and should not be partially analyzed. However, the instrument showed favorable reliability indicators of alpha, respectively .50, .49, .67, and 64 for the four attachment styles. Two-way translation (English-Bulgarian-English) was performed to prepare the questionnaire.

The following items measured the subscales:

- Secure Attachment Style - 3 items (ex. “I trust the other people, and I like it when other people can rely on me).

- Fearful-Avoidant - 5 items (ex. “I would like to be open to others, but I feel I cannot trust other people)
- Preoccupied - 3 items (ex. “I often wonder whether people like me)
- Dismissing - 4 items (ex. “I prefer that others are independent of me and that I am independent of others)

The short version of the questionnaire of Chui and Leung was chosen because the design of the study was time-consuming for participants and involved a large number of items in the questionnaire.

Early Maladaptive Schemas

For the needs of the current study, the short version of Jeffrey Young’s questionnaire of early maladaptive schemas was used. It contains 35 items (the original full version comprises 90 items). The scales' internal content is designed to measure the five domains of schemas, and they are postulated so that each of the schemas is present to some degree for each individual. A short overview of the instrument is presented below for each domain.

- Disconnection and Rejection

The expectations that one’s needs for security, safety, nurturance, empathy, sharing of feelings, acceptance, and respect would not be met predictably. Typical family origin is detached, cold, rejecting, withholding, lonely, explosive, unpredictable, or abusive.

- Impaired Autonomy and Performance

Expectations about oneself and the environment that interfere with one’s perceived ability to separate, survive, function independently, or perform successfully. Typical family origin is enmeshed, undermining a child’s confidence, being overprotective, or failing to reinforce the child to perform competently outside the family.

- Impaired Limits

It presents a deficiency in internal limits, responsibility to others, or long-term goal orientation. This leads to difficulty respecting the rights of others, cooperating with others, making commitments, or setting and meeting realistic personal goals. Typical family origin is characterized by permissiveness, overindulgence, lack of direction or a sense of superiority rather than appropriate confrontation, discipline, and limits concerning taking responsibility, cooperating reciprocally, and setting goals. In some cases, the child may not have been pushed to tolerate normal levels of discomfort or may not have been given adequate supervision, direction, or guidance.

- Other-Directedness

An excessive focus on others' desires, feelings, and responses at the expense of one's own needs to gain love and approval maintains one's sense of connection or avoids retaliation. It usually involves suppression and lack of awareness regarding anger and natural inclinations. Typical family origin is based on conditional acceptance, and children must suppress essential aspects of themselves to gain love, attention, and approval. In such families, the parents' emotional needs and desires or social acceptance and status are valued more than each child's unique needs and feelings.

- Overvigilance and Inhibition

It encompasses an excessive emphasis on suppressing one's spontaneous feelings, impulses, and choices or on meeting rigid, internalized rules and expectations about performance and ethical behavior, often at the expense of happiness, self-expression, relaxation, close relationships, or health. Typical family origin is grim, demanding, and sometimes punitive. Such ideas as performance, duty, perfectionism, following rules, hiding emotions, and avoiding mistakes predominate over pleasure, joy, and relaxation. There is usually an undercurrent of pessimism and worry that things could fall apart if one fails to be vigilant and careful at all times.

The test-retest reliability scores reported by the authors vary between (.79) to (.89) for the items included (Phillips et al., 2017). In order to fit the planned length of the questionnaire, the author chose 35 items with the highest discriminative characteristics. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale is (.76), where the components overlap with the original distribution of the subscales (the five domains).

Conflict Resolution Styles

The conflict resolution styles are perceived as incorporated mechanisms of intervening in a conflict in a specific way. The instrument implied in this study is Kurdek's Conflict Resolution Styles questionnaire (Kurdek, 1994). The actual scientific inventory consisting of four categories describing conflict resolution cover the goals of the study, and they are defined as:

- Positive Conflict Resolution - the ability to reach out to compromises and negotiations;
- Conflict Engagement - referring to the use of personal attacks and loss of control;
- Withdrawal - involving a denial to discuss the problematic issue, turning out the partner;
- Compliance - when the person gives in and does not defend their opinion or ground.

Meta-analysis of the scales was performed later on by McClellan's questionnaire, which was retested statistically in 1997. Since then, it has been used in practically any culture with high internal consistency and split-half reliability scores. The CRQ (Conflict Resolution Questionnaire) was examined by evaluating the content, construct, and concurrent validity. All psychometric data showed above the acceptable standards (McClellan, 1997). The adaptation of the questionnaire for the current study has been performed. The alpha's reliability coefficients vary from .68 to .72, while the construct validity shows a precise four-dimensional component classification that groups the four subscales of the conflict resolution.

Emotional Expressivity

The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire assesses three facets of emotional expressivity: negative expressivity, positive expressivity, and impulse strength. The instrument designed by Gross and John (Gross & John, 1995) defines emotional expressiveness through the manifested behavior. The authors describe facial and physical changes which generally go along with emotions, such as smiling, tears, crying etc. The questionnaire contains 16 items that operationalize three factors: expressivity confidence (the confidence that people demonstrate publicly and in a social circle), core emotional expressivity, and masked expressivity (the ability to hide feelings for a better social presentation). In the current study, the core emotional expressivity is divided into three factors: the expressivity of positive emotions, negative emotions, and impulsiveness. The adaptation for the Bulgarian scientific community has already been performed, and permission to use it for the current study was obtained. The Cronbach's alpha in the original study for the whole questionnaire varies between .82 and .86, which corresponds with the correlations achieved at the Bulgarian adaptation. In a nutshell, the three subscales used in the study are:

- Impulsiveness

The scale describes solid emotional reactions which lead to the experience of physiological and behavioral changes that cannot be easily hidden. At the same time, it depicts the difficulties the individuals perceive when they wish to conceal their emotional impulses to constrain socially unacceptable behaviors.

- Positive Emotional Expressivity

It contains six items referring to expressing positive emotions such as happiness and pleasure. The scale represents favorable terms such as joy, enthusiasm, laughter etc. In the original version, the item “I am an emotionally expressive person” has the highest weight.

- Negative Emotional Expressivity

Six items construct the third scale. They all describe negative emotions. All statements refer to emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety etc. Not all questions are negatively defined, as three are reversed and have a positive formulation.

Romantic Relationships Satisfaction

In order to test the perceived romantic relationship satisfaction Hendrick's Relationship Assessment Scale was used (Hendrick, 1988). It is a unifactorial scale that only focuses on the perceived individual satisfaction in a romantic relationship. It encompasses three aspects of satisfaction: emotional, physical, and intimate. Seven items were developed based on previous measures such as the Marital Assessment Questionnaire (Hendrick, 1981) and Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1998). College students completed the RAS using a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Factor analysis supported the scale's structure, while item correlations varied from .573 to .760. The RAS exhibited conceptually consistent correlations with additional relationship measures. The RAS was also an effective discriminator of couples who stayed together versus those who split apart. Its predictive ability indicated that it could be advantageous in targeting couples "at risk" for relationship breakup. Additionally, in a study by Hendrick and Dicke, the RAS was found to have good test-retest reliability (Hendirck & Dick, 1998). The construct validity for the Bulgarian adaptation showed alpha's ranging from .65 to .82.

6.3. Method

For the needs of the current study, a master questionnaire was designed, including all necessary instruments, and it is presented in the Appendix. Four questionnaires needed to be adapted. Namely, the Attachment Styles Questionnaire (Chui & Leung, 2016), Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form (Young & Brown, 2005), Conflict Resolution Styles (Kurdek, 1994) and the Relationship Satisfaction Assessment (Hendrick, 1988). Translation

from English into Bulgarian was done be two independent psychologists, followed by one back transltion into English. All item translations were discussed among the experts who took part in the translations until the final versions were agreed.

All hypotheses were tested using statistical procedures. In the first stage, the average and the standard values were checked, as well as the standard deviations and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. This analysis is necessary to assess the internal coherence of all instruments. The hypotheses were tested only after seeing that all instruments show satisfactory psychometric characteristics so that the measured scales could be used. All descriptive statistics were applied as a standard procedure, including testing between groups using Student´s T-tests. The correlations between the different variables were also obtained. Employing the multifactorial regression model, an explanatory model of the variance was found. For what concerns the study's major statistical interest, mediation analysis was run to test whether there are some unobservable elements contributing to the relationship between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution styles. As such mediators, the early maladaptive schemas and the emotional expressivity were hypothesized as possible mediators. In a subsequent analysis, we tested whether the latter relationship influences relationship satisfaction.

6.4. Procedure

Following the usual procedure, the questionnaires involved in the study were translated from English into Bulgarian and back into English by Bulgarian experts proficient in English, which guaranties that the original meaning is preserved.

The questionnaire was distributed using the online platform Google Forms. A 5-point Likert scale for all items was applied (from “completely untrue for me” to “completely true for me”.

The final version of the questionnaire contains 89 items. It can be seen in the Appendix. The first 15 items measure the attachment styles. These are the short-form scales of Chui and Leung's questionnaire (Chui & Leung, 2016). The questions included were designed to measure all four attachment styles (secure, fearful-avoidant, preoccupied, and dismissing). The questions were randomized in order not to cause tendencies or create contamination of the responses.

In measuring the Early Maladaptive Schemas, 35 items were chosen out of the original 90 (Short Form). In strict terms, the first questionnaire that Young designed included 232 items. The 35 items included measure the following five domains: Disconnection and Rejection, Impaired Autonomy, Impaired Limits, Other-Directedness, and Overvigilance.

The Emotional Expressivity was tested by Berkeley´s questionnaire of 16 items designed by Gross and encompassing the three emotional facets: positive, negative, and impulsive. This is the only questionnaire that was already adapted for the Bulgarian population by Jenya Miusheva (Milusheva, 2020), who granted permission for usage of the scales in Bulgarian.

Conflict Resolution Styles were measured by Kurdek's inventory which consists of 16 items (Kurdek, 1994). The multidimensional questionnaire includes four subgroups: conflict engagement, positive problem-solving, withdrawal, and conflict compliance.

Relationship Satisfaction is a unifactorial variable containing seven items. They all consider the individually perceived satisfaction as a whole, monitoring in one category the emotional, physical, and intimate aspects of a romantic relationship.

The investigation was conducted anonymously and voluntarily without offering financial compensation to the respondents. When filling in the form on the Internet, all participants were informed that the investigation was being accomplished for the needs of a psychological study. No further information was given regarding the instruments, and no

theory, investigation purposes, or hypotheses were cleared out to the participants. They were all asked to complete the form most authentically and objectively as there were no correct or wrong answers: just which best described themselves. No data which could be tracked down to a specific individual was collected, and all demographic or individual information was guaranteed to remain private. The average time to complete the questionnaire was between 15 and 25 minutes. The form was available for completion between April the 1st and on for a month until May 2020. The total number of participants was 320, where 12 respondents were excluded due to incomplete, incorrect or dubious (controversial) completion of the form.

The gathered data was processed by the statistical program IBM SPSS, version 20.0.0.0. All items were recoded and grouped into specific scales.

6.5. Sample

The subjects included in this study were 308 individuals aged 14 to 74 years with a mean age of 38.47 (mode = 28, median = 35, s.d. = 12.58). There were 79 male (26%) and 229 female (74%) participants. The selection criteria were that the participants currently are into or have been in a romantic relationship and are 16 years old or older. Two hundred forty-nine of the subjects were currently in a relationship, while 59 were single when filling out the questionnaires but had a romantic bond experience. The duration of the relationships for the sample ranged from 1 to 51 years (mean = 12.11, media = 7, mode = 1, s.d. 11.67). The vast majority of participants were Bulgarian (97,4%), where only single subjects were representing Norway (0,3%), Ukraine (0,3%), Cyprus (0,3%), Greece (0,3%) and were later on excluded from the sample as the primary goal of the study was to represent the Bulgarian population. All people described themselves as heterosexual.

Table 1. Distribution of participants on gender, age and education.

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Age	Under 25	5	32	37

	26-35	36	84	120
	36-45	20	45	65
	46-55	7	39	46
	Above 55	11	29	40
Education	Primary			3
	Secundary			41
	Bachelor			68
	Master			173
	Doctor			23
Total				308

The answers of 12 participants were excluded from the total number of all filled forms due to incorrect completion or dubious demographic data such as irrelevant age (under 16) or irrelevant relationship duration (20 years old with 15 years of relationship experience, etc.).

6.6. Psychometric Characteristics of the Scales

Psychometric characteristics of the Attachment Style Questionnaire-Short Form

(Chui & Leung, 2016)

Alpha's Coefficient is used when determining the internal reliability of the scale for the Bulgarian sample. The current investigation results demonstrate the instrument's high reliability in the frame of the Bulgarian socio-cultural context. The α score for the whole questionnaire is .62. The lowest subscale, "Secure Attachment Style," in terms of reliability, shows .43, while the highest, "Avoidant Attachment Style," tops at .84 (Table 2). The other two subscales, "Preoccupied" and "Dismissing" attachment styles, show respective reliability of .84 and .66. The inter-correlations between the items of the specific scales show the same direction as in the original questionnaire (Table 2). Comparative data between the adapted questionnaire and the original is presented below.

Table 2. Adapted Attachment Style Questionnaire Cronbach's alpha values

Attachment Scales	Number of Items	Mean	SD.	Cronbach α	Cronbach α of the original scale
Secure	3	4.0639	.64562	.427	.77
Avoidant	5	2.4526	.85843	.843	.87
Preoccupied	3	6.9708	2.81153	.780	.81
Dismissing	4	3.3945	.77904	.664	.71
Total	15	2.9997	.42809	.618	.79

The psychometric data of the adapted questionnaire presented in Table 2 show relative values to the original questionnaire designed by Chui and Leung (Chui & Leung, 2016). The reliability varies between .71 and .87, and the weight of each subscale remains in the same direction as in the adapted instrument. The total α of the original questionnaire is .79. The items are inter-correlated in a significant way, as shown in Table 3, apart from the connection between preoccupied and dismissing styles with the secure style and the avoidant with the dismissing.

Table 3. Inter-Correlation Values Between the Attachment Styles

Attachment Styles	Secure Attachment Style	Avoidant Attachment Style	Preoccupied Attachment Style	Dismissing Attachment Style
Secure Attachment Style	1			
Avoidant Attachment Style	-.258***	1		
Preoccupied Attachment Style	-.016	.243***	1	
Dismissing Attachment Style	.046	.068	-.141**	1

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 ***

Psychometric characteristics of the Early Maladaptive Schemas – Short Version (Young & Brown, 2005)

Young's questionnaire on early maladaptive schemas is widely used worldwide and adapted for many different cultures. The Bulgarian version has also been validated and adapted for practitioners' use. After intensive email correspondence, a precise allowance to use the adapted Bulgarian version was not achieved. A free-to-use English test was applied for the current investigation and with fixed time limits. The items were translated and processed by language experts in Bulgarian following the standards of double translation to Bulgarian and back to English. The following psychometric data applies to the newly adapted scales for the Ph.D. investigation goals.

Table 4. Adapted Cronbach Values for YSQ-Short Form

Early Maladaptive Schemas	Number of Items	Mean	SD.	Cronbach α	Cronbach α of the original scale
Emotional deprivation	5	1.730	1.005	.854	.88
Abandonment	5	2.486	1.103	.825	.87
Defectiveness	5	1.615	.750	.796	.91
Emotional Inhibition	5	2.031	1.015	.863	.87
Enmeshment	5	1.785	.815	.737	.78
Subjugation	5	2.315	.891	.763	.82
Entitlement	5	2.968	.857	.585	.67
Total	35	2.124	0.916	.907	.82

As clearly demonstrated in Table 4, the seven applied subscales of the questionnaire for the study show similar subscales or even higher overall α than the original. The highest alpha result is Emotional Inhibition with .863, while the lowest falls to .585 with the schema Entitlement. The other groups show optimal to high scores where Emotional Deprivation presents at .854, Abandonment at .825, Defectiveness at .796, Enmeshment at .737, and Subjugation at .763. The total α score for the whole questionnaire tops at .907.

All this gives good reliability of the correlations between the other hypothesized variables and the inter-correlated subscales of the questionnaire itself. The latter is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Inter-Correlation Values for the Early Maladaptive Schemas

Schemas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Emotional Deprivation	1						
2. Abandonment	.353***	1					
3. Defectiveness	.545***	.468***	1				
4. Emotional Inhibition	.328***	.214***	.427***	1			
5. Enmeshment	.186***	.461***	.330***	.148***	1		
6. Subjugation	.469***	.745***	.556***	.363***	.422***	1	
7. Entitlement	.394***	.265***	.368***	.105	.152***	.307***	1

Note: $p<0.05$*, $p<0.01$ **, $p<0.001$ ***

As it is easily observed, all subscales correlate significantly, some are moderate to strong. Such examples are the associations between Emotional Deprivation and Defectiveness, Emotional Deprivation and Subjugation, Abandonment, and Defectiveness, and especially Abandonment and Subjugation. The last one is of scientific and practical interest as the Subjugation is seen as a defense mechanism to the Abandonment. If a person has a core fear of abandonment, then a way of preventing it from happening is by submissive behaviors typical for the Subjugation schema. The only insignificant correlation between these seven schemas is between Emotional Inhibition and Entitlement. Not only is it insignificant, but also relatively weak as, in theory, the more a person feels entitled or is narcissistic, the less probable it is to inhibit emotions.

Psychometric Characteristics of the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Milusheva, 2020)

The Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire was the only out of the five instruments used in the investigation, which was granted for direct use by the Bulgarian author who adapted it. The values obtained in the study show high reliability of the scales in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context (Table 6).

Table 6. Cronbach Alpha Values for the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire

Scales	Number of Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach α	Cronbach α of the original scales		
					1	2	3
Positive Emotional Expressivity	4	5.812	1.036	.728	.71	.65	.68
Negative Emotional Expressivity	6	5.338	1.057	.676	.72	.68	.68
Impulsive Emotional Expressivity	6	3.959	1.068	.680	.73	.78	.82
BEQ	16	5.036	1.054	.735	.88	.85	.85

The given results above show a satisfactory degree of reliability for all three constructs. The lowest coefficient is .67 for the Negative Emotional Expressivity, while the highest is attributed to the Positive Emotional Expressivity with .72. The psychometric characteristics of the questionnaire are similar to the original versions (Table 6). The reliability scores vary between .65 and .82, while the total scores of the adapted BEQ and the original are respectively .73 and .88.

The subscales correlate between each other positively and in a significant way (Table 7). The strongest association is between the Impulsive Expressivity Facet and the Negative Expressivity Facet. Both theory and clinical practice show that the tendency of spontaneous or impulsive expression is predominately linked to negative emotional expression in the course of ventilating difficulty in withholding emotions. The positive expression shows the same direction, although it is weaker.

Table 7. Inter-correlation between the Emotional Expressivity Facets of BEQ

Expressivity Facets	Positive	Impulsive	Negative
Positive	1		
Impulsive	.484***	1	
Negative	.421***	.535***	1

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 ***

Psychometric characteristics of the Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire (Kurdek, 1994)

The Cronbach's coefficient was used to define the internal consistency of the Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire. The given results show a high degree of reliability of the instrument. The operation was necessary as the items were cross-checked after translation between two independent English and Bulgarian experts.

Tabla 8. Cronbach Alpha Scores for Kurdek's Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire

Conflict Resolution Styles	Number of Items	Mean	SD.	Cronbach α	Cronbach α of the original scale
Conflict Engagement	4	2.394	.849	.754	.82
Positive Problem Solving	4	3.826	.648	.621	.68
Problem Withdrawal	4	2.466	.889	.754	.66
Problem Compliance	4	2.461	.633	.760	.80
Total	16	2.787	.755	.671	.74

The highest Cronbach score goes to Problem Compliance with .760, while Positive Problem Solving represents the lowest at .621. The other two show .754 for Conflict Engagement and .754 for Problem Withdrawal. Concerning the inter-correlation of the subscales, they are significant and valuable for further data analysis (Table 9).

Table 9. Inter-Correlation Coefficients between Conflict Resolution Styles

Conflict Resolution Styles	Conflict Engagement	Positive Conflict Solving	Problem Withdrawal	Problem Compliance
Conflict Engagement	1			
Positive Conflict Solving	-.105	1		
Problem Withdrawal	.352***	-.198	1	
Problem Compliance	.624***	-.015	.390***	1

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 ***

The strongest association is between Conflict Engagement and Conflict Compliance, .624, respectively .390 between Problem Withdrawal and Problem Compliance, and .352 between Conflict Engagement and Problem Withdrawal. The other couples of variables show an insignificant relationship between each other: Conflict Engagement and Positive Conflict Solving, Positive Conflict Solving with Problem Withdrawal, and Problem Compliance.

Psychometric characteristics of the Relationship Assessment (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988)

Hendrick and Hendrick´s questionnaire is the only unifactorial instrument in the study. It is represented by seven items on a single scale, all measuring general relationship satisfaction based on common characteristics such as physical attraction, emotional satisfaction, and fulfillment of needs.

Table 7. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for Relationship Assessment Scale

RAS	Number of Items	Mean	SD.	Cronbach α	Cronbach α of the original scale
Total	7	3.878	.889	.91	.92

Chapter 7. Results and Discussion

7.1. Factor Analysis of the Scales

The Factor analysis of the principal components checks whether the adapted questionnaires correspond to the original subscales. It groups the items in a segmented manner showing how they get organized between one another according to their explicative weight for the whole scale. The varimax rotation is a statistical technique used at one level of factor analysis to clarify the relationship among factors. Generally, the process involves adjusting the coordinates of data that result from a principal components analysis. The adjustment, or rotation, is intended to maximize the variance shared among items. By maximizing the shared variance, results more discretely represent how data correlate with each principal component. Maximizing the variance generally means increasing the squared correlation of items related to one factor while decreasing the correlation on any other factor. In other words, the varimax rotation simplifies the loadings of items by removing the middle ground and, more precisely, identifying the factor upon which data loads. The explorative factorial analysis of the principle components is presented for each variable below.

Factor Analysis of the Attachment Style Questionnaire-Short Form (Chui & Leung, 2016)

The structure of the questionnaire is presented in Table 9. The abbreviations used for the needs of the presentation are the following (A – Avoidant Attachment Style, AP – Preoccupied Attachment, AD – Dismissive Attachment, AS – Secure Attachment). The order of the displayed items is by their weight load. The four principle components explain 61.80% of the whole variance of the scale. The structure and functions of the items correspond to

the original findings of the authors and represent the four-dimensional organization of the four attachment styles. The highest loads are shown for avoidant attachment style (AA). The item “I am wary of engaging in close relationships because I am afraid I will be hurt” tops .815 and constitutes a leading mark for the sample in attachment dominance. It represents the difficulties individuals experience when connecting to others romantically and opens a broad discussion over the so-called “healthy” relationships. On the other extreme are the secure attachment components demonstrating the lowest scores, such as AS1, “I trust other people, and I like it when they can count on me,” with only .386. From a theoretical point of view, it is natural to explain that the more anxious the participants report to find themselves, the less secure and trusting they would be. From a clinical perspective, it signalizes a possible need to immerse into a social discussion regarding developmental difficulties regarding relationships.

Table 8. Component Structure of the Attachment Style Questionnaire upon Varimax Rotation of the Principle Components

Items	Statement	Secure Attachment Style	Avoidant Attachment Style	Preoccupied Attachment Style	Dismissing Attachment Style	H2
AA4	I am wary of engaging in close relationships because I am afraid I will be hurt.	-	.815	-	-	.671
AA3	I am afraid that my hopes will be deceived when I get too close to others.	-	.780	-	-	.642
AA2	I would like to have a close relationship with others,	-	.774	-	-	.757

	but it is difficult for me to trust them.					
Items	Statement	Secure Attachment Style	Avoidant Attachment Style	Preoccupied Attachment Style	Dismissing Attachment Style	H2
AA1	I trust other people and I like it when they can count on me.	-	.707	-	-	.666
AP2	I often worry that people don't like me.	-	-	.633	-	.803
A5	I feel uncomfortable when relationships with other people become too close.	-	.626	-	-	.462
AP1	I often wonder if people like me.	-	-	.545	-	.779
AD2	I prefer others to be independent of me, as I am independent of them.	-	-	-	.667	.537
AP3R	I don't care if people like me or not.	-	-	.653	-	.591
AD4	I don't worry about being alone: I don't need other people so much.	-	-	-	.582	.641
AD1	I need to be independent.	-	-	-	.544	.598
AD3	I like to be self-sufficient.	-	-	-	.494	.651
AS1	I trust other people, and I	.386	-	-	-	.387

	like it when they can count on me.					
Items	Statement	Secure Attachment Style	Avoidant Attachment Style	Preoccupied Attachment Style	Dismissing Attachment Style	H2
AS3	I think it is important for people to be able to rely on each other.	.645	-	-	-	.616
AS2	I feel calm in an intimate relationship.	.535	-	-	-	.484
% of variance explained		24.54%	40.63%	52.41%	61.89%	-

Factor Analysis of the Early Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire Short Version

(Young & Brown, 2005)

The original questionnaire consists of 18 schemas measured by 90 items grouped into five clusters for each concept. After detailed analysis, seven were chosen in the current study due to their conceptual link to the other variables included in the data. Thus, a seven principle component structure was expected when running the statistics. They reflected the source and were ordered by the items' weight load. The most substantial effect was demonstrated by the schema “Abandonment” (SA). It is interesting to analyze the connection between this schema and the avoidant attachment (AA), which was emphasized above. These two components show high statistical effects, which leads to possible critical explanations. Suppose avoidant factors explain the more significant variance. In that case, it is expected for the sample to connect romantically in an avoidant way predominantly while at the same time threatening the probability of being abandoned. The abandonment schema measures whether the individuals fear the risk of being left alone or rejected, thus implying specific defensive mechanisms such as auto-rejection. Logically and supported by this theory of Young, if a group of participants would not want to risk being rejected, it would avoid connecting with others in the first place.

On the other hand, all the schemas show a specific negative connotation (as they are called maladaptive). It leads the analysis to clinical implications and conclusions and must be considered a tool for intervention. On the other extreme is the schema "Entitlement" (SENT). If we compare the attachment styles, it corresponds to the secure attachment style (AS). The direction shows that statistically, the sample recognized the items of being in a healthy predisposition towards a relationship which lessened entitlement, etc., narcissistic characteristics could contribute. The schema entitlement represents ego-centered traits that are seen as narcissistic. Such individuals would emphasize the control they could put into essential subjects to benefit their own goals and purposes.

Table 9. Component Structure of the Early Maladaptive Schema Questionnaire upon Varimax Rotation of the Principle Components

Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SA3	I am worried that my loved ones will leave or abandon me.	.743	-	-	-	-	-	-	.585
SA1	I find myself clinging to people I am close to because I am afraid they will leave me.	.693	-	-	-	-	-	-	.687
SA2	I need others so much that I'm afraid of losing them.	.691	-	-	-	-	-	-	.546
SA4	When someone I care about seems to withdraw or withdraws from me, I feel desperate.	.680	-	-	-	-	-	-	.536

Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SA5	Sometimes I worry so much about people leaving me that I push them away.	.668	-	-	-	-	-	-	.631
SS2	I feel that I have no choice but to obey the wishes of others, otherwise they will take revenge on me, get angry with me or throw me out in some way.	-	.726	-	-	-	-	-	.610
SS4	I've always left others to choose for me, so I really don't know what I want for myself.	-	.659	-	-	-	-	-	.577
SS5	It is very difficult for me to demand that my rights be respected or that my feelings be taken into account.	-	.644	-	-	-	-	-	.572
SS3	In my relationships, I usually give in to the other.	-	.533	-	-	-	-	-	.558
SS1	I think if I do what I want,	-	.407	-	-	-	-	-	.565

	I'll get in trouble.								
Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SED4	I have never had anyone really listen to me, understand me, or be aware of my true feelings and desires.	-	-	.791	-	-	-	-	.775
SED3	I didn't feel that I was special to anyone.	-	-	.780	-	-	-	-	.701
SED2	I don't have people who give me warmth, a hug and love.	-	-	.738	-	-	-	-	.598
SED1	I didn't have anyone to take care of me, be with me, or get really excited about what was happening to me.	-	-	.720	-	-	-	-	.632
SED5	I have not had a strong or wise person to give me good advice or guidance when I'm not sure how to act.	-	-	.679	-	-	-	-	.572
SEI4	I control myself so much that others find me	-	-	-	.840	-	-	-	.718

	unemotional or insensitive.								
Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SEI5	People see me as emotionally rigid.	-	-	-	.814	-	-	-	.709
SEI2	I am uncomfortable expressing my feelings to others.	-	-	-	.786	-	-	-	.715
SEI3	It is difficult for me to be free and spontaneous among other people.	-	-	-	.742	-	-	-	.626
SEI1	I am very embarrassed to show positive feelings towards others (for example, love, that I care about, etc.).	-	-	-	.699	-	-	-	.622
SD2	No one I want would want to be close to me if they really knew me.	-	-	-	-	.731	-	-	.667
SD1	No one I want could love me when they see my flaws or shortcomings.	-	-	-	-	.656	-	-	.669
SD3	I am not worthy of the love, attention and	-	-	-	-	.609	-	-	.480

	respect of others.								
Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SD4	I feel like I can't be loved.	-	-	-	-	.588	-	-	.647
SD5	I am too unacceptable in many basic ways to reveal myself to others or let them get to know me well.	-	-	-	-	.538	-	-	.599
SE5	I often feel that I do not have a separate identity from my parents or partner.	-	-	-	-	-	.468	-	.510
SE2	My parents and I are too involved in our personal lives and problems.	-	-	-	-	-	.801	-	.693
SE1	I am not able to separate from my parents as other people my age seem to have done.	-	-	-	-	-	.763	-	.607
SE4	I often feel that it is as if my parents live through me - that I do not have a life of my own.	-	-	-	-	-	.680	-	.631
SE3	It is very difficult for me and my	-	-	-	-	-	.561	-	.484

	parents to keep personal things secret from each other without feeling attacked or feeling guilty.								
Items	Statement	Aband	Subj	EDep	Inhib	Defect	Enmesh	Entitle	H2
SENT2	I am special and should not accept many of the prohibitions and restrictions placed on others.	-	-	-	-	-	-	.724	.623
SENT3	I hate being restricted or hindered from doing what I want.	-	-	-	-	-	-	.678	.497
SENT4	I feel that I do not need to follow normal rules or agreements as others do.	-	-	-	-	-	-	.652	.603
SENT1	I have a hard time accepting "no" for an answer when I want something from other people.	-	-	-	-	-	-	.314	.633
SENT5	I feel that what I can offer is more valuable than the contribution of others.	-	-	-	-	-	-	.717	.639

% of variance explained	26.47%	35.35%	42.71%	47.68%	51.97%	55.61%	58.57 %	

Factor Analysis of the Psychometric Characteristics of the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire (Milusheva, 2020)

The Varimax principle component structure was applied on the data for the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire. The initial organization of the items did not completely correspond to the original scales as one main factor was explaining mainly both Negative and Impulsive expressivity. However, with slight accommodation, generally, it was seen as a unifactorial instrument. However, setting the rotation criteria to three components (as the original scale dictates) could be structured into a three-component instrument. However, some items score high in both Impulsive and Negative expressivity. Such are N6 and I6, respectively, “What I feel is written all over my face” and “I feel my emotions very strongly.” From a semantical point of view, they could be interpreted similarly, which might have led the respondents to identify similarly as measuring similar characteristics.

Table 10. Component Structure of the Berkeley Expressivity Questionnaire upon Varimax Rotation of the Principle Components

Items	Statement	Impulse	Positive	Negative	H2
I6	I feel my emotions very strongly.	.799	-	-	.090
I4	Sometimes I can't hide my feelings, even if I wanted to.	.715	-	-	.544
I5	There were times when I couldn't stop crying, even though I tried to stop.	.670	-	-	.461

I2	My body reacts very strongly to emotional situations.	.634	-	-	.441
Items	Statement	Impulse	Positive	Negative	H2
I3	I have strong emotions.	.606	-	-	.439
I1	Sometimes I cry in sad movies.	.094	-	-	.643
P4	I am an emotionally expressive person.	-	.618	-	.536
P1	When I experience positive emotions, people can easily see how I feel.	-	.803	-	.748
P3	When I am happy, my emotions are visible to everyone.	-	.796	-	.748
P2	I laugh out loud when someone tells me a joke or a joke.	-	.693	-	.487
N6	What I feel is written all over my face.	-	-	.796	.657
N5	When I experience negative emotions, people can easily see	-	-	.661	.467

	exactly how I feel.				
N2	It's hard for me to hide my fear.	-	-	.587	.392
Items	Statement	Impulse	Positive	Negative	H2
N4R	No matter how anxious or upset I feel, I try to stay calm on the outside.	-	-	.836	.717
N3R	I have learned that it is better to suppress my anger than to show it.	-	-	.817	.680
N1R	People often don't know how I feel.	-	-	.435	.256
% of variance explained		32.71%	42.67%	51.92%	

Factor Analysis of the Conflict Resolution Styles Questionnaire

(Kurdek, 1994)

Kurdek's questionnaire represents a four-dimensional structure in both the author's initial testing and the current study. It includes four principle components "Problem Withdrawal," "Positive Problem Solving," "Problem Compliance," and "Conflict Engagement." The varimax rotation shows the weight load for each factor in Table 12,

ordered in descending order. The four components altogether explain 56.69% of the variance regarding emotional expressivity.

Table 11. Component Structure of the Kurdek's Conflict Resolution Questionnaire upon Varimax Rotation of the Principle Components

Items	Statement	Withdrawal	Engagement	Compliance	PSolving	H2
W2	I reach my limit, "switch off" and refuse to talk anymore.	.674	-	-	-	.674
W3	I stop listening to what my partner is saying.	.648	-	-	-	.494
W4	Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.	.635	-	-	-	.547
W1	I remain silent for long periods of time.	.607	-	-	-	.612
CE4	Throwing insults and digs.	-	.553	-	-	.567
CE3	Getting carried away and saying things that aren’t meant.	-	.522	-	-	.468
CE2	Exploding and getting out of control.	-	.500	-	-	.670
CE1	Launching personal attacks.	-	.464	-	-	.633
C1	Not being willing to stick up for myself.	-	-	.694	-	.667
C3	Not defending my position.	-	-	.690	-	.724
C4	Giving in with little attempt	-	-	.604	-	.618

	to present my side of the issue.					
C2	Being too. compliant.	-	-	.563	-	.385
Items	Statement	Withdrawal	Engagement	Compliance	PSolving	H2
PS3	Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.	-	-	-	.650	.619
PS2	Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.	-	-	-	.649	.460
PS4	Negotiating and compromising.	-	-	-	.585	.613
PS1	Focusing on the problem at hand.	-	-	-	.491	.321
% of variance explained		22.27%	37.16%	48.58%	56.69%	

Factor Analysis of the Relationship Assessment

(Hendrick & Hendrick, 1988)

Hendrick's questionnaire is the only one-dimensional instrument applied in the study. 66.25% of the variance is explained by the unique factor "Relationship Satisfaction." The highest score is represented by the item "In general, how satisfied are you in your relationship" (RAS2) with .824. Overall, all items show a great to decent effect on the dependent variable, Relationship Satisfaction.

Table 12. Component Structure of the Relationship Satisfaction Assessment Questionnaire upon Varimax Rotation of the Principle Components

Item	Statement	RAS	H2
RAS2	How well does your partner meet your needs?	.908	.824

RAS3	In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	.865	.748
RAS1	How good is your relationship compared to most?	.858	.736
RAS5	How often do you wish you hadn't got in this relationship?	.846	.715
RAS6	To what extend has your relationship met your original experiences?	.803	.645
RAS4R	How much do you love your partner?	.744	.553
RAS7R	How many problems are there in your relationship?	.646	.418
% of variance explained		66.25%	-

7.2. Differences in Attachment Styles, Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Expressivity, Conflict Resolution and Relationship Satisfaction based on gender, education, age and other demographic factors

Student's T-test is applied when testing differences between independent groups on one criterion. The t score indicates the load of the effect between the variables. The larger the t score, the more difference there is between groups. The smaller the t score, the more similarity there is between groups. The sample includes 308 subjects, where 229 are female, and 79 are male. The latter implies that the groups are uneven in terms of the gender quantity of respondents but meet the criteria for significant observations. It is interesting to consider the differences between the sexes regarding emotional expressivity as in the literature. It has been previously tested that females are prone to better expressivity both verbally and non-verbally than males. Significant differences could be observed in the current study, as shown in Table 14 below. The only significant difference between the groups is based on the expressivity. The T-score is significantly larger than all

other associations -5.893, indicating significant differences between males and females according to their ability to express.

Table 13.T-test on the Five Variables on Gender Differences

	Sex	Mean	SD	T-score	Sig.
RSatisfaction	Male	3.911	.960	.381	.703
	Female	3.867	.865		
Attachment	Male	45.632	6.389	.000	1.000
	Female	45.633	6.399		
Schema	Male	74.354	19.576	-.148	.883
	Female	74.772	22.417		
Expressivity	Male	71.569	12.582	-5.893	.000
	Female	81.640	13.260		
Conflict Resolution	Male	37.731	6.675	.908	.365
	Female	37.008	5.889		

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 ***

Another interesting comparison could be observed in terms of whether there are any significant differences within the different age groups regarding the five variables (attachment, emotional expressivity, conflict resolution styles, schemas, and relationship satisfaction) and the duration of the relationship that affects them. These two are presented below.

Differences based on Age Groups and Relationship Duration for the Five Variables

In Table 14, the ANOVA one-way analysis was run to search for significant differences between age groups (under 25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 55 and above) regarding their association with the variables. It shows that there is no significance regarding how individuals represent the theoretical concepts of attachment. According to theory (Bowlby, 1991), it is natural that personality development is completed at a very early stage (around four years of age). Thus, there should be no expectations about how age affects this specific variable. On the other hand, one significant difference could be observed when testing with the Brown-Forsythe test for equality of group variances performing ANOVA. Namely, age imposes the -inter and -intra group effect on the early maladaptive schemas, significant at

.047. This finding is supported by theory and has vast implications for the clinical field, as it turns out that even though attachment styles are determined and maintained through time and space, schemas could be transformed with age. It gives a break-through for therapy and a chance for intervention.

Table 14. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Differences between Age and the Main Variables.

		Number	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
RSatisfaction	Under 25	37	3.733	.982	1.86	5.00	.727	.575
	26-35	120	3.894	.930	1.00	5.00		
	36-45	65	3.918	.768	2.14	5.00		
	46-55	46	3.770	.852	1.71	5.00		
	55 +	40	4.025	.906	1.14	5.00		
	Total	308	3.878	.889	1.00	5.00		
Attachment	Under 25	37	46.513	6.982	28	62	1.285	.300
	26-35	120	45.375	5.977	30	66		
	36-45	65	44.938	6.528	27	60		
	46-55	46	45.043	7.207	26	58		
	55 +	40	47.400	5.637	37	60		
	Total	308	45.633	6.386	26	66		
Schema	Under 25	37	83.297	22.975	49	143	2.379	.047
	26-35	120	73.225	22.275	37	160		
	36-45	65	74.384	21.690	44	136		
	46-55	46	69.695	19.058	43	115		
	55 +	40	77.175	19.988	45	123		
	Total	308	74.665	21.694	37	160		
Expressivity	Under 25	36	80.805	16.003	46	105	2.061	.093
	26-35	120	79.441	14.037	41	107		
	36-45	65	81.215	12.463	54	106		
	46-55	46	78.087	11.621	47	105		
	55 +	40	73.875	14.534	31	104		
	Total	307	79.048	13.793	31	107		
Conflict Res.	Under 25	37	37.506	5.963	24.75	47.25	.299	.876
	26-35	120	36.975	6.256	15.25	60.25		
	36-45	65	37.792	6.018	19.50	59		

	46-55	46	37.146	5.812	23.75	51.25		
	55 +	40	36.643	6.388	25.75	53.50		
	Total	308	37.194	6.097	15.25	60.25		

As it concerns the differences in the relationship duration for the five variables, the results show more critical and interesting data to interpret. In Table 15, it could be observed that three variables show significant differences within the six groups regarding how long the relationship has lasted. These are the Relationship Satisfaction, the Attachment Styles, and the Early Maladaptive Schemas. It could be concluded that according to the Levene test, a unique variance is explained significantly between all the groups and the relationship duration.

Table 15. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Differences Between Relationship Duration Groups and the Main Variables.

		Number	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	F	Sig.
Relationship Satisfaction	Under 5	130	3.649	.948	1	5	3.562	.004
	6-10	50	4.088	.809	2.14	5		
	11-15	35	3.959	.878	1.71	5		
	16-25	45	3.977	.724	2.43	5		
	26-35	33	4.039	.895	2	5		
	36+	15	4.323	.662	3	5		
	Total	308	3.878	.889	1	5		
Attachment	Under 5	130	46.207	6.197	33	66	2.744	.019
	6-10	50	44.960	6.285	28	60		
	11-15	35	43.600	7.117	26	60		
	16-25	45	44.111	6.414	28	56		
	26-35	33	47.181	5.434	32	54		
	36+	15	48.800	6.592	39	60		
	Total	308	45.633	6.386	26	66		
Schema	Under 5	130	78.692	24.260	39	160	2.253	.049
	6-10	50	70.820	19.644	37	119		
	11-15	35	67.971	17.874	42	117		
	16-25	45	72.977	20.116	44	117		
	26-35	33	76.697	20.499	43	123		
	36+	15	68.800	12.918	49	88		
	Total	308	74.665	21.694	37	160		

Expressivity	Under 5	129	78.620	14.857	41	107	1.182	.318
	6-10	50	81.100	13.410	50	105		
	11-15	35	79.142	12.419	56	103		
	16-25	45	81.266	11.682	47	106		
	26-35	33	77.272	12.099	56	104		
	36+	15	72.933	17.102	31	90		
	Total	307	79.048	13.793	31	107		
Conflict Resosultion	Under 5	130	37.596	6.504	15.25	60	.976	.433
	6-10	50	36.785	5.864	26	51		
	11-15	35	37.264	5.689	26.25	59		
	16-25	45	38.005	6.000	23.75	51.25		
	26-35	33	36.128	5.9273	25.75	53.50		
	36+	15	34.816	4.4686	27.75	43.25		
	Total	308	37.194	6.0973	15.25	60.25		

Differences based on Education and Relationship Status for the Five Variables

The groups defined by education are standard (primary, secondary, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees). After running the ANOVA analysis of variance, there were no significant differences regarding how education affects the five variables (attachment styles, schemas, expressivity, conflict resolution, and relationship satisfaction). However, two tendencies are worth mentioning: schemas and relationship satisfaction. The first concept demonstrates that the lower the education, the higher the scores. It implies that we should expect higher maladaptive behaviors when people drop out of school earlier. The difference between the means of primarily educated individuals only tops at 96.33 (N=3) while doctoral have means of 67.73 (N=23). As a reference, the bachelor and master education groups show means of 78.58 (N=68) and 73.23 (N=173). A similar direction is represented by relationship satisfaction; the higher the education, the more perceived satisfaction is displayed. In quantitative terms, primary education presents 3.71 (N=3) while doctoral 4.03 (N=23). Bachelor and master maintain the tendency with 3.76 (N=68) and 3.90 (N=173), respectively. The descriptive data is shown in Table 16.

Table 16. Descriptive differences ANOVA for Schemas and Relationship Satisfaction on Education

		Number	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Schemas	Secondary	41	76.51	22.454	43	132
	Bachelor	68	78.58	21.454	44	124
	Master	173	73.23	21.335	37	160
	Doctoral	23	67.73	18.711	39	110
	Total	308	74.66	21.694	37	160
RSatisfaction	Secondary	41	3.87	1.106	1	5
	Bachelor	68	3.76	.942	1.14	5
	Master	173	3.90	.824	1.86	5
	Doctoral	23	4.03	.806	2.14	5
	Total	308	3.87	.889	1	5

In Table 17, a new grouping set was performed where the Relationship Status was used in combination with the five variables. It shows that all of them, except for Conflict Resolution, differ significantly in a function to whether the individuals are currently in a relationship or not.

Table 17. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Differences Between Relationship Status and the Main Variables.

	RStatus	Number	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	F	Sig
RSatisfaction	Yes	249	4.047	.800	1.71	5	55.344	.000
	No	59	3.164	.896	1	5		
	Total	308	3.878	.889	1	5		
Attachment	Yes	249	45.060	6.494	26	65	10.793	.001
	No	59	48.050	5.757	34	66		
	Total	308	45.633	6.386	26	66		
Schemas	Yes	249	72.831	21.719	37	160	9.551	.002
	No	59	82.406	19.867	39	143		
	Total	308	74.665	21.694	37	160		
Expressivity	Yes	249	80.028	13.500	31	107	6.625	.011
	No	59	74.932	14.360	46	105		
	Total	308	79.048	13.793	31	107		
Conflict	Yes	249	37.328	5.829	19.50	59	.630	.428
	No	59	36.627	7.144	15.25	60.25		
	Total	308	37.194	6.097	15.25	60.26		

It appears that the satisfaction scores for individuals in a relationship are nearly 1 point higher on average than the ones who are not in a relationship but have been in the last year or more. As a percentage, the same is maintained for Schemas. It could be deducted that having a partner would contribute to less maladaptive behaviors. The same direction applies to expressivity, where people in a relationship tend to be more expressive and for attachment styles.

7.3. Relations between Attachment Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas, Expressivity, Conflict Resolution, and Relationship Satisfaction

This part of the analysis presents the associations between the Attachment Styles and the other four variables, namely the Early Maladaptive Schemas, Expressivity, Conflict Resolution and Relationship Satisfaction. In order to test the main hypotheses of the study, it is essential to have significant and relatively strong associations between the variables.

Relations between the Attachment Styles and the Early Maladaptive Schemas

In Table 18, all the variables correlate significantly and moderately to weakly. The strongest association is between the preoccupied attachment style and schema abandonment (r=482). According to Bowlby (1991), when anxious in a social situation, specific defensive mechanisms come into play to cope with the requirements of the environment. The same theory has been presented by Lazarus as well in the transactional model (Lazarus, 1984) where the individual resources are objectively insufficient or are perceived as such from a subjective point of view. However, the main conclusions in both models could lead to avoidant behaviors. In terms of the schema theory and specifically the abandonment model, a precise defensive mechanism defined by Young is self-rejection or

self-dismissal. One would eliminate any possibility of failure by obstructing the possibility of connection. Consequently, there must be no preoccupations (no possible adverse future outcomes would occur). Another important observation from Table 18 is the negative association between the secure attachment style and all the maladaptive schemas. It is easy to deduct that if an individual connected with ease with others, then less active maladaptive schemas would be encountered, which would, in theory, mean a tendency for a healthier pairing. All the other attachment styles correlate positively with the schemas as they belong to the category "insecure." The more insecure attachment styles, the more active the maladaptive schemas are in such a linear model.

Table 18. Pearson Correlations between Attachment Styles and Early Maladaptove Schemas.

Variables	ASecure	AAvoid	APreoccupied	ADismissing
EDeprivation	-.285**	-.381**	.287**	.020
Abandonment	-.065	.368**	.482**	-.113*
Defectiveness	-.302**	.343**	.329**	.033
Einhibition	-.281**	.335**	.249**	.088
Enmeshment	-.035	.210**	.311**	-.135*
Subjugation	-.155**	.434**	.452**	-.069
Entitlement	-.110	.275**	.189**	.208**

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

The relationships between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction are presented in Table 19. All correlations are significant and between moderate and strong. The strongest association is between the dismissing attachment style and satisfaction (R=-.609). It is only natural that all directions are negative apart from the secure attachment and the satisfaction. The explanation behind this phenomenon corresponds to the theory. The secure attachment style predisposes behaviors that openly serve both partners' needs, thus fulfilling fundamental experiences and contributing to higher perceived satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction is seen as a mixture of physical and emotional necessities. Individuals tend to be hesitant to declare or act upon the natural human manners of expressing care, tenderness, or love when it comes to insecure attachment styles.

Table 19. Pearson Correlations between Attachment Styles and Early Maladaptive Schemas.

Variables	ASecure	AAvoid	APreoccupied	ADismissing
RSatisfaction	.309**	-.211**	-.053	-.609**

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Attachment Styles and the Conflict Resolution

The associations between attachment styles and conflict resolution styles are weak to moderate. These two concepts generally share little direct overlap regarding their influence on individuals. The attachment styles explain how individuals connect regarding whether one is prepared to initialize verbal and non-verbal contact based on a safe, trustworthy, and symbiotic platform. On the other hand, the conflict resolution styles represent action-oriented strategies that are learned and not inherent. The secure attachment style correlates significantly and negatively with problem withdrawal but positively with the problem-solving strategy. According to the theoretical expectations, if an individual has a secure attachment style, they would not hesitate to openly list a number of solutions in a conflict with the clear vision of settling them down most beneficially and effectively. On the opposite, such individuals would not tend to withdraw from a conflict, which explains the negative direction between the two variables. Withdrawal is typical for respondents who fear entering a conflict due to insecurities in themselves or others having dysfunctional expectations that they would be rejected or suffer harmful consequences in an open discussion. The avoidant attachment demonstrates positive associations with problem withdrawal and problem compliance, while the preoccupied attachment is linked positively with conflict engagement. Being avoidant leads to withdrawal. Both from a semantic and theoretical point of view, they are directed to running away from a conflict

instead of getting to terms with it. Complying is another way of fulfilling the same purpose – an inclination towards the position of the other at the expense of one's own needs could be achieved by avoiding and following what the others impose. The preoccupied attachment style goes along with a specific degree of anxiety. When under generalized fear of suffering troubles, an individual would monitor and react overly exaggeratedly towards any possibilities of a conflict, thus engaging in such. However, complying and being determined is difficult, which the negative association between the preoccupied attachment and the compliant conflict solution could observe. Finally, the dismissing attachment style corresponds to negative compliance, as dismissing individuals would instead push away others than follow their needs. All those statistics can be observed below in table 20.

Table 20. Pearson Correlations between Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution Styles

Varables	ASecure	AAvoid	APreoccupied	ADismissing
CEngagement	-.049	.059	.213**	-.029
PPSolving	.179**	-.105	-.081	0.58
PWithdrawal	-.195**	.270**	.111	.032
PCompliance	-.045	.133*	-.117*	-.131*

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Attachment Styles and the Emotional Expressivity

Little has been studied regarding the connections between attachment styles and emotional expressivity. In general, the secure attachment predisposes expressivity in terms of its genuinely established fundaments of communication in a safe environment. Such individuals should not hesitate to discuss any matter, be it to express positive emotions or show any negative facets. Having this fundamental understanding, it is no surprise that all emotional facets correlate significantly and positively with attachment styles. Avoidant attachment is associated negatively with negative expressivity. As previously discussed, avoiding behaviors tend to keep away from confrontation, and it implies that no negative

emotions would be welcomed and might lead to inevitable negative consequences. Lastly, the preoccupied attachment style demonstrates a weak but significant link with the impulsive and negative emotional facets. The preoccupied individuals are generally highly activated, vigilant, and energized when dealing with emotions, even though the inner processes are organized in a dysfunctional manner. The more anxiety presented, the more impulsiveness and negativity are expected.

Table 21. Pearson Correlations between Attachment Styles and Emotional Expressivity

Variables	ASecure	AAvoid	APreoccupied	ADismissing
Positive Facet	.282**	-.108	.006	.040
Impulsive Facet	.191**	.051	.154**	.008
Negative Facet	.145*	-.121*	.134*	-.084

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Early Maladaptive Schemas and the Conflict Resolution

The association between the early maladaptive schemas and the conflict resolution styles are highly significant and broad. In general, these concepts have many interconnections from an ideological stance. To begin with, all schemas are defined and seen as containing an inherent fear, which explains the maladaptive direction. According to it, a combination of genetic, cultural, and learned behaviors explains a core belief that is highly unpleasant for an individual. Thus, all personalities manifest a specific schema and are prepared to defend themselves from any adversities which could occur as a function.

On the other hand, when we observe problem-solving strategies, we are obliged to put them on a communicative platform. Analyzed form such a perspective, they represent a range of milestones in the arsenal of a personality which demonstrates the boundaries and the abilities to get to a desired result without of a discussion with another person (partner). Specifically, considering the different conflict resolution styles, we could observe that conflict engagement (CEngagement) correlates positively and significantly with emotional deprivation, abandonment, defectiveness, enmeshment, and subjugation. The

more an individual immerses in a conflict and is eager to act upon it, the more probable it is to display the main fear within the leading schema. The opposite turns out to take effect when approaching a conflict from a positive solving perspective. In order to perform it, one must not act through the main schema, as none dysfunctional behaviors would help resolve a conflict situation positively. As a continuation of the same logic in Table 22, the problem-solving approach is shown in connection to the emotional deprivation, abandonment, defectiveness, and subjugation schemas in a negative and significant way. The other two conflict resolution styles (problem withdrawal and problem compliance) show similar weight and direction. Both are relevant to the generally considered "unhealthy" ways of solving a conflict and share common variance with the schemas regarding their common dysfunctionality. Withdrawal should be understood as an avoidant approach, where an individual would prefer to step away from a conflict or give up defending a point. Notably, the strongest associations between problem withdrawal and schemas are defectiveness, abandonment, and subjugation. They all share an inherent idea of being unable to express self-worthiness.

Table 22. Pearson Correlations between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Conflict Resolution Styles

Varible	CEngagement	PPSolving	PWithdrawal	PCompliance
EDeprivation	.142*	-.129*	.217**	.200**
Abandonment	.243**	-.113*	.227**	.314**
Defectiveness	.197**	-.175**	.329**	.259**
EInhibition	.030	-.056	.200**	.133*
Enmeshment	.132*	-.077	.167**	.129*
Subjugation	.127*	-.172**	.301**	.338**
Entitlement	.106	-.078	.181**	.054

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Early Maladaptive Schemas and the Relationship Satisfaction

Table 23 presents the correlations between the early maladaptive schemas and relationship satisfaction. All seven are significant except for one and show weak to strong connections. All relations are negative, corresponding to the original hypotheses and previous findings (Young & Brown, 2005). The above analysis lays upon the central premise that relationship satisfaction is measured on characteristics far beyond physical attraction. Among them are psychological concepts such as emotional availability, other-directed thinking, and fulfilling the partner's needs. The latter is only possible if one has resolved personal and interpersonal issues that undermine compatibilities in the dyad. It appears that the worst asset for the sample is emotional deprivation. According to Young, individuals representing such a schema have expectations that their needs for security, safety, stability, nurturance, empathy, sharing of feelings, acceptance, and respect predictably will not be met. Typical family environment in the early years is detached, cold, rejecting, withholding, lonely, explosive, unpredictable, or abusive.

Table 23. Pearson Correlations between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Relationship Satisfaction

Variable	Relationship Satisfaction
EDeprivation	-.558**
Abandonment	-.196*
Defectiveness	-.382**
EInhibition	-.186**
Enmeshment	-.067
Subjugation	-.279**
Entitlement	-.266**

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Additionally, emotional deprivation is theorized in three specific categories in the expectation that others will not adequately meet one's desire for a normal degree of emotional support. The three significant forms of deprivation are the deprivation of nurturance, the deprivation of empathy, and the deprivation of protection. They all share similar parameters, including the absence of attention, affection, warmth, companionship, understanding, listening, self-disclosure, or mutual sharing of feelings. In the current study, the correlation between emotional deprivation and relationship satisfaction is R= -.558. As

previously mentioned, the other schemas show the same direction aligned with emotional deprivation, i.e correlation values for defectiveness, subjugation, and entitlement are respectively R = -.382**, R = -.279**, and R = -.266**. According to the same theory, defectiveness is part of the domain of disconnection/rejection. It implies the following characteristics which do not contribute to relationship satisfaction: the feeling that one is defective, harmful, unwanted, inferior, or invalid in essential respects or that one would be unlovable to significant others if exposed. It may involve hypersensitivity to criticism, rejection, and blame, self-consciousness, comparisons, insecurity around others, or a sense of shame regarding one's perceived flaws. These flaws may be private (e.g., selfishness, angry impulses, unacceptable sexual desires) or public (e.g., undesirable physical appearance, social awkwardness) (Young & Brown, 2005).

Subjugation involves an excessive surrendering of control to others because one feels coerced—submitting to avoid anger, retaliation, or abandonment. The two primary forms of subjugation are the subjugation of needs and emotions. They imply the suppression of emotions, especially anger. Usually involves the perception that one's desires, opinions, and feelings are not valid or important to others. Frequently presents as excessive compliance, combined with hypersensitivity to feeling trapped. It generally leads to a buildup of anger, manifested in maladaptive symptoms (e.g., passive-aggressive behavior, uncontrolled outbursts of temper, psychosomatic symptoms, withdrawal of affection, "acting out," or substance abuse).

Entitlement is referred to a domain which is called impaired limits. It wraps up individual differences, including deficiency in internal limits, responsibility when it comes to others, or long-term goal orientation. It leads to difficulty respecting the rights of others, cooperating with others, making commitments, or setting and meeting realistic personal goals. Typical family origin is characterized by permissiveness, overindulgence, lack of direction, or a sense of superiority rather than appropriate confrontation, discipline, and limits about taking responsibility, cooperating reciprocally, and setting goals. In some cases, the child may not have been pushed to tolerate normal levels of discomfort or may not have

been given adequate supervision, direction, or guidance.) Most strictly, schema entitlement involves beliefs such as being superior to others, being entitled to special rights and privileges, or not being bound by the rules of reciprocity that guide regular social interactions. Often involves insistence that one should be able to do or have whatever one wants, regardless of what is realistic, what others consider reasonable or the cost to others. It might also include an exaggerated focus on superiority (e.g., being among the most successful, famous, or wealthy) to achieve power or control (not primarily for attention or approval). It sometimes includes excessive competitiveness toward or domination of others: asserting one's power, forcing one's point of view, or controlling the behavior of others in line with one's desires without empathy or concern for others' needs or feelings.

Relations between the Early Maladaptive Schemas and the Emotional Expressivity

Table 24 presents the associations between the early maladaptive schemas and emotional expressivity. The associations between these two variables have not been broadly discussed in previous studies and this lends the current investigation novelty and possibility to contribute to the academic psychological knowledge. Seven significant correlations were discovered. Logically, the positive emotional facet relates negatively with the early maladaptive schemas of emotional deprivation, defectiveness, and emotional inhibition. It is not surprising as, in theory, all those schemas imply an internal and core emotional instability that would not allow one to experience positive emotions and express them freely. One of the typical items describing the positive emotional facet (e.g., "When I'm happy, my feelings show") we can see how it contrasts with the schemas. In the strongest negative association (R= -.411**) with emotional inhibition, the incongruence is in the basic foundations where the emotional inhibition would not allow expressivity in general, especially positive emotions. Such individuals experience significant difficulty communicating verbally and non-verbally warmly and genuinely with others. The same

applies to the other two schemas, which show a significant association with the positive facet: emotional deprivation and defectiveness. According to the authors, those individual traits which encompass the schemas are the following: excessive emphasis on suppressing one's spontaneous feelings, impulses, and choices or on meeting rigid, internalized rules and expectations about performance and ethical behavior, often at the expense of happiness, self-expression, relaxation, close relationships or health. Typical family origin is grim, demanding, and sometimes punitive. Such personalities would be likelier to stick to ideas linked to performance, duty, perfectionism, following rules, hiding emotions, and avoiding mistakes predominately over pleasure, joy, and relaxation. There is usually an undercurrent of pessimism and worry that things could fall apart if one fails to be vigilant and careful at all times (Young & Brown, 2005).

The impulsive facet correlates positively with the schemas of abandonment and enmeshment but negatively with emotional inhibition. Inherently, the impulse strength factors go around overt expression (e.g., „I have strong emotions"). It is interesting to point out that with abandonment, an individual would defend against the worst-case scenario, which is the fear of being left alone. Similarly, with enmeshment, the main assumptions are that one would perceive a risk of being unable to proceed without the ultimate support of others. In both cases, strong and unrestrained emotions would be evident as a reaction to the general fear in the schema. The more the schema is active, the more prone one would be to express and "fight" for "survival." Following the same conceptual direction, emotional inhibition correlates negatively with the impulsive facet as it is not typical for such individuals to keep any within themselves emotions.

The negative facet only correlates significantly with emotional inhibition. As mentioned, inhibition generally presents unease regarding expressivity, whether positive, impulsive, or negative. An excellent example of the negative facet is "Whenever I feel negative emotions, people can easily see exactly what I am feeling." It is fundamentally "not easy" for such individuals to show any emotions to others.

Table 24. Pearson Correlations between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Emotional Expressivity

Variables	Positive Facet	Impulsive Facet	Negative Facet
EDeprivation	-.173**	-.049	-.076
Abandonment	.058	.246**	.110
Defectiveness	-.130**	.050	-.040
EInhibition	-.411**	-.202**	-.334**
Enmeshment	.049	.201**	.050
Subjugation	-.087	.103	-.053
Entitlement	.019	.059	-.056

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Emotional Expressivity and the Conflict Resolution Styles

All studies conflict resolution styles correlate positively and significantly with emotional expressivity facets. Notably, conflict engagement correlates with all three facets. It is noteworthy that the tendency to engage in a conflict does not differ much with the tone and direction of the emotions expressed. However, the strongest association is with the impulsive facet. In other terms, the more prone to impulsive expressivity persons are likely to immerse in a conflict, in the first place. The same relation could be observed for the negative and positive facets, where the correlations` values are decreasing. It seems that when people express positive emotions openly, they are less predisposed towards conflict engagement but would not be reluctant to enter into such if it seems necessary.

Table 25. Pierson Correlation Table between the Emotional Expressivity and the Conflict Resolution Styles

Varibales	Positive Facet	Impulsive Facet	Negative Facet
CEngagement	.136*	.270**	.257**
PPSolving	.100	.047	-.071
PWithdrawal	-.064	.037	-.070
PCompliance	.021	.185**	.137*

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

The other significant connection is between the conflict resolution style "problem compliance" and the impulsive and negative facets. Problem compliance is an approach towards conflicts where one obeys or gives up when facing an argument. Although it is harder to explain, this conflict resolution style connects with the impulsive facet when individuals show high anxiety levels. In such cases, they would fear abandonment, although they might have some dysregulated emotions, adding to compliance rather than engagement. The other connection with the negative facet is easier to understand: any form of expressed antipathy would be undesired, and such people would rather comply.

Relations between the Emotional Expressivity and the Relationship Satisfaction

Table 26 presents one significant correlation: between emotional expressivity and relationship satisfaction. The optimistic facet inclines to a greater quantity of shared emotions in a beneficial way, which might contribute to higher perceived relationship satisfaction. Nevertheless, it appears that these concepts do not show much material for analysis in the current study but offer a broad perspective for the mediation analysis presented later on in text.

Table 26. Pearson Correlations between Emotional Expressivity and Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Relationship Satisfaction
Positive Facet	.122*
Impulsive Facet	.074
Negative Facet	.061

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Relations between the Conflict Resolution Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

The associations presented in Table 27 between the conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction are highly informative. The correlations are all significant, with levels ranging from weak to moderate. The only positive correlation is between positive problem-solving and relationship satisfaction. Intuitively, when individuals focus on a positive result from an emerging conflict, their overall perceived satisfaction is affected positively. In contrast, all other conflict approaches (conflict engagement, problem withdrawal, and problem compliance) connect negatively with satisfaction. When a dyad is disposed to engaging in a conflict, a more significant accumulation of possible setbacks and triggers which might worsen the contentment will emerge. Withdrawing also harms the relationship approach, leaving many questions unanswered between the partners. Complying is another negative link, as it puts different roles between the partners where one is too submissive and not offering a reciprocal positive effect.

Table 27. Pearson Correlations between Conflict Resolution Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Relationship Satisfaction
CEngagement	-.184**
PPSolving	.191**
PWithdrawal	-.314**
PCompliance	-.137*

Note: p<0.05*, p<0.01 **, p<0.001 *** (Pearson r, two-tailed)

Role of Attachment Styles, Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Expressivity, and Conflict Resolution Styles for Relationship Satisfaction

A regression analysis was used to test the variance explained by the four independent variables: attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, expressivity, and conflict resolution styles. The multifactorial linear regression analysis allows for adjustment of the multicollinearity of the independent variable. In this way, only predictors that have a statistically significant effect on the studied construct remain, and their influence is independent of the variance of the others. The specific type of regression analysis used was

a progressive (stepwise) linear regression analysis - suitable for searching a set of statistically significant factors that may explain the variance of interest.

Attachment Styles as Predictors of Emotional Expressivity

An observable trend is that the secure, preoccupied and avoidant attachment styles play a moderate explicative role in the variance of emotional expressivity. There is significant evidence that having these three attachment styles make a difference in terms of what the expressivity would be expected to represent. As it was previously discussed, a secure attachment leads to positive expressivity and insecure attachment to negative expressivity. The beta score for the secure attachment is low (Table 35, B= .274). The secure attachment can explain only 7,5% positive expressivity's variance. The highly significant p value allows us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is an effect on the dependent variable, but the effect is too low to yield a meaningful result.

Table 28. Regression Analysis for the Dependent Variable Positive Emotional Expressivity and Independent Variables Attachment Styles, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Secure Attachment	.274	4.983	1.000	.000
R^2	.075			

As shown below in Table 29, both secure and preoccupied attachment styles predict the impulsive emotional expressivity. It means that any change in these two attachment styles has an effect on the impulsive facet. In the current sample, however, 7.3% of the variance of impulsive emotional expressivity is explained by these two attachment styles, which, again, is very low.

Table 29. Regression Analysis for the Dependent Variable Impulsive Emotional Expressivity and Independent Variables Attachment Styles, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Secure Attachment	.193	3.486	1.000	.001

Preoccipied Attachment	.192	3.468	1.000	.001
R^2	.073			

Finally, the negative emotional expressivity is predicted by the avoidant and the preoccupied attachment styles in a significant model (Table 30). As the other two regression model, this one has very low explanatory power (5.4%.) and will not be discussed,

Table 30. Regression Analysis for the Dependent Variable Negative Emotional Expressivity and Independent Variables Attachment Styles, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Avoidant Attachment	-.171	-2.986	1.063	.000
Preoccipied Attachment	.204	3.555	1.063	.000
R^2	.054			

Attachment Styles as Predictors of the Relationship Satisfaction

Table 31 demonstrates the statistics for the linear regression where the independent variables are the attachment styles, and the dependent is the relationship satisfaction.

The predictive characteristics of the attachment styles for relationship satisfaction are weak, though somewhat higher than the ones for emotional expressivity facets. The secure and preoccupied attachment explains 12.1% of the relationship satisfaction variance. The secure attachment shows higher and positive beta value, while the beta for preoccupied attachment is negative.

It was initially expected that the secure attachment style would have a positive predictive effect on the relationship satisfaction as most of the reports of a “healthy” relationship consist of such unconditional relations as displayed in the secure attachment theory: acceptance, love, warmth, tenderness, openness towards the partner.

Table 31. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Attachment Styles and the Dependent Variable Relationship Satisfaction, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Secure Attachment	.293	5.463	1.000	.000
Preoccupied Attachment	-.183	-3.415	1.000	.001
R^2	.121			

Attachment styles as a Predictors of Conflict Resolution Styles

As dependent variables, the conflict resolution styles show an interesting pattern when the attachment styles are taken as predictors. As it is shown in Tables 32, 33 and 34, the respective models explain only 3.9% of the conflict engagement, 3.5%. of the positive problem resolution style and 7.3%. for the withdrawal problem resolution style. Apparently, attachment styles are poor predictors for any of the studied conflict resolution styles.

Table 32. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Attachment Styles and Dependent Variable Conflict Engagement, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Preoccupied Attachment	.195	3.485	1.000	.001
R^2	.039			

Table 33. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Attachment Styles and Dependent Variable Positive Conflict Resolution, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Secure Attachment	.188	3.347	1.000	.001
R^2	.035			

Table 34. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Attachment Styles and Dependent Variable Withdrawal Problem Resolution Style, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Avoidant Attachment	.270	4.911	1.000	.001
R^2	.073			

Early Maladaptive Schemas as Predictors of Conflict Resolution Styles

The early maladaptive schemas are established at an early age and are seen as inherent. That is the reason why they are expected to play a role in the explanation of other learnt behaviors such as the conflict resolution styles. An important and difficult to analyse contribution is the prediction which the abandonment schema gives to the conflict engagement conflict style.

As it is shown in Table 35, 36, 37 and 38, however, early maladaptive schemas fail to explain more than 9% of any of studied conflict resolution style's variance, which mean that, in our sample, early maladaptive schemas have very low capacity to predict studied conflict resolution styles.

Table 35. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Variable Conflict Engagement, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Abandonment	.250	4.516	1.000	.000
R^2	.062			

Table 36. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Variable Positive Problem Solving , N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Subjugation	-.170	-3.018	1.000	.003
R^2	.029			

Table 37.Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Variable Problem Withdrawal , N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Emotional Inhibition	.230	4.141	1.000	.000
R^2	.053			

Table 38. Regression Analysis for Independent Variables Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Variable Problem Compliance, N= 308

Independent Variable	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Subjugation	.312	5.737	1.000	.000
R^2	.097			

Early Maladaptive Schemas as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction

Regression analysis of the early maladaptive schemas achieves a model that explains a moderate amount of the variance (R^2= 32%) and is capable of predicting the relationship satisfaction (Table 39). There are two predictors: emotional deprivation and defectiveness (betas = -.490 and =-.138). It could be concluded that people with those two schemas will demonstrate less tendency to be satisfied with their relationships. In general, the early maladaptive schemas are always negatively associated with this dependent variable as they hinder healthy communication. The main contribution of such an analysis remains in the field of possible interventions, from which such individuals could benefit.

Table 39. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Relationship Satisfaction, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
EDeprivation	-.497	-8.823	1.422	.000
Defectiveness	-.132	-1.979	1.422	.049
R^2	.320			

Early Maladaptive Schemas as predictors of the Emotional Expressivity

The early maladaptive schemas play a decent role in predicting emotional expressivity. The model explains 20.7% of the dependent variable (Table 40). The schema emotional inhibition demonstrates a significant explicative function in a negative direction. The beta coefficient is the degree of change in the outcome variable for every unit of change in the predictor variable. If the beta coefficient is negative, the interpretation is that the outcome variable will decrease by the beta coefficient value for every one-unit increase in the predictor variable. Regarding the emotional inhibition (B= -.455), the beta is negative, and it should be expected that the positive emotional expressivity, in general, would decrease with the change in this schema. According to the theory, individuals with such a schema tend to inhibit emotions which lead to lower probability for the positive expressivity to be demonstrated. Such individuals are less likely to be expressive as they have difficulty opening up.

Table 40.Regression Analysis for the Independent Variables Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Variable Positive Emotional Expressivity, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
EInhibition	-.455	-8.935	1.000	.000
R^2	.207			

In Table 48 three schemas are shown to be a significant predictor for the impulsive emotional expressivity. These are the abandonment, emotional inhibition and enmeshment. The only negative direction is displaied by the emotional inhibition (B= -.292) while the other two independent variables - abandonment and enmeshment - show a

positive effect (respectively B= .300 and .120). It could be concluded that when emotionally inhibited, an individual is less likely to let impulsive expressity take over. With abandonment containing anxious connotations and a deep fear of losing a significant other, it is understandable that impulsive expressions would be increased as such individuals have a representation of a greater risk of losing control over and putting themselves in a harmful position. The latter leads to earlier discussed defensive mechanisms of overprotectiveness which urges a higher probability of spontaneous expressivity. The schema enmeshment presents such characteristics of invasive behavior where one would engage in behvaiors without respecting boundaries. Such tendencies are typical for impulsive expressivty as well.

These reflexions should be taken causiously since the model explains only 17,5% of the dependent variable's varience.

Table 41. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Impulsive Emotional Expressivity, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Abandonment	.300	5.038	1.306	.000
Emotional Inhibition	-.292	-5.450	1.051	.000
Enmeshment	.120	2.038	1.274	.042
R^2	.175			

Finally, the four schemas abandonment, defectiveness, emotional inhibition and entitlement play an explicative role for the negative emotional expressivity (Table 49). The first two (abandonment and defectiveness) have a positive effect meaning that when they vary, the variance in the emotional expressivity responds in the same direction. The more abandonment and defectiveness within the personality is represented, the more predicted negative expressivity could be observed. The opposite applies for the emotional inhibition and entitlement where the direction is negative. One of the strongest effects is the emotional inhibition with the negative emotional expressivity (B= -.422). It could be

concluded that this schema is an important factor forecasting negative emotional facets such as bodily reactions of fear and crying.

The model explains only 18,2% of the dependent variable's varience and these reflexions too should be taken causiously.

Table 42. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Early Maladaptive Schemas and Dependent Negative Emotional Expressivity, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Abandonment	.211	3.571	1.298	.000
Defectiveness	.135	2.041	1.631	.042
Emotional Inhibition	-.422	-7.321	1.228	.000
Entitlement	-.132	-2.338	1.177	.020
R^2	.182			

Emotional Expressivity as a predictor of the Conflict Resolution Styles

Another group of variables that did not meet the expectations was Emotional Expressivity which was hypothesized as predictor for Conflict Resolution Styles. The regression models, yielded by the data, did not reach further than 10.4% explanation of the dependent variable's variance, which is unsatisfactory. The details are presented in tables 43, 44 and 45.

This means that emotional expressivity is not a good predictor for studied conflict resolution styles. It is especially true for the positive and compliance conflict resolution styles, where the explained variance is mere 3%.

Table 43. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Emotional Expressivity and Dependent Variable Conflict Engagement Style, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Impulsive Facet	.188	2.930	1.401	.004
Negative Facet	.180	2.805	1.401	.005
R^2	.104			

Table 44. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Emotional Expressivity and Dependent Variable Positive Resolution Style, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Impulsive Facet	.179	2.682	1.401	.008
Negative Facet	-.178	-2.660	1.401	.008
R^2	.030			

Table 45. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Emotional Expressivity and Dependent Variable Compliance Problem Resolution Style, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Impulsive Facet	.174	3.084	1.000	.002
R^2	.030			

Conflict Resolution Styles as Predictors of the Relationship Satisfaction

Lastly, the conflict resolution styles were tested as predictors of the relationship satisfaction, and it could be observed that only 7.9% of the variance is explained. Again, contrary to the expectations and abundant findings in the literature, the predicting capacity of the conflict resolution styles for relationship satisfaction was not observed in our sample.

Table 46. Regression Analysis for the Independent Variable Conflict Resolution Styles and Dependent Relationship Satisfaction, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Problem Withdrawal	-.282	-5.132	1.000	.000
R^2	.079			

Attachment styles, Early maladaptive schemas, Conflict resolution styles and Emotional Expressivity as predictors of Relationship Satisfaction

A predictive model which encompasses the attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles and emotional expressivity was run in order to prognosticate the relationship satisfaction. Three significant predictors were found. These are the secure attachment, schema emotional deprivation and the problem withdrawal conflict resolution style. They alone predict 35.8% of the variance of the relationship satisfaction. The secure attachment style predicts relationship satisfaction in a positive direction (B=.130) but the effect is weak. The emotional deprivation and problem withdrawal foresee the satisfaction in a negative way. The emotional deprivation beta is very strong (B=-.642), while the problem withdrawal has a respective beta of -.181.

In theory, when having a secure attachment style, one would freely explore the world and all of its manifestations. As a result, the relationship satisfaction would logically be greater as such individuals connect with others with an ease, openly and sincerely, having no anxious or avoidant behaviors to hinder the bond. The opposite is true when analyzing the emotional deprivation and problem withdrawal. Being emotionally deprived, one would give less love, tenderness and would express feelings in an inhibited way. This, together with the problem withdrawal, would drag possible dissatisfaction in the partner. The results are shown in Table 47.

Table 47. Regression Analysis for Independent Variables Early Maladaptive Schemas, Attachment Styles, Conflict Resolution Styles, Emotional Expressivity and Dependent Variable Relationship Satisfaction, N= 308

Variables	B	T	Collinearity	Sig.
Secure Attachment Style	.130	2.705	1.102	.007
Emotional Deprivation	-.642	-10.061	1.115	.000
Problem Withdrawal	-.181	-3.549	1.051	.000
R^2	.358			

7.5. Mediation roles of the Variables

Mediation analysis is an advanced statistics measure when testing whether there are any indirect effects of an X variable for a Y variable. These effects are not directly observable but hidden or mediated by other factors (M). In simple correlations, we observe to what extend two variables share a variance and how they are influenced in connection with each other. The question answered through mediation analysis is whether there are other variables that play a role in a specific relation. When there are no direct effects between the two variables, they can still interact with each other by being moderated by other factors. In the current study and according to theory, three concepts could play a mediating role. These are the early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles, and emotional expressivity. The attachment styles, as defined by the founder of the attachment theory John Bowlby are constant characteristics. At the same time, the schemas, as seen by Jeffrey Young, are derived and learned behaviors based on critical learning processes in early childhood. The same applies to conflict resolution styles and emotional expressivity. Both latter concepts are seen as strategies that individuals learn when growing up. Lastly, the following analysis tests relationship satisfaction about the mediating factors.

Mediating Role of Early Maladaptive Schemas between Attachment Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

While there is no direct effect between the attachment styles (X) and relationship satisfaction (Y), the mediation model where early maladaptive schemas are tested as mediators, is significant. The total effect (B=- .3163) is significant to the third decimal (p=.0074).

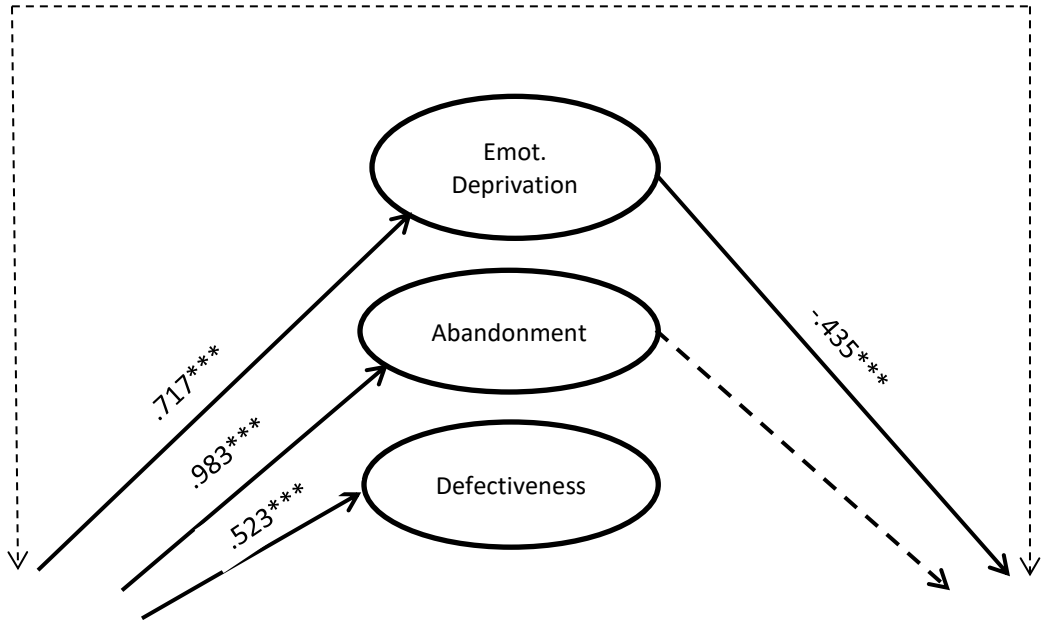
In figure two, the significant relations could be observed as marked with a solid lines, while the punctured indicate insignificant effects. Even though there is no direct link towards relationship satisfaction achieved by the attachment styles, two schemas mediate the process between these two variables: emotional deprivation and defectiveness. The attachment styles are associated positively with both schemas, respectively B=.7178 and B=5231, but they negatively influence the relationship satisfaction (B=-4353 and B=-.1606).

The insecure attachment styles are socially perceived as negative or undesirable, but there are several combinations where individuals with preoccupied attachments get along. However, it is statistically evident that when the relationship is mediated by emotional deprivation and defectiveness, the link for satisfaction is negative.

Table 48. Mediation Scores for the Early Maladaptive Schemas between the Attachment Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Attachment Styles (Beta)	Relationship Satisfaction (Beta)	T	Sig.
Emot. Deprivation	.717	-.435	-8.154	.0000
Abandonment	.983	.020	.344	.730
Defectiveness	.523	-.160	-2.060	.040
EInhibition	.692	.019	.410	.681
Enmeshment	.377	.072	1.224	.221
Subjugation	.844	-.029	-.372	.709
Entitlement	.571	-.045	-.800	.424

The raw scores are presented in Table 48, while figure 2 shows the relations as a model achieved by the Process mediation analysis algorithm. The punctured lines show insignificant connections, while the solid lines show significant ones.



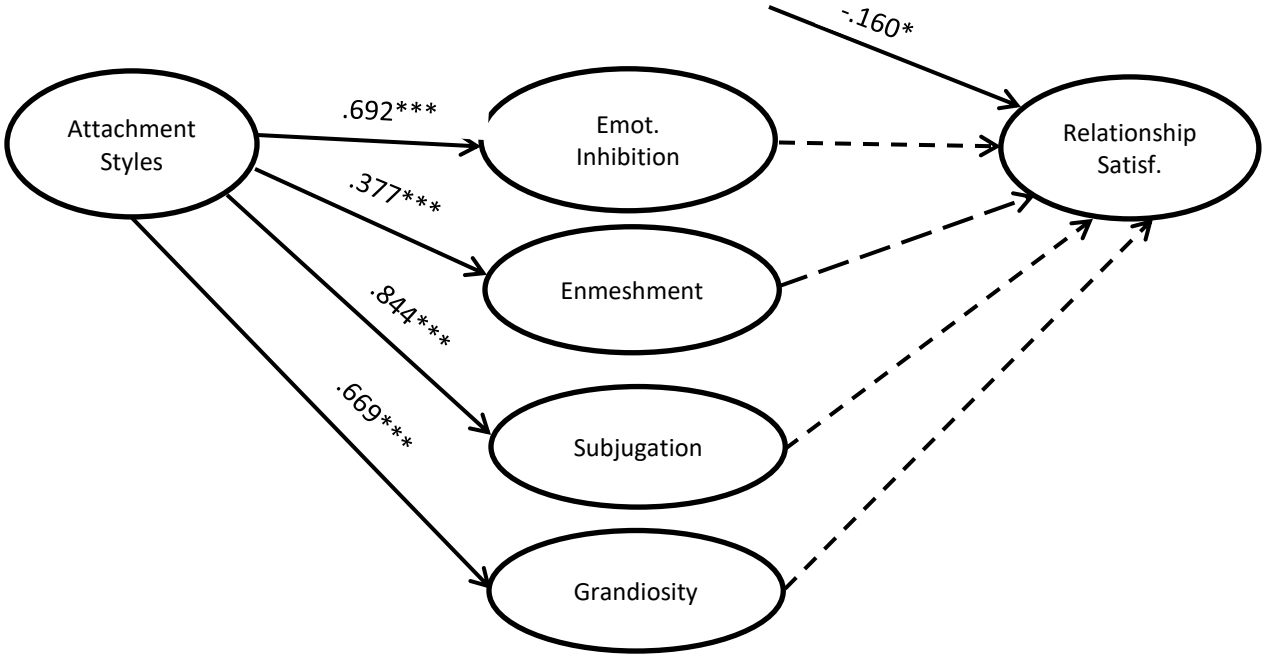


Figure 2. Mediation Analysis of the Early Maladaptive Schemas between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

In such a mediation, the direct connection between the attachment styles and the relatioship satisfaction as a whole is not significant. However, it is mediated by the schemas emotional deprivation and defectiveness. It could be deducted that having a specific attachment would benefit the development of the schema (B= .7178). It could be supposed that the insecure attachment would have a greater chance of forming this direction. However, it is quite logical that the schema would trigger negative relationship satisfaction (B= -.4353) as being emotionally deprived, one would not meet specific needs of the partner such as to openly express love and tenderness. The same applies for the schema defectiveness as it brings impaired image concepts of the self as being unworthy of giving or receiving love, thus being defective. It would be useful to have these considerations in the practical field as they might contribute to more effective interventions.

Mediation Role of Conflict Resolution Styles Between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

As previously discussed, the model's direct association between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction is insignificant. However, some mediators add up to the explicative understanding of the relation. In conflict resolution styles, problem withdrawal is mediating between the attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction (Tabel 49 and fig. 3). The direction with the attachment styles is positive (B=.4019), while the connection with the relationship satisfaction is negative (B=-.2226).

Table 49. Mediation Scores for the Conflict Resolution Styles between the Attachment Styles and Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Attachment Styles (Beta)	Relationship Satisfaction (Beta)	T	Sig.
Conflict Engagement	.203	-.083	.180	.072
Positive PSolving	-.067	.140	-.774	.439
Problem Withdrawal	.401	-.222	3.447	.000
Problem Compliance	.078	.030	.934	.350

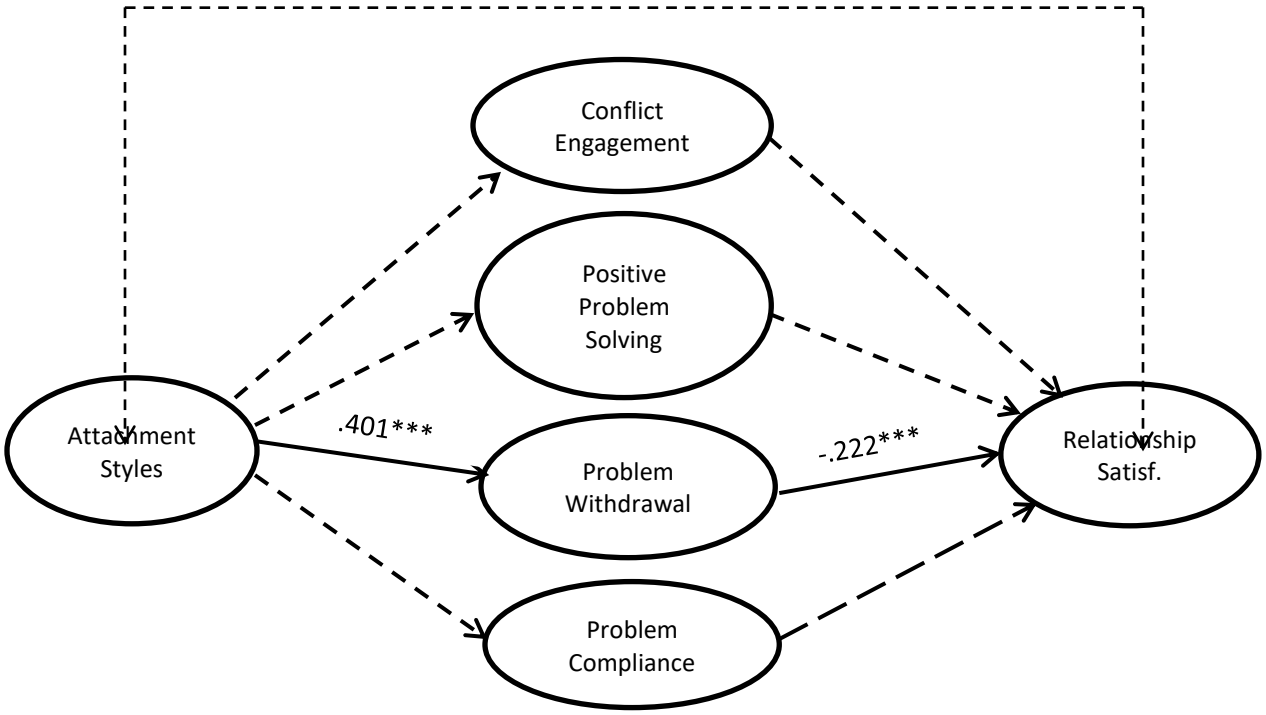


Figure 3. Mediation Analysis of the Conflict Resolution Styles between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

The problem withdrawal mediates the process in a negative way for the relationship satisfaction (B= -.2226). In other terms, regardless of the attachment styles, (as they in general explain the relationship satisfaction poorly) the problem withdrawal has a significant mediation role with them and influences the relationship satisfaction.

Mediation role of Emotional expressivity between the Attachment styles and the Relationship satisfaction

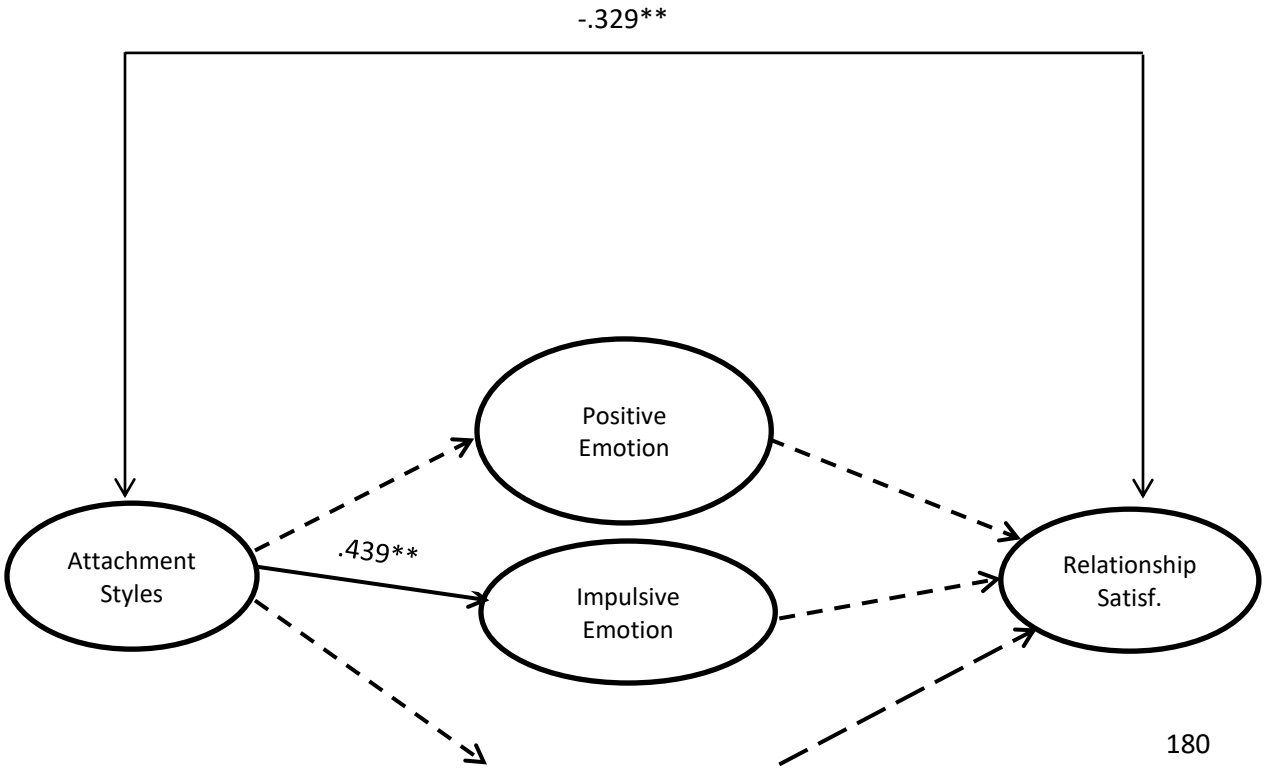
When it concerns the model of emotional expressivity (M) as a mediator between attachment styles (X) and relationship satisfaction (Y), it turns out that the effect of the X on Y is significant. That is possible when multicollinearity plays a more prominent role. However, there are no complete mediators when observing emotional expressivity. This alone suggests that, in general, there are direct associations between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction.

Table 50. Mediation Analysis of the Emotional Expressivity Facets between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Attachment Styles (Beta)	Relationship Satisfaction (Beta)	T	Sig.
Positive Emotion Facet	.026	.081	.189	.850
Impulsive Emotion Facet	.439	.020	3.155	.001
Negative Emotion Facet	-.061	.013	-.429	.667

Table 50 shows no significant mediations between the attachment styles and relationship satisfaction in terms of the emotional expressivity facets. However, Figure 4 represents the direct association between attachment and relationship satisfaction. The

impulsive emotional facet has a significate indirect connection with the attachment styles meaning that some of the explicative load could be attributed to the impulsivity. However overall, it suggests no expected effect on the satisfaction as a mediator.



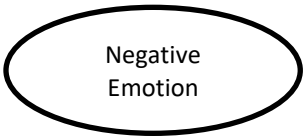


Figure 4. Mediation Analysis of the Emotional Expressivity between the Attachment Styles and the Relationship Satisfaction

The connection between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction has been shown as mediated by some of the concepts of this study, such as the early maladaptive schemas and the conflict resolution styles. However, the emotional expressivity is not part of this process and could not contribute to the understanding of this association alone.

Mediation Role of Early Maladaptive Schemas between Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution Styles

In Figure 5, the mediating effects of the early maladaptive schemas are tested for the connection between the attachment styles and the conflict resolution styles. It was expected that all attachment styles would be associated significantly with the schemas as these two concepts belong to similar ideas in theory. However, only the abandonment schema mediates the conflict resolution styles. The abandonment shows positive directions for both variables as it takes the variance of the insecure attachment styles and the negative conflict resolution styles. This finding could be used in consultancy settings: when a relationship does not bring satisfaction, it could be attributed to a possible abandonment schema. It is even more interesting as there is no direct effect of the attachment styles on conflict resolution, but they are significantly mediated and have indirect effects between each other.

Table 51. Mediation Analysis of the Early Maladaptive Schemas between the Attachment Styles and the Conflict Resolution Styles

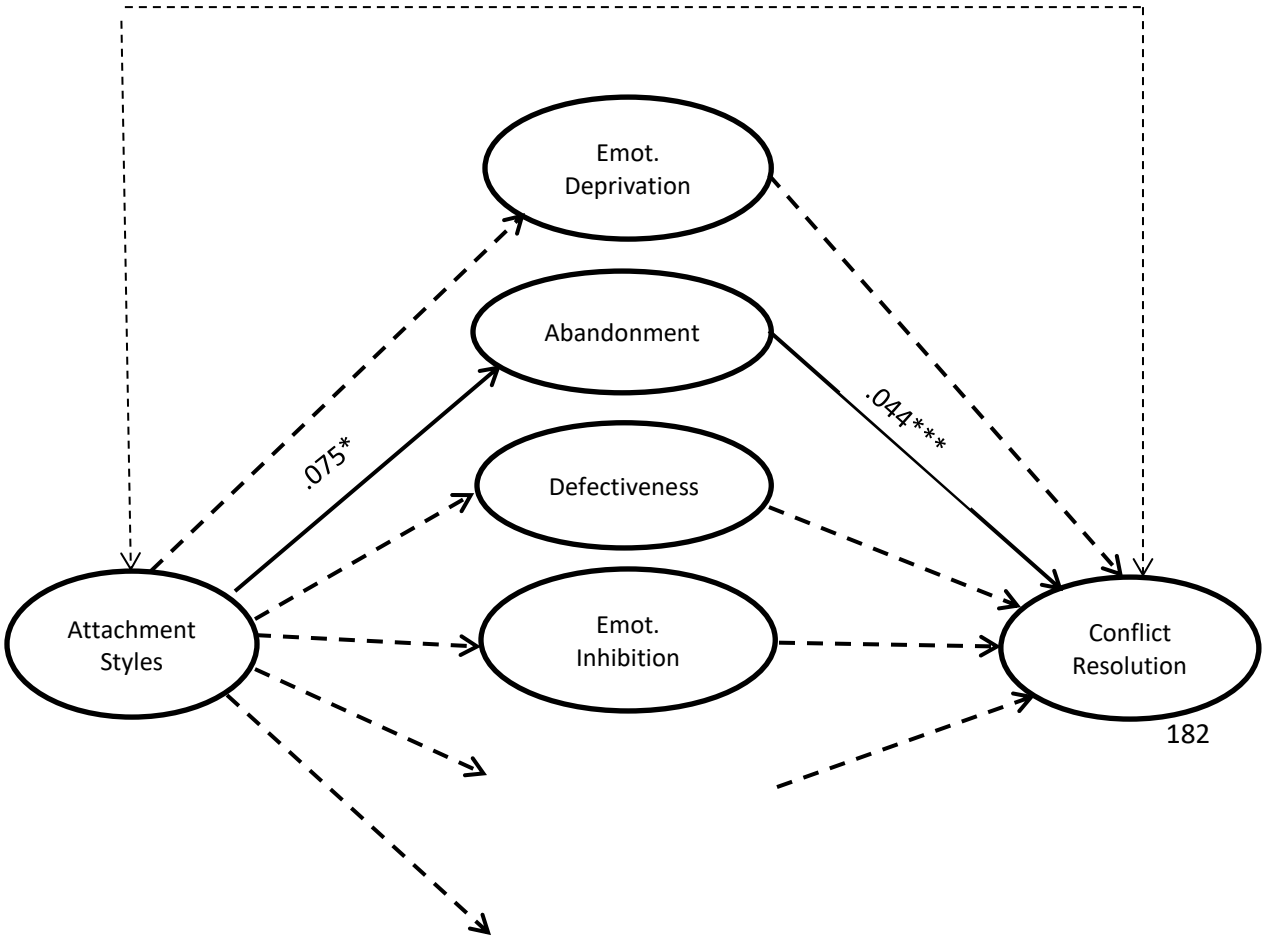
Variables	Attachment Styles (Beta)	Conflict Resolution Styles (Beta)	T	Sig.
Emot. Deprivation	.025	.020	.944	.345
Abandonment	.075	.044	2.443	.015

Defectiveness	-.032	.021	-.818	.414
EInhibition	.077	.013	3.247	168
Enmeshment	.000	.012	.027	.978
Subjugation	.063	.023	1.575	.116
Entitlement	.110	.014	3.962	.067

As shown in Table 51, the abandonment plays a mediating role in the relationship. It is positive in both directions; with a beta of .0750 with the attachment and .0443 respectively for the conflict resolution. It is of a further investigative interest to test the detailed attachment styles and conflict resolution which are involved in this relationship. With the preliminary findings which are not part of an interest for this work, it seems that the abandonment mediates the avoidant attachment style and the problem withdrawal strategy. This data could be observed in Table 52.

Table 52. Mediation Analysis of the Abandonment Maladaptive Schema between the Avoidant Attachment Styles and the Problem Withdrawal Resolution Style

Variables	Avoidant Attachment Style (Beta)	Problem Withdrawal Resolution Style (Beta)	T	Sig.
Abandonment	.225	.115	2.442	.015



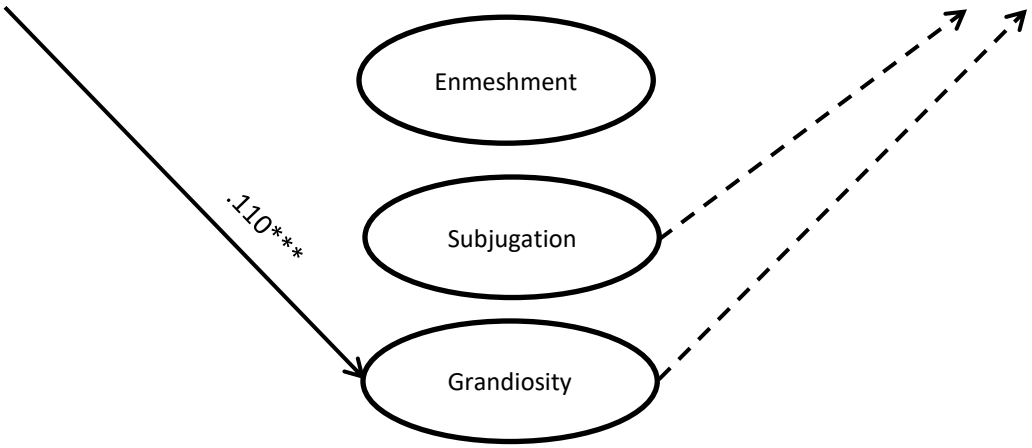


Figure 5. Mediation Analysis of the Early Maladaptive Schemas between the Attachment Styles and the Conflict Resolution Styles

Mediation Role of Emotional Expressivity between Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution Styles

When testing emotional expressivity as a mediator between the attachment and conflict resolution styles, it can be observed that the impulsive emotional facet plays such a role. There are no direct effects between X and Y. The direction of the emotional facet is positive for both interactions.

Table 53. Mediation Analysis of the Emotional Expressivity between the Attachment Styles and the Conflict Resolution Style

Variables	Attachment Styles (Beta)	Conflict Resolution Styles (Beta)	T	Sig.
Positive Emotion	.026	-.209	-.552	.580
Impulsive Emotion	.439	1.500	3.664	.000
Negative Emotion	-.061	.246	.642	.520

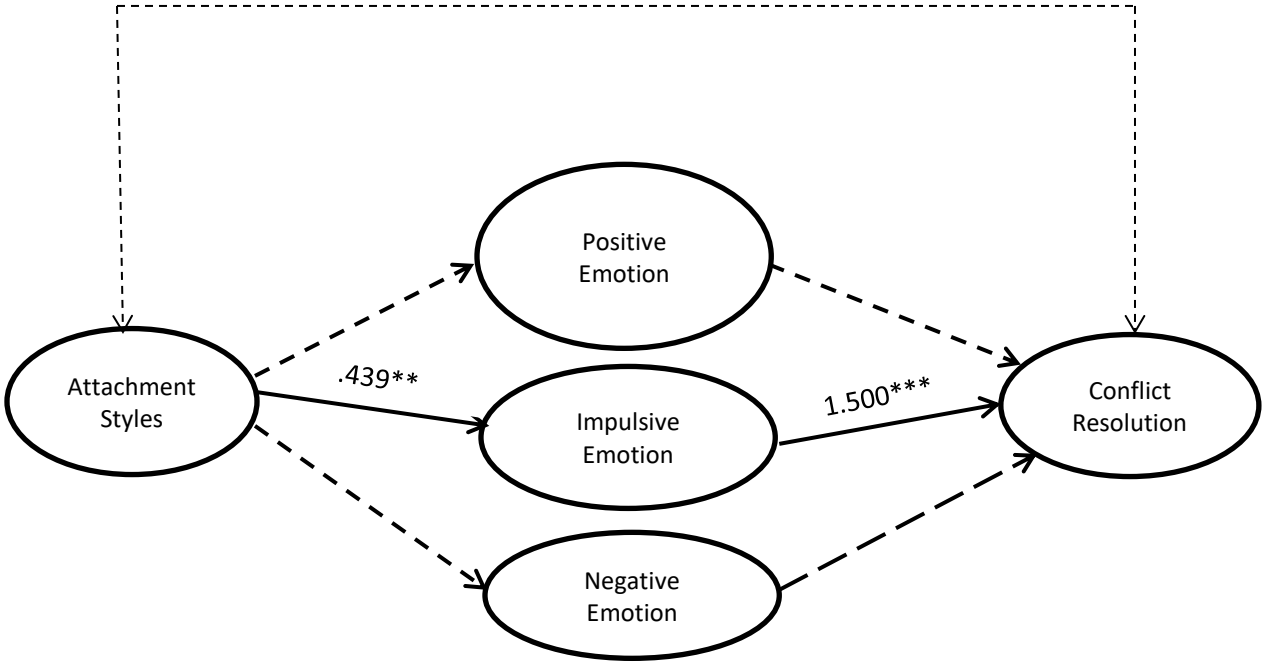


Figure 6. Mediation Analysis of the Emotional Expressivity between the Attachment Styles and the Conflict Resolution Styles

One possible explanation for this finding is that emotionally impulsive individuals are more prone to investing themselves in conflicts. That would lead to greater effects and engagement in general and would contribute to significant outcomes of a possible argument.

7.6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present analysis is based on an empirical study with 308 respondents (229 female and 79 male). It confirms the difference between men and women in expressivity, where women show higher skills than men. It was interesting to observe that the different age groups show significant differences in how the early maladaptive schemas are formed and changed with age, regardless of gender. Hypotheses were tested also about differences in relationship satisfaction according to the duration of a relationship. The higher satisfaction levels were found in longer relationships. This result is in accordance with the previous research.

Education was found to play an important role in connection with two variables: the early maladaptive schemas and the relationship satisfaction. Individuals with lower education show more severe maladaptive schemas while those with higher education show greater levels of relationship satisfaction. Not only the educational degree itself explains the relationship satisfaction, but also the current relationship status of the respondents. It turned out that the relationship status moderates relationship satisfaction but also influences attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, and expressivity. The latter opens an essential discussion for practitioners as it seems people can make significant changes in partnership, and it could be seen as a vital healthcare benefit. However, regardless of the other variables, the sole fact that an individual is in a relationship shows to be a factor of their general satisfaction in the dyad.

The first two hypotheses of the study were confirmed by performing a linear correlation analysis. It was confirmed that the secure attachment styles are associated with less maladaptive schemas (negative correlation), while the insecure attachment styles helps the maintenance of the maladaptive schemas (positive correlation). The attachment styles are broadly discussed in previous studies and seen as a precursor of the schemas (Baker, 2013), a finding, which we confirm in the current study.

Another central hypothesis of the study was whether the secure attachment style is associated with higher relationship satisfaction and the insecure attachment styles - to

lower satisfaction. Such a connection was proven to be significant and corresponded to other studies (Annette, 2013). In our study, one of the strongest associations was found between dismissing attachment and relationship satisfaction with a strong negative correlation (R= -.609).

Additionally, it was confirmed that the secure attachment style is associated with higher probability of positive problem-solving but links negatively with problem withdrawal.

The secure attachment style is linked with emotional expressivity: all expressivity facets correlate positively with the secure attachment. The avoidant attachment links negatively to the negative expressivity. Other investigators have observed that avoidant behaviors tend to create hesitance regarding expressivity (Melley, 2003).The same applies to the preoccupied attachment styles, which lead to higher negative and impulsive expressivity, (Searle, 1999).

One of the primary connections which lead to broad implications for practitioners is between the early maladaptive schemas and the conflict resolution styles. Specific factors drive conflict engagement, most of which consist of general fears theorized as schemas. Emotional deprivation, abandonment, defectiveness, enmeshment, and subjugation correlate positively with the engagement in conflicts within the couple. The same schemas have an opposite connection with the problem-solving approach, as internally a solution to a problem is seen as a positive outcome. In contrast, the schemas contain negative connotations and open an avenue for specific difficulties. Problem withdrawal and problem compliance are associated similarly with the schemas: positively, as supported by other authors, (Janovsky, 2020).

The early maladaptive schemas are associated with lower relationship satisfaction, as hypothesized. Emotional deprivation has a strong negative correlation with satisfaction R=-.558, but other schemas demonstrate relative strength. Such are defectiveness, subjugation, and entitlement (R = -.382, R = -.279, and R = -.266). The early maladaptive

schemas are one of the most interesting concepts for modern researchers due to their implications for practical psychological intervention schools.

The early maladaptive schemas show a logical and consistent connection with emotional expressivity. The positive expressivity facets link negatively with the schemas. The strongest one is with emotional inhibition (R=-.411). The impulsive facet has, again, a negative link to positive expressivity, while the impulsive facet - to higher abandonment and enmeshment schemas. Schemas tend to be impulsive (subconscious) and a natural response to critical situations where the general fear they represent is activated.

Emotional expressivity moderates the conflict resolution styles, where conflict engagement positively interacts with all conflict resolution styles, but the strongest association is with the impulsive facet. The more an individual is prone to impulsivity, the more conflicts will be observed. The same direction is seen for the positive and negative facets but to a milder extend. It could be concluded that people would not hesitate to enter into a conflict regardless of their typical expressivity. According to the findings, when a tendency to comply (problem compliance resolution style) is found, typically impulsive and negative facets of expressivity would be expected. Emotional expressivity alone does not contribute significantly to relationship satisfaction, although the positive facet correlates with higher satisfaction positively.

The conflict resolution styles contribute to relationship satisfaction. A positive association was found between positive problem-solving and relationship satisfaction, while all the others are negative in terms of satisfaction. It implies that conflict engagement, problem withdrawal, and problem compliance are associated with relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, it is both theoretically and practically worth noting that, according to this study, some of the attachment styles significantly predict the emotional expressivity. However, the expected prediction of the variety is generally low and does not meet the standards of a scientific contribution. Having these direct low effects in the findings prompts the search of indirect influences presented later on in the mediation analysis. Even so and

although the weak predictive ability, the model shows that the preoccupied and avoidant attachment lead to negative expressivity while the secure attachment foresees the positive expressivity. It is interesting to note down that the secure and preoccupied attachment lead to impulsive expressivity. That could be attributed to a greater perceived freedom when showing emotions with the secure attachment as such individuals freely connect to changing environment while preoccupied are over-protective, thus more easily entering impulsiveness. The negative expressivity is also influenced by the avoidant attachment (B= -.171). It means that it is expected for individuals with such attachment to fall into sharing more negative emotions with others.

The secure and preoccupied attachment styles play a role in connection with the relationship satisfaction as well. The secure confirms the expectations that with each additional unit the satisfaction would rise (B= .293) while the preoccupied has the opposite effect; the satisfaction decreases (B= -.183).

For what it concerns the conflict resolution styles, the attachment styles as a whole are poor predictors with little explicative power. Even so, the preoccupied attachment predicts a small effect on the conflict engagement while the secure attachment explains the positive conflict resolutions style. These results come as no surprise as such theoretical concepts have been observed earlier. The same applies for the avoidant attachment style as it predicts the problem withdrawal resolution style. It is even clear from a semantic point of view that being avoidant would lead to withdrawal and such statistics have been demonstrated in the sample.

The early maladaptive schemas also play a weak role for the conflict resolution styles. With a minimal effect, the schema abandonment could slightly increase chances for conflict engagement. In theory it has been widely shown that one of the typical defensive mechanisms of the abandonment is being over protective and always seeking reassurance thus immersing in more possible conflicts as a result. On the other hand, the schema subjugation has a negative direction when explaining positive problem solving strategies,

meaning that the more the subjugation is active the less satisfaction is reached. Finally, the schema emotional inhibition plays an explicative role for the problem withdrawal (B= .230). Inhibiting emotions logically leads to a tendency of not immersing into conflicts and giving in as shown with this sample. Similarly, the schema subjugation explains the problem compliance (B= .312). Subjugation or being submissive in a relation is associated to more obedient behaviors such as being compliant in order to reach a solution. All those effects, however, in our study have shown minimal effects and practically no explanatory power. Overall, it was expected that the predictive role of the schemas and the attachment styles would be greater for the conflict resolution which was not statistically shown for the study.

The maladaptive schemas in the current study explain a greater but still moderate amount of the variance of the relationship satisfaction (R^2=32%). Two predictors (emotional deprivation and defectiveness) play a significant and important role in the relationship. They both have a negative beta score (respectively B= -.490 and B= -.138) which allows an interpretation of less expected satisfaction in a relation when these schemas are active. The contribution of the early maladaptive schemas for the exmotional expressivity also predicts the emotional expressivity. It is found that the schema emotional inhibition (B= -.455) explains the positive expressivity in a negative direction meaning that the positive expressivity would decrease together with the inhibition schema. On the other hand, the impulsive emotional expressivity is influenced by three schemas (abandonment, emotional inhibition and enmeshment). More impulsiveness is expected with the abandonment and enmeshment schemas as such individuals have little perceived control when in a relationship which makes them eager to monitor and search for reassurance in the communication and expression. The emotional inhibition has a negative connection and leads to less predicted impulsivity (B= -.292). The negative expressivity facet is the last which sustains a predictive load and there are four schemas which play a role: abandonment, defectiveness, emotional inhibition and entitlement. The one with greatest effect is the emotional inhibition (B= -.422) showing that when the emotions are impeded by the individual, less negativity is demonstrated.

Another pair of two regression models which predict variables in this study are the negative and impulsive expressivity facets which explain the conflict engagement in a positive way. However, these findings have a very small overall explicative effect and should be taken cautiously. The negative expressivity facet also plays a minimal role for the positive resolution but with a negative mark meaning that it contributes to a smaller chance for constructive outcome of an argument. Lastly, the problem withdrawal resolution styles shows a negative predictive direction for the relationship satisfaction (B= -.282) which is logically supported by other studies. The theory supposes that one gives in when faced with a conflictive situation and that leads to unsolved conflicts which turns the relationship in a toxic direction. In general, the emotional expressivity facets do not reach more than 10.4% of predictive effect for the conflict resolution styles and all the finding regarding this connection should be taken cautiously.

Finally, the attachment styles, early maladaptive schemas, conflict resolution styles and emotional expressivity were tested as predictors for the relationship satisfaction. Three significant predictors were found. The specific significant variables which play a predictive role are the secure attachment style, the schema emotional deprivation and the problem withdrawal resolution style. They explain 35.8% of the variance of the relationship satisfaction. There are two negative effects (respectively B=-.642 and B=-.181) having the emotional deprivation and problem withdrawal. It could be concluded that these three variables play an important part in explaining the satisfaction in couples and might serve as a tool for practitioners. Being emotionally deprived would lead to lesser tendency to show love, tenderness and one would be hesitant to satisfy these basic romantic needs. Withdrawing from a problem would be another issue when it comes to satisfaction as it would hinder any probable agreements when a conflict occurs. The opposite is true for the secure attachment style as it adds to the general satisfaction (B= .130). Individuals with such an attachment style are open to discover and benefit from open communication and contact with the partner.

One of the study's main hypotheses were made regarding the indirect links between the studied variables studied with mediation analysis. It was a fundamental approach as three of the variables are theoretically derived or mediate in a certain way the relationship between attachment styles and romantic satisfaction. The early maladaptive schemas are a concept that lies upon the attachment theory and is established as a product of the interaction between individuals. The latter implies that the attachment was developed at an earlier stage, but other processes are “hidden” behind it. That is the reason why the schemas should be tested as mediators. Other scientists have proposed such models as well, (Masoodi, 2016). On the other hand, conflict resolution styles and emotional expressivity are acquired through experience and could influence specific interactions.

In the results from this study a direct effect of attachment styles on relationship satisfaction as a whole was not found, instead, it was mediated by the schemas. The emotional deprivation and the defectiveness mediate the interaction in a significant way. This finding implies that the two schemas influence attachment and satisfaction. According to the model, it would be irrelevant to make any interventions directly in the attachment. The schemas need to be considered as a mediator.

The conflict resolution styles present a significant mediator between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. The problem withdrawal is mediating and has a positive direction (B=.4019) with the attachment styles and a negative (B=-.2226) with relationship satisfaction. This implies that when an individual presents avoidant attachment, it will lead to a withdrawal strategy toward conflicts. However, the ultimate effect of the interaction would mark a lowered relationship satisfaction. It should be noted that, according to the data, the avoidant attachment itself would not explain the relationship satisfaction itself in a significant way.

Emotional expressivity is not seen as a mediator in the process. However, it is worth mentioning that when they are run as mediators, the association between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction is significant.

The relationship between attachment and conflict resolution styles opens another discussion. The early maladaptive schema abandonment plays a mediation role between the insecure attachment and the negative conflict resolution style. It could be extrapolated that these findings add up to the practical field and could work as a model of counselling. The schema abandonment might be tested with individuals as a way of approaching certain relationship issues specifically when there is evidence for negative conflict resolution within the couple. Informing about alternative ways of dealing with conflicts, especially rethinking the conflict withdrawal role could also be beneficial.

Guidance into additional training for professionals in terms of how to assess and deliver insights into different ways of finding healthy resolution in intimate relationships could be drawn from the findings. It has become even more important in the recent years with the coronavirus pandemic as many couples suffered relationship turbulences. Many authors studied the effects and finding of solutions (Jones et. al, 2021). Specific resolution strategies were proposed by the method of open-end narratives and the individual approach to the topic has grown in interest.

Others have stressed the increase in hostility and withdrawal from relationship affection due to the external stress factors (Pietromonaco & Overall, 2021). The current work offers another insight into the relationship resolution strategies and other significant contributors such as the early maladaptive schemas and attachment styles to the understanding of these relationship processes.

7.7 Limitations of the Study

There is no scientific work in the field of psychology with no limitations. The same is true for the present one. To start with, the data collection hides some risks. Self-reports rely on reflexivity and subjective evaluation of the respondents.

The period during which this research was carried out was stressful for everybody due to the Covid-19 crisis and restrictions. In such challenging times, people might have explicitly been emotional or at least different from their usual selves. A possible replication of the study would be helpful to check the stability of the patterns observed and is considered an exciting perspective for future work.

Cross-sectional analysis gives an informative view of the actual state (data collected between March and April 2020) of the 308 individuals who participated, but could not monitor dynamics. With attachment styles, it is well known that some models are triggered when the so-called Strange Situation (as per Mary Ainsworth) occurs. Such are, for example, separations and crises between two inter-connected individuals. Due to costly practices and specific deadlines, the study's design could not test that.

Another good approach for the future work would be a meta-analysis, as many other authors have contributed to the topic in different cultures. The initial interest was directed toward comparing a Bulgarian and a Spanish sample. The problematic social situation at the time of the data collection during the pandemic period did not allow for questionnaire completion by the Spaniards. It is another milestone and personal interest to broaden the topic and detect dynamics between these two nations in the future.

Conclusion

As it was shown in the results, the attachment styles do not play an important role for the conflict resolution styles. The problem withdrawal has a slight negative association with the secure attachment style. Negative direction of the interaction was shown between the negative emotional facet and the relationship satisfaction. It means that developing such an expressivity facet influences relationships between partners and should be considered as a factor. It was found in this investigation that the insecure attachment (avoidant and preoccupied) have an effect on the early maladaptive schemas. Contrary to

what was true for the attachment styles, the maladaptive schemas have a negative influence for the relationship satisfaction as expected. Thirdly, the maladaptive schemas by themselves predict less overall relationship satisfaction. This finding gives a good opportunity for practitioners to test and relate to such marital cases where specific maladaptive schemas influence and explain any possible negative outcomes from the relationship of the couple. Even more, the early maladaptive schemas do not just associate negatively with the relationship satisfaction, but they also mediate the processes between the attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction. It was further discovered during the course of the investigation that the schemas emotional deprivation and defectiveness have the most powerful significant effect as mediators between these two variables. The early maladaptive schemas also mediate the conflict resolution where the schema abandonment influences the relationship significantly. Lastly, the final hypothesis that the positive emotional facet will play a significant mediating role between the secure attachment styles and the relationship satisfaction was not justified. It turned out that instead the impulsive emotional facet mediates the relationship. It could be deducted that such a result is logical as when an individual is being expressively disinhibited, that leads to a greater probability of a conflictive engagement.

The growing interest in the last few decades towards attachment styles advocates the needs of society when it comes to interconnections between individuals. When John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth developed their theory, it was a breakthrough in the field of psychodynamics and a massive explicative instrument for consultants around the globe. Their work inspired an important investigative perspective, raising many questions among professionals and their clients.

The socio-economical background of the 21st century poses serious strains on romantic experiences. One challenge psychologists face is finding strategies and practices that would provide remedies to these problems. Such could be found in the early maladaptive schemas introduced by Jeffrey Young. They provoked high academic interest during the last few decades. The schemas' effect in understanding romantic relationships

lies in their behavioral nature. Such paradigms not only explain but also open up a chance for intervention. Emotional inhibition and defectiveness are observable in our everyday routines and habits. By recognizing tendencies, individuals could form better relationships, and such a change is possible not just by accepting attachment styles but by acting through schemas. Other important factors, such as conflict resolution styles and emotional expressivity, add to the general understanding of personal suffering in intimacy and beyond. It is in the hands of researchers to invest in further discoveries and bring a higher quality of life to the community. It seems to be a specific mission devoted to people's general psychological and physical health. A cause that is never-ending and a challenge widely accepted in psychological laboratories in the academic universe.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire of the Study

Instructions

You are about to participate in an anonymous investigation regarding attachment styles. All data collected will remain confidential and is only for scientific purposes. Be advised to mark the position (1-5) truthfully and intuitively. The attachment styles are a natural construct of the personality and there are no clinical assumptions based on this questionnaire. In order to score the statements, please follow the scale:

1 – Never

2- Sometimes

3 – Usually

4 – Often

5 - Always

Attachment Styles

Доверявам се на другите хора и ми харесва, когато и те могат да разчитат на мен.	1	2	3	4	5
Не се тревожа да бъда сам/а: не се нуждая от другите хора толкова много.	1	2	3	4	5
Чувствам се спокоен/а в интимни отношения.	1	2	3	4	5
Харесва ми да бъда самодостатъчен/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Смятам, че е важно хората да могат да разчитат един на друг.	1	2	3	4	5
Предпочитам другите да бъдат независими от мен, както аз съм независим/а от тях.	1	2	3	4	5
Би ми се искало да бъда отворен към другите, но чувствам, че не мога да им се доверя.	1	2	3	4	5
Важно е за мен да бъда независим.	1	2	3	4	5
Бих искал да имам близки отношения с другите, но ми е трудно да им се доверя.	1	2	3	4	5
Не се притеснявам дали хората ме харесват или не.	1	2	3	4	5
Страхувам се, че надеждите ми ще бъдат излъгани, когато се сближа твърде много с другите.	1	2	3	4	5
Често се тревожа, че хората не ме харесват.	1	2	3	4	5
Предпазлив съм да се ангажирам с близки отношения, защото се страхувам, че ще бъда наранен.	1	2	3	4	5

Често се чудя дали хората ме харесват.	1	2	3	4	5
Чувствам се некомфортно, когато връзките с други хора станат твърде близки.	1	2	3	4	5

The following statements are designed to measure personality traits formed through earlier developmental stages of the upbringing. They are all characteristics of a normal process when growing up.

In order to score the statements, please follow the scale:

1 – Never

2- Sometimes

3 – Usually

4 – Often

5 - Always

Early Maladaptive Schemas

Не съм имал някой, който да се грижи за мен, да е заедно с мен или да се вълнува истински от това какво се случва с мен.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз нямам хора, които ми дават топлина, прегръдка и обич.	1	2	3	4	5
Не съм чувствал, че за някой съм специален.	1	2	3	4	5
Не съм имал някой, който наистина да ме изслушва, да ме разбира, или да е наясно с истинските ми чувства и желания.	1	2	3	4	5
Не съм имал/а силна или мъдра личност, която да ми даде добър съвет или насока когато не съм сигурен/а как да постъпя.	1	2	3	4	5
Намирам, че се вкопчвам в хора, с които съм близък/ка, защото ме е страх, че ще ме напуснат.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз се нуждая от другите толкова много, че се страхувам да не ги загубя.	1	2	3	4	5
Тревожа се, че хората, които са ми близки ще ме напуснат или изоставят.	1	2		4	5
Когато някой, на който държа изглежда, че се отдръпва или оттегля от мен, се чувствам отчаян/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Понякога толкова много се тревожа за това хората да не ме напуснат, че ги отблъсквам.	1	2	3	4	5

SD1. Никой, когото желая, не би могъл да ме обича щом види моите дефекти или недостатъци.	1	2	3	4	5
Никой, когото желая, не би искал да е близък с мен ако ме познаваше наистина.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз не съм достоен/йна за любовта, вниманието и уважението на другите.		2	3	4	5
Чувствам, че не мога да бъда обичан/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз съм твърде неприемлив/а по много основни начини, за да се разкрия пред другите или да ги оставя да ме опознаят добре.	1	2	3	4	5
Твърде неудобно ми е да показвам позитивни чувства към другите (например обич, че ме е грижа и т.н.).	1	2	3	4	5
Неудобно ми е да изразявам чувствата си пред другите.	1	2	3	4	5
Трудно ми е да съм освободен/а и спонтан/на сред други хора.	1	2	3	4	5
Контролирам се толкова много, че другите ме смятат за неемоционален/на или безчувствен/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Хората ме виждат като емоционално скован/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Не съм способен/на да се отделя от родителите си така, както другите хора на моя възраст изглежда, че са го направили.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз и родителите ми сме твърде въвлечени взаимно в личния си живот и проблемите си.	1	2	3	4	5
Много е трудно за мен и родителите ми да пазим в тайна лични неща един от друг без да се чувстваме нападнати или да изпитваме вина.	1	2	3	4	5
Често чувствам, че, като че ли моите родители живеят чрез мен – че нямам собствен живот.	1	2	3	4	5
Често чувствам, че нямам отделна идентичност от родителите или партньора си.	1	2	3	4	5
Мисля, че ако правя това, което искам, ще си навлека неприятности.	1	2	3	4	5
Чувствам, че нямам друг избор освен да се подчиня на желанията на другите, иначе те ще ми отмъстят, ще ми се ядосат или ще ме изхвърлят по някакъв начин.	1	2	3	4	5
Във връзките си обикновено отстъпвам пред другия.	1	2	3	4	5
Винаги съм оставял/а на другите да избират вместо мен, така че наистина не знам какво искам за себе си.	1	2	3	4	5
За мен представлява голяма трудност да изисквам правата ми да бъдат зачетени или чувствата ми да бъдат взети под внимание.	1	2	3	4	5
Имам големи трудности с това да приема „не“ за отговор когато искам нещо от други хора.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз съм специален/на и не би трябвало да приемам много от забраните и ограниченията, поставени пред другите.	1	2	3	4	5

Мразя да съм ограничаван/а или възпрепятстван/а в това да правя това което искам.	1	2	3	4	5
Чувствам, че няма нужда да следвам нормалните правила или договорености както правят това другите.	1	2	3	4	5
Чувствам, че това което мога да предложа, е с по-голяма стойност от приноса на другите.	1	2	3	4	5

Emotional Expressivity

Когато изпитвам позитивни емоции, хората лесно могат да видят какво чувствам.	1	2	3	4	5
Понякога плача на тъжни филми.	1	2	3	4	5
Хората често не знаят какво чувствам.	1	2	3	4	5
Смея се с глас, когато някой ми разкаже виц или шега.	1	2	3	4	5
Трудно ми е да прикривам страха си.	1	2	3	4	5
Когато съм щастлив, емоциите ми са видни за всички.	1	2	3	4	5
Тялото ми реагира много силно на емоционални ситуации.	1	2	3	4	5
Научил/а съм, че е по-добре да потискам гнева си, отколкото да го показвам.	1	2	3	4	5
Без значение колко разтровожен или разстроен се чувствам, се стремя да остана външно спокоен.	1	2	3	4	5
Аз съм емоционално експресивен човек.	1	2	3	4	5
Изпитвам силни емоции.	1	2	3	4	5
Понякога не мога да скрия чувствата си, дори и да бих искал.	1		3	4	5
Когато изпитвам отрицателни емоции, хората лесно могат да видят точно как се чувствам.	1	2	3	4	5
Имало е случаи, в които не съм можел да спра да плача, въпреки че съм се опитвал да спра.	1	2	3	4	5
Преживявам емоциите си много силно.	1	2	3	4	5
Това, което чувствам, е изписано на цялото ми лице.	1	2	3	4	5

Conflict Resolution Inventory

Започвам персонални атаки.	1	2	3	4	5

Избухвам и излизам извън контрол.	1	2	3	4	5
Губя самоконтрол и казвам неща, които не мисля.	1	2	3	4	5
Обиждам и подхвърлям саркастични подигравки.	1	2	3	4	5
Веднага се фокусирам върху настоящия проблем.	1	2	3	4	5
Залаям се да дискутирам различията конструктивно.	1	2	3	4	5
Намирам алтернативи, които са приемливи и за двама ни.	1	2	3	4	5
Преговарям и намирам компромиси.	1	2	3	4	5
Пазя мълчание за дълги периоди от време.	1	2	3	4	5
Достигам до своя предел, „изключвам се“ и отказвам да говоря повече.	1	2	3	4	5
Спирам да слушам какво ми говори партньорът.	1	2	3	4	5
Отдъпвам се, държа се дистанцирано и незаинтересован/а.	1	2	3	4	5
Не съм склонен/на да държа на своето.	1	2	3	4	5
Твърде склонен/на съм да се съглася с партньора си.	1	2	3	4	5
Не защитавам позицията си.	1	2	3	4	5
Предавам се, без да полагам големи усилия да представя моята позиция.	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship Assessment Scale

Колко добре вашият партньорът успява да задоволи личните ви потребности.	1	2	3	4	5
Като цяло, до колко задоволен/а се чувствате от връзката си.	1	2	3	4	5
Колко задоволителна е връзката Ви в сравнение с	1	2	3	4	5

повечето други връзки.					
Колко често ви се иска да не бяхте започвал/и тази връзка.	1	2	3	4	5
До каква степен връзката ви отговаря на първоначалните ви очаквания.	1	2	3	4	5
До каква степен обичате вашия партньор.	1	2	3	4	5
Колко проблеми имате във връзката си.	1	2	3	4	5