

From Preoccupied Attachment Pattern to Depression: Serial Mediation Model on the Female Sample

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Abstract : Depression is considered to be a leading cause of death and disability in the female population, and that is the reason why understanding the dynamics of the onset of depressive symptomatology is important. A review of the literature indicates the relationship between depressive symptoms and insecure attachment patterns, but very few studies have examined the mechanism underlying this relation. The aim of the study was to examine the pathway from the preoccupied attachment pattern to depressive symptomatology, as well as to test the mediation effect of mentalization, social anxiety and rumination in this relationship using a serial mediation model. The research was carried out on a geographical cluster sample from the general population of Serbia included within the project 'Indicators and models of family and work roles harmonization' funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia. This research was carried out on a subsample of 791 working-age female adults from 37 urban and rural locations distributed through 20 administrative districts of Serbia. The respondents filled in a battery of instruments, including Relationship Questionnaire - Clinical Version (RQ - CV), The Mentalization Scale (MentS), Scale of Social Anxiety (SA), Patient Ruminative Thought Style Questionnaire (RTSQ), Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). The results confirm our assumption that the total indirect effect of the preoccupied attachment pattern to depressive symptoms is significant across all mediators separately. More importantly, this effect is still present in a model with a sequential mediator relationship, where social anxiety, rumination, and mentalization were perceived as serial mediators of a relationship between preoccupied attachment and depressive symptoms (estimated indirect effect=0.004, boot-strapped 95% CI=0.002 to 0.007). Our findings suggest that there is a significant specific indirect effect of the preoccupied attachment pattern to depressive symptoms, occurring through mentalization, social anxiety and rumination, indicating that preoccupied attachment cause decrease of a self related mentalization, which in turn causes increasing of social anxiety and rumination, concluding in depressive symptoms as a final consequence. The finding that the path from the preoccupied attachment pattern to depressive symptoms is typical in women is understandable from the perspective of both evolutionary and culturally conditioned gender differences. The practical implications of the study are reflected in the recommendations for the prevention and forehand psychotherapy response among preoccupied women with depressive symptomatology. Treatment of this specific group of depressed patients should be focused on strengthening mentalization, learning to accept and to understand herself better, reducing anxiety in situations where mistakes are visible to others, and replacing the rumination strategy with more constructive coping strategies.

Keywords : preoccupied attachment, depression, serial mediation model, mentalization, rumination

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