

FIRST OBJECT RELATIONS AND EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS IN ADULTHOOD^{*,**}

YETİŞKİNLİK DÖNEMİNDE İLK NESNE İLİŞKİLERİ VE ERKEN DÖNEM UYUM BOZUCU ŞEMALAR

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Abstract

Both object relations theory and early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) are related to the quality of the bond established with the first objects. This bond affects on the psychological structures of the individuals, their choice of romantic partners and the relationship processes with these romantic partners in adulthood, by creating a template for the future. In this study, the relationship between first object relations and EMSs was examined. In order to examine the relationship between these two concepts, Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI), Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form 3 (YSQ-SF3) and personal information form were applied to a sample of 501 people living in Istanbul. According to our results, there was a significant correlation between object relations and EMSs. After the regression analyzes that we conducted it was found that object relations subscales predicts EMSs.

Keywords: Object relations, Early maladaptive schemas, First objects.

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Öz

Hem nesne ilişkileri teorisi hem de erken uyum bozucu şemalar, ilk nesnelere kurulan bağın kalitesiyle ilgilidir. Bu bağ, gelecek için bir şablon oluşturarak bireylerin psikolojik yapılarını, romantik partner seçimlerini ve bu romantik partnerlerle yetişkinlikteki ilişki süreçlerini etkiler. Bu çalışmada, ilk nesne ilişkileri ile erken uyum bozucu şemalar arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Bu iki kavram arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacıyla İstanbul'da yaşayan 501 kişilik bir örnekleme Bell Nesne İlişkileri ve Gerçeği Değerlendirme Ölçeği (BORRTI), Young Şema Ölçeği-Kısa Form 3 (YŞÖ-KF3) ve kişisel bilgi formu uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlarımıza göre, nesne ilişkileri ile erken uyum bozucu şemaların ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Yaptığımız regresyon analizleri sonucunda nesne ilişkileri alt boyutlarının erken uyum bozucu şemaları yordadığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nesne ilişkileri, Erken dönem uyum bozucu şemalar, İlk nesnelere.

1. Introduction

Object relations is a structure that consists of all cognitive representations that individuals create by internalizing the bond they establish with their first objects (caregivers like mother etc.) and the characteristics of their first objects (Westen et al., 1990). Object relations theory deals with the impact of these internalized cognitive representations on new bonds that will be established in adulthood. According to this theory, the main motivation of individuals is to make physical and emotional contact with their objects (Summers, 1994). When individuals are born, they acquire the necessary skills and impulses to be able to connect with their objects. Internalized object relations constitute the basis of future conflicts and transference (Kernberg, 2004). Therefore the quality of the bond established with the first objects affects the psychological structures of the individuals as well as their choice of romantic partners in adulthood and the relationship processes in adulthood by creating a template for the future (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Based on object relations theory, Young et al. (1990) developed schema therapy to treat personality disorders. Early maladaptive schemas (EMS), which are one of the most important concepts of schema therapy, are recurrent cognitive patterns that occur as a result of the early bonds that individuals form with their objects. Through EMS, individuals form perceptions both for themselves and for other people. These perceptions repeat throughout individual's life. In schema theory, 5 schema domains and 14 EMS have been identified: disconnection, impaired autonomy, impaired limits, other directedness and unrelenting standards (Young, 1999).

In disconnection schema domain, individuals have difficulty in establishing secure, fulfilling and stable bonds with other people. They have an intense and strict belief that their needs for love, safety and sense of belonging will never met by other people. This domain includes schemas of "emotional deprivation", "defectiveness", "emotional inhibition" and "social isolation/mistrust" (Young, 1999). In impaired autonomy schema domain, individuals find it difficult to create an identity of their own because they believe they cannot act on their own without the support of their objects. They believe they are insufficient when dealing with life on their own. This domain includes schemas

of “abandonment”, “enmeshment/dependence”, “failure”, “pessimism” and “vulnerability to harm”. In impaired limits schema domain, individuals think that rules covering other people are invalid for them because they cannot develop adequate internal boundaries and limits. These individuals believe that they are privileged, so they are not respectful of the rights of other people. They do not have enough discipline to control their impulses and act towards their goals. This domain includes “entitlement/insufficient self control” schema (Young & Klosko, 1993). In other directedness schema domain, individuals focus on the needs of other people rather than themselves. The reason for this is to gain the approval of other people, to avoid negative reactions and to maintain relationships with significant other people. This domain includes schemas of “self sacrifice” and “punitiveness”. In unrelenting standards schema domain, individuals constantly strive to comply with the strict rules they have created about their lives by suppressing their feelings, thoughts, impulses, and needs. This domain includes schemas of “approval seeking” and “unrelenting standards” (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003).

The first environment of a human being and his early maladaptive shemas are created by his first objects. This environment contents all the relations and all the experiences both with earth and with other people living in it. Thus all this relations turn into maladaptive schemas by time. As a result, we choose partners in line with the cognitive and behavioral patterns created by our maladaptive schemas. This concept is called schema chemistry (Roediger, 2015). So, it is thought that unhealthy relationships established with the first objects in the early stages of life, will have role in EMS that are a negative template for adult relationships. However, when the literature of our country is examined, there is no study that handles these concepts together, which are thought to be related to each other. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to examine the relationship between first object relations and EMS. It is thought that the results of our study will contribute to both the literature and adult psychotherapists working in the clinical field.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample of this study is determined by random sampling method and consists of 501 adults living in Istanbul in 2021 who voluntarily participated in the study and are aged between 18 to 45. The mean age of the sample is 28.08 (sd = 7.82), the gender distribution is 55.3% female (n = 277) and 44.7% male (n = 224).

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Personal Information Form

Personal information form prepared by us includes informations such as age, education level, income level, relationship status of the participants.

2.2.2. Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI)

BORRTI was developed by Bell (1995) for the purpose of measuring the object relations and reality testing dimensions of self functions. Developed by using object relations theory, BORRTI is a self-report scale and serves to evaluate personality disorders, eating disorders and psychotic states. The scale consists of 90 items in total (45 items for object relations, 45 items for reality testing). Subscales in object relations scale are “alienation (ALN)”, “insecure attachment (IA)”, “egocentrism (EGC)”, “social incompetence (SI)”. Subscales in reality testing scale are “reality distortion (RD)”, “uncertainty of perception (UP)”, “hallucinations and delusions (HD)”. Uluç and Tüzün (2013) adapted the scale to Turkish and conducted validity and reliability studies of the scale. For Turkish adaptation of the scale, the internal consistency analysis demonstrated that Cronbach Alpha coefficients range between .80 and .70 for the object relations subscale and also are found to be range between .77 to .54 for the reality testing subscales

2.2.3. Young Schema Questionnaire – Short Form 3 (YSQ-SF3)

The short form of the Young Schema Questionnaire is a 75-item scale developed by Young (1990) to evaluate early maladaptive schemas. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Soygüt, Karaosmanoğlu ve Çakır (2009). Evaluation is carried out using likert-type rating scale ranging from 1 to 6. In the study conducted for the Turkish version, it was determined that the scale had 5 schema domains and 14 schema dimensions, and 90 questions. Schema domains in Turkish version are “disconnection”, “impaired autonomy”, “impaired limits”, “other directedness” and “unrelenting standards”. In the Turkish form, it was determined that the validity reliability of the schema dimensions range between $r = .66 - .82$, and the validity reliability of the schema domains range from $r = .66$ to $.83$. For schema dimensions, the internal consistency analysis demonstrated that Cronbach Alpha coefficients are found to be range between $\alpha = .63 - .80$, and for schema domains, the internal consistency analysis demonstrated that Cronbach Alpha coefficients are found to be range between $\alpha = .53 - .81$.

2.3. Procedure

Following the application permission obtained by the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Aydın University (Date: 03.03.2021, No: 2021/02), the data collection tools of our study were applied to individuals between the ages of 18-45 residing in Istanbul as a result of their voluntary participation. The scales were distributed online to our sample with personal information form and information about their identity was not obtained from our sample in order to protect their privacy. The scales take an average of 20 minutes to complete. The data obtained from the scales were analyzed through the SPSS 25 package program.

3. Results

Table 1. Distribution of Participants by Demographic Variables

Table 1: Contains the Findings Obtained through the Descriptive Analysis of the Sociodemographic Variables.

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Women	277	55.3
	Men	224	44.7
	Total	501	100.0
Educational Status	Primary School	14	2.8
	High School	103	20.6
	Graduate	325	64.9
	Postgraduate	59	11.8
	Total	501	100.0
Income Level	Low	37	7.4
	Medium	425	84.8
	High	39	7.8
	Total	501	100.0
Psychiatric Diagnosis	No	430	85.8
	Yes	71	14.2
	Total	501	100.0
Raised by	Mother/father	474	94.6
	Relatives	17	3.4
	Baby sitter	7	1.4
	Other	3	0.6
	Total	501	100.0
Mother's Pregnancy	Planned	345	68.9
	Unplanned	156	31.1
	Total	501	100.0
Dreams About the Loss of the Caregiver	No	323	64.5
	Yes	178	35.5
	Total	501	100.0
Relationship Status	Married	202	40.3
	Single	174	34.7
	Flirt	117	23.4
	Divorced	8	1.6
	Total	501	100.0
Dreams About the Loss of Romantic Partner	No	406	81.0
	Yes	95	19.0
	Total	501	100.0
Having a pet	None	348	69.5
	Cat	69	13.8
	Dog	46	9.2
	Bird	38	7.6
	Total	501	100.0

The mean age of the samples is 28.08 (sd = 7.82), the average number of siblings is 2.95 (sd = 1.60), and the mean of the birth order is 2.05 (sd = 1.35).

Table 2. Findings of the Correlation Between Age, Number of Siblings, Birth Order and YSQ-SF3 and BORRTI

Table 2 shows the relationship between; age, number of siblings and failure schema; birth order and early maladaptive schemas.

	Age	Number of Siblings	Birth Order
Emotional Deprivation	-.138**	0.079	0.044
Social Isolation/Mistrust	-.200**	-0.036	-0.061
Defectiveness	-.171**	0.004	-0.022
Emotional Inhibition	-.142**	-0.043	-0.032
Social Isolation/Mistrust	-.169**	0.000	-0.004
Abandonment	-.131**	0.023	0.005
Vulnerability to Harm	-.191**	-0.032	-0.049
Failure	-.193**	-.088*	-.089*
Pessimism	-.197**	0.001	0.000
Entitlement /Insufficient Self-Control	-.152**	-0.083	-0.033
Self Sacrifice	0.027	-0.016	0.018
Punitiveness	-0.081	0.050	0.001
Unrelenting Standards	-0.037	0.039	-0.007
Approval-Seeking	-.148**	-0.050	-.105*
Alienation	-.261**	0.038	0.020
Insecure Attachment	-.303**	-0.022	-0.042
Egocentricm	-.222**	0.018	0.011
Social Incompetence	-.129**	0.063	0.030
Reality Distortion	-.216**	-0.019	0.025
Uncertainty of Perception	-.301**	0.022	0.045
Hallucinations and Delusions	-.246**	-0.011	0.027

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ Pearson Correlation Test

As a result of the correlation analysis, a weak and negative relationship was found between educational status and the following subscales: emotional inhibition ($r = -.104$, $p < 0.01$), self-sacrifice ($r = -.143$, $p < 0.01$), punitiveness ($r = -.241$, $p < 0.01$). Also a weak and negative relationship was found between educational status and egocentrism ($r = -.165$, $p < 0.01$). A weak and negative correlation was found between income level and failure ($r = -.093$, $p < 0.01$) scores.

As a result of the t-test, it was determined that the scores obtained from social isolation/mistrust ($t(499) = 2.18$, $p < 0.05$), vulnerability to harm ($t(499) = 2.46$, $p < 0.05$), failure ($t(499) = 3.34$, $p < 0.05$), pessimism ($t(499) = 3.26$, $p < 0.05$) and entitlement/insufficient self-control ($t(499) = 2.69$, $p < 0.05$) subscales differ significantly according to the gender variable. When the means of the all subscales are compared it was seen that women get higher scores than men. Also the scores obtained from

punitiveness ($t(499)=-4.25$, $p<0.05$) subscale differ significantly according to the gender variable. When the means of the all subscales are compared it was found that men get higher scores than woman.

As a result of the t-test, it was determined that the scores obtained from alienation ($t(499)=2.67$, $p<0.05$), insecure attachment ($t(499)=4.18$, $p<0.05$), reality distortion ($t(499)=2.56$, $p<0.05$), uncertainty of perception ($t(499)=5.07$, $p<0.05$) and hallucinations and delusions ($t(499)=2.68$, $p<0.05$) subscales differ significantly according to the gender variable. When the means of the all subscales are compared it was seen that women get higher scores than men.

Table 3. Findings of the Correlation Between YSQ-SF3 and BORRTI

Table 3 shows result of the Pearson Correlation Test which applied to all YSQ-SF3 subscales and all BORRTI subscales to determine the correlation between early maladaptive schemas and first object realitons.

	Alienation	Insecure Attachment	Egocentrism	Social Incompetence	Reality Distortion	Uncertainty of Perception	Hallusinations and Delusions
Emotional Deprivation	.541**	.384**	.462**	.396**	.405**	.372**	.383**
Social Isolation/ Mistrust	.670**	.576**	.597**	.474**	.583**	.550**	.520**
Defectiveness	.526**	.389**	.412**	.412**	.409**	.415**	.393**
Emotional Inhibition	.469**	.379**	.426**	.422**	.402**	.365**	.358**
Enmeshment/ Dependence	.585**	.430**	.415**	.461**	.399**	.456**	.362**
Abandonment	.557**	.473**	.464**	.433**	.450**	.449**	.405**
Vulnerability to Harm	.516**	.488**	.514**	.361**	.503**	.463**	.453**
Failure	.532**	.448**	.342**	.394**	.365**	.424**	.320**
Pessimism	.566**	.551**	.502**	.401**	.549**	.505**	.508**
Entitlement / Insufficient Self-Control	.397**	.431**	.440**	.206**	.444**	.352**	.399**
Self Sacrifice	.365**	.379**	.433**	.291**	.324**	.207**	.253**
Punitiveness	.293**	.312**	.410**	.253**	.299**	.146**	.227**
Unrelenting Standards	.248**	.376**	.299**	.210**	.231**	.143**	.209**
Approval Seeking	.468**	.575**	.437**	.364**	.304**	.316**	.276**

** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$ Pearson Correlation Test

As a result of the regression analysis we conducted, it is seen that the independent variables of alienation, hallucinations and delusions and egocentrism predict the dependent variable of emotional deprivation ($R^2 = .32$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 32% of the total variance in the dependent variable of emotional deprivation. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta = .39$), hallucination and delusions ($\beta = .14$) and egocentrism ($\beta = .13$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains emotional deprivation schema is alienation.

It is seen that the independent variables of alienation, egocentrism, uncertainty of perception and hallucinations and delusions predict the dependent variable of social isolation/mistrust ($R^2 = .53$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 53% of the total variance in the dependent variable of social isolation/mistrust. The relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta = .39$), egocentrism ($\beta = .18$), hallucinations and delusions ($\beta = .17$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta = .14$). The independent variable that explains social isolation/mistrust schema the most was found to be alienation.

It is seen that the independent variables of alienation and hallucinations and delusions and uncertainty of perception predict the dependent variable of defectiveness ($R^2 = .31$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 31% of the total variance in the dependent variable of defectiveness. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta = .40$), hallucination and delusions ($\beta = .16$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta = .10$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains defectiveness schema is alienation.

When we examine the results, it is observed that the independent variables of reality distortion, social incompetence, egocentrism and uncertainty of perception independent variables predict the dependent variable of emotional inhibition ($R^2 = .27$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 27% of the total variance in the dependent variable of emotional inhibition. Relative effect order according to beta is social incompetence ($\beta = .26$), egocentrism ($\beta = .21$), reality distortion ($\beta = .11$), uncertainty of perception ($\beta = .10$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains emotional inhibition schema is social incompetence.

It is found that the independent variables of alienation and uncertainty of perception predict the dependent variable of enmeshment/mistrust ($R^2 = .36$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 36% of the total variance in the dependent variable of enmeshment/mistrust. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta = .48$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta = .17$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains enmeshment/mistrust schema is alienation.

According to our results it is found that the independent variables of alienation, reality distortion and uncertainty of perception predict the dependent variable of abandonment ($R^2 = .34$, $p < 0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 34% of the total variance in the dependent variable of abandonment. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta = .40$), reality distortion ($\beta = .15$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta = .13$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains abandonment schema is alienation.

It is found that the independent variables of alienation, reality distortion, egocentrism and uncertainty of perception predict the dependent variable of vulnerability to harm ($R^2=.36, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 36% of the total variance in the dependent variable of vulnerability to harm. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta=.20$), egocentrism ($\beta=.20$), reality distortion ($\beta=.18$), uncertainty of perception ($\beta=.14$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains vulnerability to harm is egocentrism.

It is seen that the independent variables of alienation and uncertainty of perception predict the dependent variable of failure ($R^2=.30, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 30% of the total variance in the dependent variable of failure. Relative effect order according to beta is alienation ($\beta=.43$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta=.17$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains failure schema is alienation.

It is seen that the independent variables of reality distortion alienation, uncertainty of perception and insecure attachment predict the dependent variable of pessimism ($R^2=.41, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 41% of the total variance in the dependent variable of pessimism. Relative effect order according to beta is reality distortion ($\beta=.24$), alienation ($\beta=.23$), insecure attachment ($\beta=.15$) and uncertainty of perception ($\beta=.14$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains pessimism schema is reality distortion.

According to our results it is found that the independent variables of reality distortion, egocentrism and insecure attachment predict the dependent variable of entitlement/insufficient self control ($R^2=.25, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 25% of the total variance in the dependent variable of entitlement/insufficient self control. Relative effect order according to beta is reality distortion ($\beta=.23$), egocentrism ($\beta=.18$) and insecure attachment ($\beta=.17$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains entitlement/insufficient schema is reality distortion.

It is seen that the independent variables of egocentrism and social incompetence predict the dependent variable of self sacrifice ($R^2=.20, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 20% of the total variance in the dependent variable of self sacrifice. Relative effect order according to beta is egocentrism ($\beta=.38$) and social incompetence ($\beta=.15$). It was found that the independent variable that most explains self sacrifice schema is egocentrism.

It is found that the independent variables of egocentrism and social incompetence predict the dependent variable of punitiveness ($R^2=.18, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 20% of the total variance in the dependent variable of punitiveness. Relative effect order according to beta is egocentrism ($\beta=.37$) and social incompetence ($\beta=.11$). It is seen that the independent variable that most explains punitiveness schema is egocentrism.

It is found that the independent variable of insecure attachment predict the dependent variable of unrelenting standards ($R^2=.14, p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 14% of the total variance in the dependent variable of unrelenting standards.

It is seen that the independent variable of insecure attachment predict the dependent variable of approval seeking ($R^2=33$, $p<0.05$). The independent variables in the model explain 33% of the total variance in the dependent variable of approval seeking.

4. Discussion

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between first object relations and early maladaptive schemas. Our results show that object relations and EMSs are related and object relations subscales have an affect on EMS subscales. These findings are consistent with the schema theory (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003), which suggests that EMSs are formed as a result of unhealthy object relations with first objects in the early periods of life. These schemas first emerge in childhood but continue to operate in adulthood and effect the individual's relationships with other people. When we look at our demographic variables, we reached the following results: As a result of our research, it is seen that there is a significant relationship between early maladaptive schemas and age, except for unrelenting standards, self sacrifice and punitiveness scehmas. Among our findings, a significant relationship has been found between both failure and approval seeking schemas and birth order. Between educational status and maladaptive schemas of emotional inhibition, self sacrifice and punitiveness, we found a significant relationship. Also we found a significant relationship between egocentrism subscale of BORRTI and educational status. When income level and failure schema is examined, it is observed that there is a significant correlation between these two concepts. According to our results, we found that social isolation/mistrust, vulnerability to harm, failure, pessimism and entitlement/insufficient self-control subscales of YSQ-SF3 differ significantly according to the gender which means these schemas are more common in women than men. We found that punitiveness subscale of YSQ-SF3 also differs according to gender but it was seen that punitiveness schema is more common in men than women. As a result of our study we found that alienation, insecure attachment, reality distortion, uncertainty of perception and hallucinations and delusions subscales of BORRTI also differ according to the gender which means, it is more common in women than men to form insecure bonds with other people and develop unhealthy object relations. All of our findings are discussed in detail below.

In our study, it was found that there is a significant relationship between the subscales of EMSs and the subscales of object relations. It is emphasized that object relations develop as a representation of the relationships that individuals establish with their first objects. These representations develops some patterns for individuals to interact with others throughout their lifetime (Calabrese, Farber & Westen, 2005; Huprich et al., 2007; McWilliams, 2010). EMSs are cognitive and emotional patterns that are formed as a result of the unmet basic emotional needs of the individual in his early relationship with his first object, that contain negative beliefs about the individual himself and other people. This patterns repeat throughout his life and effect his adult relationships (Roediger, 2015). Based on this information, it is thought that individuals who did not develop healthy object relations in the early years may also develop EMSs. Object relations and EMSs are related to each other and both can have a important role in the adulthood of the individual throughout life.

One of the results we obtained from our study was that alienation subscale of BORRTI predicts emotional deprivation, social isolation/mistrust and defectiveness subscales of disconnection schema domain, and abandonment, enmeshment/dependence, vulnerability to harm, failure, and pessimism subscales of impaired autonomy schema domain from YSQ-SF3. Except for vulnerability to harm and pessimism subscales from YSQ-SF3, the subscale that explains all the schema subscales mentioned the most, is alienation. Alienation subscale expresses the low capacity of establishing and maintaining close relationships with other people (Bowlby, 1969). In alienation subscale, individuals experience a basic lack of trust in their relationships (Bell, 1995). In disconnection schema domain individuals cannot establish stable, secure and satisfying bonds with other people. This is because of their strict belief that their basic need for love and trust will never be met by other people. In impaired autonomy schema domain, individuals are codependent and rely on other people in their relationships. It is emphasized that the needs of these individuals have not sufficiently met by their first objects and they have not received sufficient attention in the early years (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). According to Eşici (2014), impaired autonomy schema domain had a negative effect on close relationships. In impaired autonomy schema domain, individuals grow up with the first objects that give love only under certain conditions (Young, 1999). As a result of all this information we obtained from the literature, it seems that alienation subscale and schema domains of disconnection and impaired autonomy are all related to the ability of establishing and maintaining close relationships. Bell (1995) stated that alienation subscale is most common in patients with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Because BPD is a disorder associated with the ability to form close and stable relationships (Kernberg, 1985). According to some studies, EMSs plays a key role in BPD. It has been found that individuals with BPD have abandonment, social isolation/mistrust, emotional deprivation, defectiveness, enmeshment/dependence and failure schemas (Frias et al., 2017; Esmaeilian et al., 2019). BPD appears to be associated with both alienation subscale of object relations and with schema domains of disconnection and impaired autonomy. Therefore when level of alienation increases schema domains of disconnection and impaired autonomy increases too.

According to our findings, it was seen that egocentrism subscale of BORRTI predicts punitiveness and self sacrifice subscales of other directedness schema domain; entitlement/insufficient self control subscale of impaired limits schema domain; emotional deprivation, social isolation/mistrust and emotional inhibition subscales of disconnection schema domain; vulnerability to harm subscale of impaired autonomy schema domain, all from YSQ-SF3. It was determined that vulnerability to harm, self-sacrifice and punitiveness subscales are explained the most by egocentrism subscale. In egocentrism subscale, individuals manipulate both their relationships and their romantic partners in line with their own interests. They do not trust their romantic partners and do not have enough respect for their romantic partners' boundaries and feelings. They display an intensely demanding, coercive and intrusive attitude in relationships. They believe that relationships are for gaining power. For this reason, they perceive themselves as either "in control of the relationship" or "controlled by the romantic partner" (Bell, 1995). In other directedness schema domain, individuals feel compelled

to constantly strive to be the one who has all the attention in the relationships. Although they seem to be the altruistic side in their relationships, their purpose is to gain superiority to the other party with their self-sacrificing appearance. They are highly demanding in their relationships; if their expectations are not met enough they become angry and offended. They can not easily forgive their romantic partners so they punish them in various ways (Young, 1999). Individuals' sense of responsibility is not sufficiently developed in impaired limits schema domain. These individuals do not respect their romantic partner's personal limits in their relationships. They cannot tolerate being blocked and rejected (Simeone-DiFrancesco, Roediger, & Stevens, 2017). Individuals whose disconnection schema is dominant can use their romantic partners to satisfy their own emotional needs and intensively try to control them. These individuals, who are highly skeptical when it comes to their romantic partners may display a condescending and grandiose attitude in their relationships in order to cover the fact that their basic needs were not sufficiently met by their first objects in the past (Roediger, 2015). Individuals who have vulnerability to harm schema from impaired autonomy domain, have a demanding attitude in their relationships. They constantly ask other people to listen to their troubles, to give themselves support and reassurance. These individuals feel they have a right to intervene in their romantic partner's life. This is because of their strict belief that everyone has to adapt to them in all circumstances (Young & Klosko, 1993). In all of these schemas, an egocentric structure is encountered, especially when it comes to close relationships with other people. It is known that individuals with narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) also have high levels of egocentrism (Bell, 1995). Individuals with NPD constantly wait for the attention and approval of other people, tend to exploit other people in relationships, lack empathy, have a strong sense of entitlement and are quite arrogant. These individuals can suppress their emotions in order to avoid embarrassment and criticism (Öztürk & Uluşahin, 2020). Young, Klosko & Weishaar (2003) found that EMSs were also associated with NPD in their studies. It seems that NPD is associated with both egocentrism and EMSs. It is thought that when the level of egocentrism increases, the levels of EMSs will increase too.

In our study we found that insecure attachment subscale of BORRTI predicts unrelenting standards and approval seeking subscales of unrelenting standards schema domain; entitlement/insufficient self control subscale of impaired limits schema domain; pessimism subscale of impaired autonomy schema domain, all from YSQ-SF3. In insecure attachment subscale, individuals have a great need for close relationships with other people. But they fear that eventually their romantic partner will abandon or reject them. So they work hard to gain everyone's approval and appreciation (Bell, 1995). In unrelenting standards schema domain, individuals have grown up in an environment where love was conditional. They think that if they put a lot of effort into daily life activities and relationships, they can gain the love, approval and acceptance of other people (Behary, 2017). In impaired limits schema domain, individuals are very afraid of disappointment. For this reason, they avoid taking any responsibility for other people in order not to get hurt and suffer. In order to achieve what they want in relationships, they can go beyond their romantic partners' boundaries and aim to be omnipotent in their relationships (Roediger, 2015). Individuals who have pessimism from impaired

autonomy schema domain experience an intense distrust towards life and relationships. They tend to generalize negative aspects of life such as disappointment, betrayal and conflict. They are unable to enjoy anything that is going well in their lives due to potential negativities they may experience in the future, and they try to control everything about their lives, including relationships (Behary, 2017). Looking at these schemas, it is seen that these schemas have some common features. Individuals with related schemas carry an intense distrust of relationships, and because of this insecurity, they try to keep everything in relationships (especially their romantic partners) under control. Studies have found that BPD is also highly associated with insecure attachment (Frias, Baltasar & Birmaher, 2016; Yang et al., 2018). There are studies that have concluded that BPD is also related to EMSs (Thimm, 2010; Shorey, Anderson & Stuart, 2014). It is known that individuals with BPD generally feel insecure and inadequate in their relationships, and therefore make an intense effort to become omnipotent in relationships. It is stated that individuals with BPD are very demanding to their romantic partners and their expectations for relationships are quite high (Akyüz, 2018). In addition, it is emphasized that individuals with BPD do not care about the limits of their romantic partners and tend to exploit them in relationships (Tunç & Eren, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that BPD is related to both insecure attachment and EMSs that mentioned above and it is thought that increases in the insecure attachment level will lead to an increase in the levels of EMSs that mentioned above.

As a result from our study, it was determined that social incompetence subscale of BORRTI predicts punitiveness and self-sacrifice subscales from other directedness schema domain and emotional inhibition subscale from disconnection schema domain, all from YSQ-SF3. It was found that the subscale that explains emotional inhibition the most is social incompetence. According to Bell (1995), individuals with social incompetence are timid and anxious in close relationships. They have great difficulty, especially when it comes to romantic relationships because they experience intense frustration when they are not sufficiently appreciated by other people. Since they see themselves socially incompetent, they stay away from situations that require socialization. Individuals who have schemas in disconnection and other directedness domains do their best to maintain relationships with other people, even at the expense of their own needs. They act very carefully because they fear that their relationship will end if they make mistakes (Roediger, 2015). It can be said that their intense fear of making mistakes stems from their social incompetence. Another concept thought to be related to social incompetence is social anxiety disorder (SAD). In a study, it was found that individuals with SAD also have a preoccupied attachment style, therefore they consider themselves inadequate in relationships but see other people as sufficient so they experience an intense fear of rejection even if they want to be close to other people (Conrad et al., 2021). According to Calvete et al. (2015), SAD is also associated with EMSs. In the related study, it was found that individuals with SAD symptoms have EMSs in disconnection and other directedness schema domains. These individuals intensely focus on close relationships. From this point of view, it is thought that SAD may be also related to social incompetence and schema domains of disconnection and other directedness.

So it can be said that an increase in social incompetence level will also lead to an increase in the levels of disconnection and other directedness schema domains.

According to our findings, we found that reality distortion subscale of BORRTI predicts emotional inhibition subscale from disconnection schema domain; abandonment, vulnerability to harm and pessimism subscales from impaired autonomy domain; entitlement/insufficient self control subscale from impaired limits domain, all from YSQ-SF3. It is seen that pessimism and entitlement/insufficient self control subscales are explained the most by reality distortion subscale. In reality distortion subscale, individuals have great problems in evaluating reality. They may have paranoid thoughts about how other people try to manipulate or criticize them. They may have depressive or grandiose thoughts. It is difficult for them to understand their own feelings and the feelings of other people (Bell, 2015). Individuals with emotional inhibition schema from disconnection schema domain suppress their emotions and impulses that appears spontaneously because they are afraid of losing control of their impulses and being criticized by other people (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). In impaired autonomy schema domain, individuals experience an intense sense of inadequacy. They find it difficult to trust other people in close relationships and believe that life is full of threats because they generalize negative aspects of life too much. In impaired limits schema domain, individuals exhibit grandiose attitudes in their relations with other people. Because they believe that the rules that apply to other people do not cover them (Young, 1999). It is thought that the characteristics of EMSs mentioned above may be related to the distortion of reality in individuals. According to Bell (1995), substance use disorder (SUD) is associated with reality distortion. Studies have found that individuals with SUD have problems perceiving reality (Gregg, Barrowclough & Haddock, 2007), experience more conflict in their relationships (Barrowclough et al., 2005), and are more prone to NPD (Coleman et al., 2017). In some studies, it was observed that SUD is also related to EMSs (Roper et al. 2010; Shorey, Anderson, & Stuart, 2012; Shorey, Anderson, & Stuart, 2014). According to other studies, individuals with SUD have almost all EMSs (Shaghaghay et al., 2011; Razavi, Soltaninezhad, & Rafiee, 2012; Shorey, Anderson, & Stuart, 2013). In another study, it was found that SUD is particularly associated with disconnection and impaired autonomy schema domains (Bojed & Nikmanesh, 2013). As a result of these informations, it is understood that individuals with SUD have problems in evaluating reality (this may be the reason why they experience more conflict in their relationships and are more prone to NPD) and also have EMSs. For this reason, it is thought that an increase in reality distortion level will also lead to an increase in EMSs.

We found that uncertainty of perception subscale of BORRTI predicts social isolation/mistrust, defectiveness, emotional inhibition subscales from disconnection schema domain; abandonment, enmeshment/dependence, failure, vulnerability to harm and pessimism subscales from impaired autonomy schema domain, all from YSQ-SF3. In uncertainty of perception subscale, individuals have great difficulty in understanding feelings and thoughts of both themselves and other people. They feel extremely inadequate and find it very difficult to make decisions on their own. They feel intense anxiety during conflicts with other people. They often use the denial defense mechanism to cope

with their intense anxiety (Bell, 1995). According to Kohut (1977), in the early years of infants' life, they try to understand how to perceive themselves by looking at their first objects. In well-established object relationships, infants reflect the feeling of satisfaction due to the fulfillment of their physical and emotional needs to the first objects. The first objects project their enthusiasm and pleasure due to the presence of the infant through mirroring. This "mirroring process" created by the first object has a vital importance for the infant. Infants transform and internalize "self representation" that has been reflected on them by their first objects. This representation constitutes the first evaluation that occurs in the mind of the infants about themselves. Thus, the infant's immature self begins to mature. However, when this mirroring process between infants and their first objects does not progress as the infants need, there will be problems in the infants' self-development. The individual who grows up without the support of his first object feels worthless, helpless, incomplete and unable to maintain impulse control. This situation may cause deterioration in the perception system of the individual (Kohut, 1959). In disconnection schema domain, individuals have a belief that the other people will not love them once they really get to know them. These individuals are extremely sensitive to being criticized and think that they do not deserve to be loved and respected. Because they perceive themselves as deficient and flawed so they make an intense effort to cover up these perceived flaws. They deny their feelings and thoughts by trying to rationalize them, instead of expressing them freely (Arntz & Jacob, 2012). In impaired autonomy schema domain, individuals believe that they cannot make important decisions on their own. They usually need help and consideration from other people. They suppress and deny their emotions in order to get approval of other people (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). The common characteristics of individuals with related schemas are their negative self-perception, their desire to cover up the flaws they see in themselves through denial, and their indecisive nature. This situation may be an indication of their uncertain perceptions as a result of unhealthy object relationships. BPD is a disorder in which uncertainty of perception is observed (Bell, 1995). In a study examining the MMPI profile of BPD, it was determined that the perceptions of individuals with BPD are strange (Öğünç et al., 2018). They cannot develop a whole and stable self. Their perceptions of themselves and other people are often shallow (Derin & Öztürk, 2018). According to some studies, it has been determined that individuals with BPD also have all EMSs (Nilsson et al., 2010; Sajadi et al., 2015; Frias et al., 2018). When we look all these information from the literature, it is seen that BPD is associated with both uncertainty of perception subscale and EMSs. So, it is thought that as uncertainty of perception level increases, levels of EMSs will increase too.

According to our results, hallucinations and delusions subscale of BORRTI predicts emotional deprivation, social isolation/mistrust and defectiveness subscales from abandonment schema domain from YSQ-SF3. In hallucinations and delusions subscale, individuals are quite disconnected from the reality (Bell, 1995). In some studies, it was found that the lack of necessary emotional experiences with the first objects may be related to insecure attachment, which was found to be associated with psychosis through the mediating role of schemas of disconnection domain (Garety

et al., 2007; Bosmans, Braet & Van Vlierberghe, 2010). For example, individuals who have schemas from disconnection domain may think that “I do not belong to any community”. This situation overlaps with the negative symptoms of schizophrenia. Sometimes individuals may be suspicious of other people and have thoughts such as “sooner or later the other people will betray me”. This may be related to both disconnection schema domain and paranoid delusions (Azadi et al., 2019). Studies have shown that EMSs contain certain negative self-evaluations (such as feeling unloved), and this situation is found to be related to psychotic symptoms (Kesting & Lincoln, 2013; Tiernan, Tracey & Shannon, 2014; Hesse et al., 2015). In other studies, it is found that the number and level of EMSs predicts the severity of positive symptoms of psychosis (Bortolon et al., 2013; Sundag et al., 2016). It is thought that as hallucination and delusion level increases, levels of disconnection schema domain will increase too.

In our study, it is found that as age increases, levels of emotional deprivation, social isolation/mistrust, defectiveness and emotional inhibition subscales from disconnection domain; enmeshment/dependence, abandonment, failure, pessimism and vulnerability to harm subscales from impaired autonomy domain; entitlement/insufficient self control subscale from impaired limits domain; approval seeking subscale from unrelenting standard domain decreases. The reason for this may be that we develop more adaptive and functional thoughts and strategies about life as a result of our increasing experience with age. According to Çakırca (2020), younger individuals have a higher level of entitlement/insufficient self control, failure, and enmeshment/dependence schemas. In another study, it was observed that the younger group have a higher level of approval seeking schema (Gök, 2012). EMSs, occur as a result of individuals’ core emotional needs not being adequately satisfied by their first object (Young, 1999). Emotion dysregulation (ED) arises from the inability of individuals to experience secure attachment with their first object (Bowlby, 1988). Based on this, it is thought that the reasons for the occurrence of EMSs and ED are similar and therefore these two concepts can be related. In a study, it was found that when individuals’ level of EMSs increase, their ED skills decrease (Kaya, 2020). Studies have found that as age increases ED skills in individuals also increase (Orgeta, 2009; Giromini et al., 2017). Since EMSs and ED are thought to be related, it is thought that the increase in age will increase ED skills of individuals. Also EMSs will decrease with the increase in ED skills. On the other hand, there are studies that could not find any relationship between EMSs and age (Yalım, 2017; Kıray, 2019). The smaller sample size of these studies may be the reason for the difference in our findings.

According to our study, as the number of siblings increases the level of failure from EMSs decreases, also as the birth order increases the levels of failure and approval seeking from EMSs decreases. In Baskett’s (1985) study, it was found that parents tend to see their first-born child as more responsible and obedient, on the other hand they perceive their children that born later as more rebellious and independent. It was emphasized that parents are more demanding towards their first-born children (Baskett, 1985; Suito & Pillmer, 2007) so they approach the failure of their first-born children with intolerance (Paulhus, Trapnell & Chen, 1999). Therefore, first-born children who

are unable to cope with their parents' high expectations, inappropriate sharing of responsibility and intolerant approach may cause them to perceive themselves as less successful than their other siblings and endeavor more intensely to gain the approval of their parents. Parallel to this, children born later are thought to be able to perceive themselves more successful as they can act more independently.

In our study, it was determined that as age increases, subscales of object relations decrease. The reason for this finding may be that individuals learn to establish healthier relationships with other people as a result of the experiences gained with age, despite their negative past experiences. In Işık's (2016) study it was found that younger participants showed more social incompetence, alienation, insecure attachment, and egocentrism than older participants. In another study, it was found that age differs in social incompetence subscale. (Koçak, 2019). This information is consistent with our results.

According to the results we obtained from our study, it was found that as the income level of the individuals increases, the level of failure from YSQ-SF3 decreases. In the failure schema, the individual believes that he is inadequate in areas that require success and performance (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). It can be said that having a high income level will meet the needs of these individuals such as gaining success and prestige. For this reason, it is thought that individuals with higher income will have a lower level of failure schema. In a study, it was found that failure schema differs in terms of income level (Yalın, 2017). This finding supports ours.

In our study, it was found that as the education level increases the levels of emotional inhibition, self-sacrifice and punitiveness from YSQ-SF3 decrease. In self sacrifice schema, individuals strive to please other people at the expense of putting their own needs in the background. In emotional inhibition schema, individuals suppress their own feelings, thoughts and desires in order not to lose approval of the other people. In punitiveness schema, individuals feel guilty and punish themselves ruthlessly when they cannot please other people, even if the situation is simple (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). The common point of all three schemas is caring a lot for other people and less for oneself. These individuals cannot establish a healthy balance of giving and taking in their relationships. In Bildirici's study (2014), it was determined that individuals with higher education level establish more satisfying relationships because they attach importance to both themselves and their romantic partners' satisfaction in relationships. In some studies, no relationship was found between education level and EMSs (Sağlam, 2016; Çakırca, 2020). The sample sizes of these studies are narrower than ours. That can be the reason for different findings.

In our findings, it was seen that as the education level of the individuals increases, their egocentrism levels decrease. Egocentrism is a complex personality structure that causes the individual to have difficulties both for his self and his relationships in adulthood. In a study, it was found that individuals who feel invalid because of their first objects, have a pathological level of egocentrism in adulthood (Huxley & Bizumic, 2017). Because of this feeling of invalidation created by the first objects, individuals can have a confusion about their self worth and worth of other people

(Huxley, Seaton & Grenyer, 2021). As a result, the individual feels worthless and exhibits egocentric attitudes. An optimal level of egocentrism is necessary for individuals to survive, create a healthy sense of identity and continue their activities. However, high levels of egocentrism can cause an exaggerated self-love, which can reduce individuals' adaptation skills regarding life and relationships (Kartopu, 2013). Education is a set of activities aimed at developing individuals' cognitive, emotional and social skills that will increase their adaptation (Akyüz, 2012). For this reason, it is thought that as the education level increases, the level of egocentrism will decrease as individuals will undergo a positive transformation. In a study in the literature, it was determined that administrators who feel insufficient in terms of education level try to exhibit themselves more (Çoban & İrmış, 2018). This result supports ours.

According to our results, it was seen that women have higher levels of vulnerability to harm, failure, pessimism, entitlement/insufficient self control and social isolation/mistrust schemas than men. Also it was seen that men have a higher level of punitiveness schema than women. It can be said that women may have higher biological susceptibility to the negative effects of stressful life events (Bianchin & Angrilli, 2012) and may be more emotionally reactive in general (Bradley et al., 2001), which may predispose them to develop more EMSs than men. Men, on the other hand, have more intense symptoms of hostility, aggression and violence than women (Aktaş et al., 2005). This situation is similar to the features of punitiveness schema, which is characterized by the belief that every mistake should be punished. While women are biologically and psychologically more prone to developing more EMSs; men have a hostile nature so they may be more prone to being punitive than women. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are no common findings about EMSs and gender. In a study, it was observed that women have higher levels of disconnection, impaired autonomy and other directedness domains than men (Shorey, Anderson, & Stuart, 2013). This finding is different from ours in terms of other directedness domain. In another study, it was found that men have higher levels than women in schemas of emotional deprivation, social isolation/mistrust, emotional inhibition and entitlement/insufficient self control (Carr & Francis, 2010). According to a study, it was found that men have higher levels of emotional deprivation and entitlement/insufficient self control schemas, while women have higher levels of self sacrifice schema (Tremblay & Dozois, 2009). In another study in the literature, it was concluded that EMSs do not differ according to gender (Zatripoululou et al., 2014). All these differences between the findings may be due to the diversity of the relevant studies in terms of sample size, ethnic origin, gender distribution and age range.

In our study, it was determined that women have higher levels of alienation, insecure attachment, reality distortion, uncertainty of perception and hallucinations and delusions subscales from BORRTI. These findings can be explained as that women have more difficulty in establishing close relationships, in trusting their romantic partners, and they are more sensitive to any loss or mourning situation. According to Berry, Barrowclough & Wearden (2007), individuals' failure to establish secure attachments in relationships negatively affects the way they perceive reality. The subscales of reality distortion, uncertainty of perception and hallucinations and delusions are concepts related to

perception of reality. In Koçak's study (2019), it was found that women have higher levels of alienation and insecure attachment subscales than men. In another study, it was found that women have a higher level than men in insecure attachment subscale (Işık, 2016). These findings are in line with our study. However, according to another study, it was found that the subscales of object relations do not differ according to gender (Genç, 2020). According to Mamur's study (2020), it was found that males have higher levels of reality distortion and hallucinations and delusions subscales than women. Results of relevant studies are not consistent with ours. The sample sizes of the relevant studies are less than ours and their age distributions are different from ours. It is thought that these may be the reason for the difference between the results.

4.1. Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between first object relations and EMSs was examined. The result of our research is consistent with our hypotheses. The early relationships we develop with our first objects play a role in the formation of our early maladaptive schemas. Both the object representations we internalize in childhood and our maladaptive schemas formed through these representations serve as a template for our romantic relationships that we will form in adulthood. In our study, it was determined that both object relations and early maladaptive schemas differ in terms of demographic variables such as gender, age, birth order and number of siblings.

4.2. Limitations and Suggestions

A sample of 501 people living only in Istanbul participated in our study. Considering that object relations and early maladaptive schemas may differ in different cultures belonging to different geographies, it is recommended to include participants from different regions and countries in future studies. Object relations and early schemas may also differ according to individuals' attachment styles. Therefore, the attachment styles of individuals can be taken into account in future studies.

Ethics Committee Permission

The fieldwork of this article was approved by the Ethics Committee Permission with the dated 03.03.2021 and order number 2021/2, which was obtained at the meeting of the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Aydın University, numbered: E-88083623.020.7643.

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