

Disorganized Attachment as Partial Mediator of Relations Between Childhood Sexual Abuse and Dissociation: The Role of Relationship to Perpetrator

Kimiya Qanavati, Shaghayegh Zahraie

Al-Zahra University, Tehran, Iran

ABSTRACT

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a major social problem with various negative outcomes for a person's life, such as dissociation. Previous research has shown that insecure attachment styles, especially disorganized attachment, play a role in mediating the effect of childhood sexual abuse on dissociation. However, most of these studies have not considered several abuse characteristics, such as relationship to the perpetrator, to play a role in determining the effect of childhood sexual abuse on outcomes such as dissociation. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the mediating role of attachment styles on the relationship between child sexual abuse and dissociation in terms of the relationship to the perpetrator in a sample of 258 Iranian adults. Mediation analyses showed that fearful avoidant (disorganized) attachment partially mediated the relationship between CSA and dissociation only in participants whose perpetrator was someone within their family. Results are discussed in terms of the role of victimperpetrator relationship and attachment styles in pathways to dissociation.

Keywords: Abuse characteristics; Attachment style; Betrayal trauma; Dissociative symptoms; Intrafamilial CSA