

OPINION

By Prof. Margarita Angelova Stefanova-Bakracheva, PhD

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

for the dissertation of Vladimir Vladimirov Marinov with title: Role of early maladaptive schemas and attachment styles for conflict resolution in intimate relationships

for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”

In the scientific area: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field: 3,2, Psychology (Cultural and Differential Psychology)

Relevance of the topic

The dissertation is devoted to a widely researched topic in psychology with theoretical and practical significance. The role of attachment and relationship satisfaction retains its relevance due to its multiple dimensions and relation to individual well-being especially in the dynamic context. Research has shown the implications of crisis situations, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting an increase in the percentage of individuals with insecure attachment styles. At the same time, communication and effective couple dispute resolution, which the author discusses, is also relevant in a wider context such as changes in the legislative system and the inclusion of mandatory mediation.

Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation and the contributions

The dissertation is divided into an introduction, theoretical and empirical parts, divided into 7 chapters (theoretical part with five paragraphs, research design and results), conclusion, references and appendix and covers 233 pages. The study follows the ambitious task of contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the predictors of relationship satisfaction, which has diagnostic and prognostic value. The main focus is highlighting the predictors of relationship satisfaction and the interactions between attachment style, maladaptive schemas, emotional expressivity, and conflict resolution style.

The text is described with good organization and logical connection of the chapters and paragraphs. Concepts are analytically presented with conclusions and robust arguments. Relevant sources are used with correct referencing. Also noteworthy is the

clear style of expression, which is a confirmation of the doctoral student's competence in using and creating scientific text.

The review has a good balance in the discussion of genetic factors and parenting and environment, which in aggregate determine the attachment style, emotional expressivity and account for the differences, maintenance of schemas and projections onto individual functioning as represented in adaptive and maladaptive coping. Types of couple conflict and the most common causes of conflict and resolution styles are outlined. Persistence and the dynamics and interaction between the constructs studied are also addressed. The author demonstrates a good knowledge of the literature, logically relating and deriving positions in the theoretical paragraphs on the main constructs covered in the study, outlining not only chronologically but also substantively the research perspectives and implications. He describes the development of the concept of attachment and the operationalization of attachment styles, the schema therapy, for which he makes a well-grounded substantiation for selection as a comprehensive model integrating system, analytic, and cognitive behavioral perspectives. Emotional expressivity is presented in applied terms, and relationship satisfaction is considered. Vladimir Marinov devotes extensive attention to emotions, their genetic basis and regulatory functions, detailing the development of research in this line. He also devotes attention to self-sabotage, which has been shown to be related to parenting styles, and respectively to attachment styles and the relation of maladaptive schemas to the satisfaction of basic needs. With this model, the author extends the predictors of behaviour to include attachment and toxic need frustration also in early experience. Maladaptive coping styles due to schemas, overcompensation, avoidance, and surrender are described, and the two main directions of maintaining and overcoming them, respectively. An important emphasis indicated by the author is the correct choice of interventions depending on the persistence and characteristics of the factors underlying maladaptive behaviours.

Research methods

The substantive focus of the theoretical part is a good foundation for the research model. Five research questions are identified, which define the aim and objectives of the study. The hypotheses formulated are consistent with the stated aim and the methods are correctly selected to confirm them. The psychometric characteristics of the scales used are described in conformity to the research standards. Four of the five

scales are applied for the first time in the Bulgarian sociocultural context. The scales and questionnaires used are: the Attachment Style Questionnaire, the Early Maladaptive Schema Questionnaire, the Emotional Expressivity Questionnaire, the Conflict Resolution Inventory and the Relationship Satisfaction Assessment Scale. The characteristics of the Bulgarian sample on the scales of each of the instruments used are presented and compared with the original instruments.

Statistical analysis is adequate to the tasks set in the study and hypotheses testing: item analysis - to test internal consistency; factor analysis by principal components method and Varimax rotation - to test the factor structure of the scales; t-test for independent samples and analysis of variance (ANOVA) - to test the differential effects of demographic characteristics on the studied phenomena; correlation analysis - to test the relationships between the constructs and regression and mediation analysis to account for direct and indirect effects and delineate the predictors with independent effect and the mediated relationships with satisfaction. The empirical study includes 308 individuals; as usual, women dominate, but the sample is diverse and provides representativeness. The results are presented consistently, with correct interpretations and a well-balanced and in-depth analysis. A recommendation to the text could be made for inclusion of more Bulgarian studies and research from the last 10 years and to bring out relationship satisfaction as a focus and some technical notes that do not diminish the qualities of the work.

In terms of the contributions that have been highlighted, the application of an integrative model that can be used for research and practical purposes, for diagnostic and prognostic studies can be pointed out. Contributions include the adaptation of инструмента and the relationships revealed, which can also be part of training programs and in academic courses.

Vladimir Marinov has three publications on the topic of the dissertation, and the total of 80 points meets the minimum national NACID requirements for dissertations for the degree "Doctor". The abstract covers 33 pages and summarizes the content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific and applicable results, which represent an original contribution and shows that the PhD student has high research motivation and the ability to conduct independent research.. Due to the abovementioned advantages, I give my positive assessment and propose the scientific jury to award Vladimir Marinov the educational and scientific degree 'Doctor' in the professional field: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field: 3.2. Psychology (Cultural and Differential Psychology).

31st July 2023

Jury member:

Prof. Margarita Bakracheva, PhD

