

Social Anxiety, Parental Criticism and the Mediating Role of Early Maladaptive Schemas

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Abstract : Social anxiety is a chronic and debilitating condition characterized by fear and avoidance of social situations. Several risk factors have emerged, which emphasize the role of early childhood experiences in the development of this condition. As such, the current study tested the hypothesis that early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) mediate the relationship between retrospectively reported parental criticism and social anxiety whilst controlling the effects of depression. Three hundred and thirty-four non-clinical participants completed an online questionnaire consisting of self-report measures of parental criticism, EMSs of disconnection and rejection, and symptoms of social anxiety and depression. The mediation analysis confirmed the hypothesized model, indicating that EMSs mediated the relationship between parental criticism and social anxiety symptoms when controlling for depression. Whilst the current study is limited due to its cross-sectional design, the findings lend support to the developmental formulations of social anxiety and have important therapeutic implications for treatment.

Keywords : early maladaptive schema, parental criticism, schema, social anxiety

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