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Predicting Love Trauma Syndrome based on Early Maladaptive Schemas and Emotional Intelligence among the Youth

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The aim of this study is to determine how emotional intelligence and early schemas are correlated with the love trauma syndrome. To this end, a predictive correlation method was used. The research sample included 344 young men and women, aged 18–29, in Boushehr. They were selected through a multistage sampling method. The instruments were Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire, Young's Early Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire (short form), and Dehghani's Love Trauma Syndrome Inventory. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient showed that all the components of early maladaptive schemas and emotional intelligence (EI), except emotional exploitation, had a significant correlation with the love trauma syndrome. In addition, the results of the multivariate regression analysis indicated a significant contribution of social self-alienation, emotional exploitation, poor self-restraint, and vulnerability to loss in predicting love trauma syndrome among young females. It was also noted that mistrust/abuse, emotional deprivation, poor self-control, and strict standards were the strong predictors of love trauma syndrome among young males. The results of the study also suggested that 40% of the variances in love trauma syndrome among young females and 54% of the variances in love trauma syndrome among young males can be explained by emotional intelligence and early maladaptive schemas.

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***Keywords*:** love trauma syndrome, early maladaptive schemas, emotional intelligence

Rempel and Burris (2005) define love neither as a relationship which is a form of behaviour, nor as an emotion. Rather, they conceptualized love as a 'motivational state in which the goal is to preserve and promote the well-being of the valued object'. Love has positive influences on the individual. For instance, studies show the impact of love on the improvement of self-esteem, self-efficacy (Aron & Paris, 1995), well-being (Bao, 2012), and creative thinking (Förster, Epstude, & Özelsel, 2009). Nevertheless, loss and separation are inevitable parts of human life that may occur in different forms such as losing one's job, moving homes, and change of a teacher, leaving home, hearing and tooth loss, the death of loved ones, divorce, and romantic failure. The love trauma syndrome refers to the unresolved fear from emotional failure. The love trauma syndrome and its symptoms were first discussed in 1999 by Richard B. Rosse. Love trauma is defined as a set of acute symptoms which develop after the breakdown of a romantic relationship and are followed by personal inactivation in social, professional, and educational functions (Rosse, 1999). Rosse makes a distinction between love trauma and relationship blues, maintaining that love trauma is a more serious reaction which may interfere with social, professional, and educational functions. The less intense and durable reactions which do not interfere with social, professional, and educational interactions are called the relationship blues. A person experiences love trauma like a shock and finds it difficult to feel secure and be willing to keep the relationship going, and he or she is not able

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to control or prevent the love trauma. Love trauma is divided into Type I and Type II. Type I love trauma is a sudden and unexpected shock and type II love trauma is a chronic and recurrent condition, which the person—in violation of the relationship—repeatedly perceives in the friendship period. The person undergoing love trauma exhibits a set of symptoms like sleep disorders, worry, anger, disappointment, discomfort, concentration problems, and pessimism about future relationships. Such symptoms are not the same for all individuals, and each person is dominated by one or more symptoms. Love trauma can be experienced recurrently as follows: (1) The repetition of painful dreams caused by love trauma; and (2) The repetition of painful thoughts caused by love trauma that can turn into an obsession. The recurrence of painful feelings caused by love trauma such as envy, grudge, anger, desire for revenge, anxiety, fear, depression, emotional instability, panic and their intensity are a matter of degrees in different people. Some people are more aroused and show more symptoms of anger, irritability, and sleep disorders, while some are obsessed with the memories and feelings caused by the trauma (Rosse, 1999). The incidence of such disorders has been reported in numerous studies. Based on the studies conducted in Iran, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology has reported the rate of breakdown of emotional relations among students amounting to 22% in 2004 and 21% in 2005.

The results of a comparative study on students with and without love trauma syndrome indicated that there was a significant difference between these two groups in terms of early maladaptive schemas (Akbari, Aliloo, Khanjani, Poursharifi, & Fahimi et al., 2012). The word schema generally means a

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structure. In Kant's philosophical system, a schema is defined as the common point among all elements. Schemas are both positive and negative, and can be either adaptive or maladaptive. Schemas can be formed both during the early years of life and in the course of an entire lifetime. They may, in particular, be formed as a result of painful events experienced in childhood, and contribute to the development of personality disorders and the individual's cognitive appraisal. Early maladaptive schemas may occur because five basic emotional needs have not been satisfied in childhood, which include safe attachment to others, the freedom to express healthy needs and emotions, self-independence, efficacy and identity, self-motivation, and continence (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Young et al. (2003) identified 18 schemas in 5 five domains of separation and exclusion: self-independence, impaired functions, impaired limitations and other-orientation, excessive alertness, and emotional inhibition. A study of the mediatory role of a love story in relation to early maladaptive schemas and marital satisfaction was conducted. The early maladaptive schemas and love story were reported to be among the important criteria for mate selection and marital satisfaction (Motiee, Burjali, & Taghavi, 2014). A comparative study of the early maladaptive schemas among men with and without marital infidelity showed significant differences between intimacy and early maladaptive schemas in these two groups (Kolahi, Motlagh, Esamaili, Taghavi, & RahmatiZadeh, 2014). In another study, early maladaptive schemas and impaired self-independence were positively correlated with interpersonal problems (Mojallali, Hakim Javadi, Allah Mosavi, Khan Zadeh, & Golam Ali Lavasani, 2014). Thimm (2013) explored early maladaptive

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schemas and interpersonal problems and showed that early maladaptive schemas are correlated with a wide range of interpersonal relations and are strongly associated with problems. Davoodi, Abolghasemi, & VatanKhah (2014) explored the relationship between early maladaptive schemas, joy, and anxiety. Their results suggested that there is a significant correlation between early maladaptive schemas and anxiety and a negative correlation between joy and anxiety (Davoodi et al., 2014).

Another variable that was explored in the present study is emotional intelligence. Bani-Asadi and Jamshidi-Fard (2012) studied emotional control at the low and high levels of love. The results showed that higher levels of love were significantly associated with emotional control and as love increases, emotional control decreases. Since one of the symptoms of love trauma is depression, studied the relationship between emotional intelligence and depression (Downey, Johnston, Hansen, Schembri, & Stough, 2010) among clinical samples and reported a significant correlation between emotional intelligence and depression Downey et al. (2010). Emotional intelligence levelscan be explored through the concept of social intelligence, developed by Thorndike (1920). However, the origins of emotional intelligence can be found in Gardner's work on multiple intelligences and interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. Interpersonal intelligence is defined as a person's ability to understand others' intentions, motivations, desires, and, ultimately, effective functioning with them. Intrapersonal intelligence, on the other hand, is the ability to understand oneself and to have an effective functional model of oneself that covers one's desires, fears, and capabilities and the effective use

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of such information in one's own life (Gardner, 1999). The term emotional intelligence was first introduced by John Salovey & Mayer (1990). According to them, people with emotional intelligence are able to control their own and others' emotions and can make a distinction between positive and negative outcomes of their own emotions. A number of models has been proposed for emotional intelligence and can be divided into two groups regardless of their overlap: mixed models and empowerment models. Salovey et al. (1990) divided emotional intelligence into four groups of emotional cognition, emotional regulation, emotional understanding, and emotional management (Salovey et al. 1990). In Bar-On's (1997) model, emotional intelligence is defined as a set of non-cognitive skills and abilities that include five groups of skills: intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal skills, stress management, organization, and general mood. Goleman's model (1995) is a cluster model which encompasses 25 factors. The five clusters it suggests are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Sulaiman (2013) explored emotional intelligence, depression, and psychological adjustment among students. It was found that there is a significant difference between males and females in terms of their emotional intelligence, as females had higher levels of emotional intelligence than males. In addition, there was a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and depression and a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and psychological adjustment. A similar study was conducted by Mahmood and Gulzar (2014) on emotional intelligence and goodness, and it explored the relationship between self-esteem and depression among adults. The results indicated that there was a positive correlation

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between emotional intelligence and self-esteem, and a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and depression. Brackett , Rebecca, Warner, & Bosco (2005) assessed emotional intelligence and the quality of relationships among couples. Their results showed that couples with low emotional intelligence scores in both partners obtained lower scores on the quality of positive and deep relations and support for each other. Such couples scored higher on conflict and negative quality of relations. However, couples with both partners having high emotional intelligence scores obtained higher scores on positive outcomes and lower scores on negative outcomes compared with couples with one partner having a high emotional intelligence score (Brackett et al. 2005).

Love trauma is a mourning process that occurs without the death of the object of love. The conventional mourning process is associated with supportive behaviour on the part of relatives and family members, facilitating the mourning. However, there is no such supportive behaviour in love trauma. Besides, the person may also inhibit or distort his or her own emotional involvement. In love trauma, the person's past interferes with his or her present life and affects his or her thoughts, feelings, and behaviours considerably. Some behavioural problems of the trauma are distrust and the avoidance of emotional relationships in the future. Besides, love trauma is associated with disorders in different social and occupational functions and interpersonal relations. Despite the significant role of love trauma, there is no controlled research to recognize and improve the psychological conditions of the affected people. In addition, no study has addressed the variables considered in the present study. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can identify the factors

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affecting love trauma and provide the context for further research in this field, followed by findings that can improve the treatment and counselling methods and improve the conditions of people affected by love trauma. Accordingly, the main objective of the study is to explore how emotional intelligence and early maladaptive schemas are related to love trauma syndrome among the youth.

Method

As the aim of the study was to explore the relationship between two variables, a predictive-correlation method was used.

The population considered in this study included all young males and females, aged 18–29, who lived in Boushehr between June and December of 2012. Since the least sample size in a descriptive and correlational research is 100, a sample of 360 respondents was selected by a multistage sampling method, based on Krejcie's and Morgan's table, (as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), to improve the reliability of the research findings. According to Cohen et al. (2007), multistage sampling is a type of cluster sampling in which the researcher can use simple random sampling in the different stages of selecting the clusters or the sample if needed. Besides, if the researcher wants to select the whole population as the research sample, he or she can use stratified sampling. In other words, in the multistage sampling method, the target sample may change in each stage and the sample is selected based on the specific geographical, economic, and political conditions.

To select the research sample in this study, Boushehr was divided into five geographical regions: north, south, east, west, and centre. In each region, a number of families were selected.

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Then, for each age group, a certain number of respondents were randomly selected. For instance, to select the respondents aged 18–29, 30 young people (15 males and 15 females) were selected. In addition, if a participant of a certain age was non-existent in a family, another person in the same age group was selected from the neighbouring family. The questionnaires were administered over 30 days by distributing and collecting them in the presence of the questioners. After excluding the incomplete questionnaires, the final sample included 344 respondents.

The Young's (1998) Early Maladaptive Schemas Questionnaire (short form)

This questionnaire is a self-report instrument that contains 75 items to measure 12 early maladaptive schemas. Each item is scored using a 6-point Likert scale. A respondent's score is the sum of his or her scores for all items in the questionnaire. Ahi, Mohamadifar, & Besharat (2007) normalized the questionnaire and its validity corresponded to its foreign normalizations. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using the test-retest method. They reported the alpha coefficients for the subscales to be between 72% and 90%, this range demonstrating the internal consistency of this questionnaire. Zolfaghari, Fatahifar, & Abedi (2008) assessed the short form of the questionnaire and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the whole questionnaire was .94 and for its subscales were .90 for self-independence and impaired functions, .73 for impaired limitations, .91 for separation and exclusion, .67 for other-orientation, and .78 for excessive alertness, and inhibition.

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Schutte's Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

This questionnaire was developed by Schutte et al. (1998) based on Salovey's and Mayer's (1990) model. It contains 33 items that are scored using a Likert scale, with responses ranging from totally agree to totally disagree. The total score of the questionnaire ranges from 33–165, with three scores for emotional regulation, emotional exploitation, and emotional appraisal. The total reliability of the questionnaire was .84 and the reliability values for its subscales were .76, .66, and .55 respectively. The total reliability of the translated version questionnaire (in Persian) was .81 and the reliability values for its subscales were .78, .67, and .50 respectively (Khosro Javid, 2002).

Dehghani's Love Trauma Syndrome Inventory

This inventory was developed by Dehghani and it contains 45 items with a general scale and three subscales to measure cognitive, emotional, and behavioural symptoms. The inventory items were developed based on cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions of 30 students who had experienced romantic bereavement. The items are scored using a Likert scale. The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for assessing the internal consistency of the inventory on a sample of 41 students was .79. The reliability value of the inventory through a test-retest method on the same group of students was .81.

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Results

Table 1

The Respondents' Demographic Characteristics Frequency and Percentage of the Respondents in Terms of Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Group		Frequency	Percentage	Total Percentage
Gender	Male		162	47.1	47.1
	Female		176	51.2	51.2
Age Mean (standard deviation)			22.93 (4.17)	Age range = 18-29	
Romantic Relationship	Male	Yes	97	60.6	28.9
		No	6	39.4	18.8
	Female	Yes	103	58.5	30.7
		No	73	41.5	21.7
	Total	Yes	200	59.5	59.5
		No	136	40.5	40.5
Romantic Failure	Male	Yes	81	55.5	25.3
		No	65	44.5	20.3
	Female	Yes	101	58	31.6
		No	73	42	22.8
	Total	Yes	182	56.9	56.9
		No	138	43.1	43.1
Romantic Relationship Accompanied by Sexual Relationship	Male	Yes	37	32.2	16.1
		No	78	67.8	33.9
	Female	Yes	15	13	6.5
		No	100	87	43.5
	Total	Yes	52	22.6	22.6
		No	178	77.4	77.4
Education	Under diploma		40	11.6	11.6
	Diploma		150	43.6	43.6
	Associate and bachelor		144	41.9	41.9
	Master		10	2.9	2.9
	Total		344	100%	100%

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As can be seen in Table 1, 58.5% of the females and 60.6% of the males reported that they had been in romantic relationships. In addition, 55.5% of the males and 58% of the female respondents reported that they had experienced romantic failure. As shown, 32.2% of the males and 13% of the female respondents stated that their romantic relationships were also sexual relationships. Concerning the distribution of the respondents, 47.1% were males and 51.2% of the respondents were females and the majority of the respondents had a high school diploma. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients among early maladaptive schemas, emotional intelligence, and love trauma syndrome.

As can be seen in Table 2, there is a significant correlation between all the components of the early maladaptive schemas and EI (except emotional exploitation). In addition, the maladaptive schemas including mistrust/abuse, social self-alienation, emotional inhibition, poor self-restraint, and abandonment have the highest correlation with the love trauma syndrome.

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Table 2

The Correlation Coefficients between Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Intelligence, and Love Trauma Syndrome

Dependent Variable	Love Trauma Syndrome	
	Correlation (r)	Sig.
Emotional deprivation	.45	.000
Abandonment	.48	.000
Mistrust/abuse	.59	.000
Social self-alienation	.55	.000
Defect/shame	.42	.000
Failure	.33	.000
Dependence	.32	.000
Vulnerability to loss	.45	.000
Involvement	.42	.000
Submission to needs	.42	.000
Altruism	.38	.000
Emotional inhibition	.49	.000
Strict standards	.32	.000
Entitlement	.37	.000
Poor self-restraint	.49	.000
Emotional appraisal	-.12	.02
Emotional regulation	-.12	.02
Emotional exploitation	.05	Not significant

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Table 3

Stepwise Regression Results for the Relationship between Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Intelligence, and Love Trauma Syndrome among Young Females

Indicators Predictors	MR	RS	F P	Regression coefficients			
				1	2	3	4
Social Self-Alienation	.52	.27	65.19 p<.001	β= .52 t= 8.07 p<.001			
Vulnerability to Loss	.58	.34	44.03 p<.001	β= .42 t= 6.27 p<.001	β= .27 t=4.11 p<.001		
Emotional Exploitation	.61	.37	33.99 p<.001	β= .45 t= 6.82 p<.001	β= .27 t= .07 p<.001	β= .19 t=3.09 p<.002	
Poor Self-Restraint	.63	.40	28.79 p<.001	β= .40 t= 5.96 p<.001	β= .17 t= .42 p<.016	β= .21 t= .54 p<.001	β= .21 t= .94 p<.004

A stepwise multivariate regression analysis was run to predict the love trauma syndrome among the young female respondents, based on the early maladaptive schemas and the components of emotional intelligence. Since the F-value is significant (P=.001), it suggests a significant contribution of the predictor variables to the dependent variable. As can be seen in the above Table, among the predictor variables, social self-alienation, emotional exploitation, poor self-restraint, and vulnerability to loss were, in order, the strongest predictors of love trauma syndrome among the female respondents, such that 40% of the variances in

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love trauma syndrome among the female respondents could be explained by these variables. However, emotional deprivation, abandonment, mistrust/abuse, defect/shame, entitlement, dependence, involvement, submission to needs, altruism, emotional inhibition, strict standards, failure, emotional appraisal, and emotional regulation were excluded from the regression model.

A stepwise multivariate regression analysis was run to predict love trauma syndrome among the male respondents, based on the early maladaptive schemas and the components of emotional intelligence, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Stepwise Regression Results for the Relationship among Early Maladaptive Schemas, Emotional Intelligence, and Love Trauma Syndrome among Young Males

Indicators Predictors	MR	RS	F P	Regression coefficients			
				1	2	3	4
Mistrust/abuse	.66	.44	124.57 p<.001	β= .66 t=11.16 p<.001			
Poor Self-Restraint	.70	.49	77.37 p<.001	β=.52 t=7.98 p<.001	β=.27 t=4.17 p<.001		
Emotional Deprivation	.72	.52	57.77 p<.001	β=.44 t=6.59 p<.001	β=.23 t=3.61 p<.001	β=.20 t=3.15 p<.002	
Strict Standards	.74	.54	46.36 p<.001	β=.42 t=6.13 p<.001	β=.16 t=2.24 p<.026	β=.23 t=3.64 p<.001	β=.16 t=2.51 p<.013

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As can be seen, the F-value is significant (P=.001), and this shows the significant contribution of the predictor variables to the dependent variable. In addition, among the predictor variables, mistrust/abuse, emotional deprivation, poor self-restraint, and strict standards were, in order, the strongest predictors of love trauma syndrome among the male respondents, such that 54% of the variances in love trauma syndrome among the male respondents could be explained by these variables. On the other hand, social self-alienation, vulnerability to loss, abandonment, defect/shame, entitlement, dependence, involvement, submission to needs, emotional inhibition, failure, emotional appraisal, emotional exploitation, and emotional regulation were excluded from the regression model.

Discussion

The study was conducted to explore how emotional intelligence and early maladaptive schemas are related to the love trauma syndrome among the youth. The Pearson correlation coefficient showed that all the components of early maladaptive schemas and EI (except emotional exploitation) had a significant correlation with the love trauma syndrome. It was also noted that the schemas like mistrust/abuse, social self-alienation, emotional inhibition, and abandonment had the highest correlation with the love trauma syndrome among the respondents. This finding is consistent with the results of a study by Ebrahimi Madahi, Javidi, & SamadZade (2012), who reported significant differences in emotional intelligence between single and married people. A possible explanation for this finding is that people with high emotional intelligence can

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be aware of their own and others' emotions and feelings and manage them. Such people are also able to understand other peoples' emotions and feelings and manage their own relationships with others. They also act independently and take the responsibility for their behaviour and emotions. Accordingly, any defect in each of these functions can hinder a stable and satisfactory relationship. Therefore, the person should bear the consequences of the broken-down relationship and solve problems associated with it. It follows that emotional intelligence is negatively associated with the love trauma syndrome and romantic failure.

The results of the multivariate regression analysis indicated that among the predictor variables, social self-alienation, emotional exploitation, poor self-restraint, and vulnerability to loss were, in order, the strongest predictors of love trauma syndrome among the female respondents, such that 40% of the variances of love trauma syndrome among the females respondents could be explained by these variables. In contrast, emotional deprivation, abandonment, mistrust/abuse, defect/shame, entitlement, dependence, involvement, submission to needs, empathy, emotional inhibition, strict standards, failure, emotional appraisal, and emotional regulation were excluded from the regression model.

In addition, the results of the multivariate regression analysis indicated that mistrust/abuse, emotional deprivation, poor self-restraint, and strict standards, as predictors of love trauma syndrome among the male respondents, could explain 54% of the variances among the male respondents. However, social self-alienation, vulnerability to loss, abandonment, defect/shame, entitlement, dependence, involvement, submission to needs,

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altruism, emotional inhibition, failure, emotional appraisal, emotional exploitation, and emotional regulation were excluded from the regression model. These findings are in line with the results of a study by Akbari et al. (2012), titled 'Comparing romantically failed students with or without clinical symptoms in early maladaptive schemas and patenting styles'. They also found that the students with love trauma syndrome were different from those without it, in terms of separation and inclusion (schemas such as mistrust/abuse, abandonment/instability, emotional deprivation, social exclusion/alienation, and defect/shame), self-independence and impaired functions (schemas such as dependence/inefficacy, vulnerability to loss or diseases, and self-underdevelopment/involvement), impaired constraints (schemas such as entitlement/nobility, self-control, and poor self-discipline), other-orientation (submission), and excessive alertness (strict standards and excessive reproach). Such findings may be explained by the fact that the significant relations of mistrust/abuse, emotional deprivation, and strict standards with poor self-restraint among young males can endanger or put an end to intimate relationships based on trust and independence between the two partners. In addition, such qualities may be associated with schemas such as vulnerability and social self-alienation among girls. An imbalance in relationships and the satisfaction of the two partners' needs and desires can intensify the effects of such schemas.

Since the issue of love trauma syndrome is a rather new topic, little research has been conducted in this field. That is why the findings of the study cannot be easily justified and explained in the light of previous research. Researchers are

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recommended to address the love trauma syndrome in their studies to fill this research gap.

Limitations and suggestions

The study was not successful in controlling the different types of love trauma syndrome (acute, chronic, and delayed). Since the process of the outbreak of symptoms is different in each type of love trauma syndrome, this can affect the results of the study. For example, an individual, who at the time of sampling is involved with the chronic love trauma syndrome and undergoes lower degrees of post-breakup problems, or is in the referred state in which the individual does not experience as much post-breakup symptoms compared to when an activator activates the symptoms and signs of post-breakup.

The state of acute love trauma syndrome is different and there is the possibility that it is experienced with different active schemas and, so, will influence the way the participants answer the questions. Thus, it is suggested that in further studies, the different types of love trauma syndrome are separated and their relationship with early maladaptive schemas and emotional intelligence are analysed. Furthermore, it is preferable that other types of love, like one-sided love and unrequited love—in which the person did not have any kind of romantic relationship and never expressed his/her feelings to the beloved, but experienced the symptoms and struggles of loss and mourning—are considered because each of these states might activate different schemas as activator agents. For example, in the state of being rejected, there is more possibility for the activation of schemas of abandonment and rejection than when love is reciprocated and they are disappointed for reasons like familial objections.

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