

# The role of stress coping styles in the relationship between separation individualization and sexual self-schema

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This study aimed to investigate the role of stress coping styles in the relationship between separation individualization and sexual self-schema.

**Methods:** Relational screening model was used in the study. In the selection of the sample group of the study, the convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods, was preferred. The study group of the research consists of 246 (61%) females, 157 (39.0%) males. In this study, Demographic Information Form, Separation Individuation Scale, Sexual Self Schema Scale, and Coping with Stress Scale was used.

**Results:** According to the results, problem-focused coping styles play a partial mediator role in the relationship between separation individuation and loving/compassionate sexual self-schema in coping with stress, and there is a relationship between separation individuation and problem-focused coping styles.

**Conclusions:** There was a significant relationship between separation, individuation and loving/compassionate sexual self and self-confident, optimistic approach, seeking social support. Predicts the compassionate sexual self-schema; It was determined that coping styles were a partial mediating variable in the relationship between relational problems and the loving/compassionate sexual self-schema.

**Keywords:** Separation individuation, sexual self-schema, styles of coping with stress

Separation and individuation are a fundamental organizing principle of human development, beginning from childhood and continuing to occur at different stages throughout our lives, with implications for life-long adaptive functioning [1]. Mahler *et al.* [2] suggested that human physiological and psychological birth are separate events and that the latter is a slow and gradual birth that occurs through physiological postnatal development.

The first stage of individuation, separation, lasts

for about the first three years of life [2]. The second individuation process is adolescence period [3]. In order to reduce psychological dependence on parental introjections for standards of acceptance, self-esteem and behavior, the teenager must eliminate or transcend the internalized images of early childhood caregivers. The adolescent must learn to take on the tasks of regulating self-esteem and self-definition [4]. The third individuation process; the individual must flexibly manage the ongoing dialectic between separation and

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dependence, while avoiding the undesirable consequences of cohesion and integration on the one hand and complete separation and alienation on the other. The fourth individuation; It has been reported that middle adulthood and fifth individuation occur in late adulthood [5, 6, 7].

Studies on the self show that the self-concept is multifaceted [8, 9, 10]. Based on the idea that there may be some cognitive representation of the self that is central and likely to become active in certain life contexts, Andersen and Cyranowski [11] proposed an aspect of self-schemas that they called the sexual self-schema. Sexual self-schemas are mental generalizations about sexual aspects of the self that express an integral component of one's sexuality. The sexual self-schema structure was made functional for both women and men by using trait-adjective ratings in the Sexual Self-schema Scales [11, 12]. When sexual self-schemas are positive, sexual self-views can facilitate sexual responsiveness. However, when sexual self-views are negative, conflicting, or weak, sexual distress, difficulty, or dysfunction is likely to occur [12]. Andersen and Cyranowski, found that there were gender-related differences in sexual self-assessments. It has been observed that women have negative sexual self-schemas compared to men and these women have a high level of neuroticism, however, they report less sexual experience [13]. It is also argued that the structure of the sexual self-concept is significantly influenced by the dominant social representations of gender differences and relationships [14]. Recently, in a study to combine male and female sexual self-schema scales, sexual schemas, which were examined in 2 categories as positive and negative, were divided into loving and compassionate, sensual and provocative, and direct and outspoken [15].

Generally, coping with stress is defined as any effort to manage stress or a set of methods people use to avoid being harmed by life stresses [16]. Lazarus and Folkman [17] discussed coping styles separately as problem-oriented strategies (efforts to change the source of stress) and emotion-oriented responses (attempts to regulate emotional distress caused by the stressor). Accordingly, although emotion-oriented approaches, which are described as passive, can be active, these reactions are generally aimed at avoiding dealing with the source of stress. Problem-oriented

coping strategies, on the other hand, are aimed at eliminating the negative situation. Feingold's study of coping strategies reveals that both problem-oriented and emotion-oriented coping are used in almost all stressful situations, and that the use of problem or emotion-oriented strategies differs in effectiveness among different types of stressors [18]. As a result, more use of problem-oriented methods was associated with better adjustment, while emotion-oriented responses were associated with worse outcomes [19]. This study examines the effects of separation, individuation, which is an effective concept throughout the life of individuals, and the sexual self-schema, which interacts with many psychological factors and directly affects the vital factors, by considering the concept of sexuality in a more comprehensive way and the effects of having different sexual self-schemas. It is expected to present a different perspective to mental health professionals, especially experts working in the field of sexuality, in clinical diagnosis, treatment and therapy methods.

## METHODS

### Study Group

In the research, it was calculated that at least 384 people should be reached at 5% sampling error with simple random sampling method. The calculations were calculated with the sampling calculation method developed by Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan [20]. The study group of the research consists of a total of 403 participants, 246 women (61%) and 157 men (39.0%) aged between 18 and 65. Participants were accessed through various social media platforms.

### Data Collection Tools

#### *Sociodemographic Information Form*

The sociodemographic information form was prepared by the researchers. In the form, age, education level, place where they spent most of their life, romantic relationships, early caregiver(s), number of siblings, their sexual life, physical disorders and mental disorders were asked.

#### *Separation Individuation Scale*

The Separation Individuation Scale (SIS) was de-

veloped by Christenson and Wilson [21]. The scale has 39 items, 3 dimensions (difficulties in separation/differentiation, division, relationship problems). The progression of the scale's scores reveals the psychopathology that takes place during the separation-individuation process. SIS was adapted to Turkish by Göral [22]. The Cronbach's alpha number was determined as .85 for the whole scale. The study on the psychometric properties of the scale was repeated by Göral Alkan [23]. SIS was adapted to Turkish by Göral [22]. The Cronbach's alpha number was determined as .85 for the whole scale [22].

### Sexual Self Schema Scale

The Sexual Self-Schema Scale created by Hill [24]. In this scale, which includes 36 adjectives, 3 dimensions, the response options range from "doesn't describe me at all" to "describes me very well" and are prepared in a 7-point likert type. Participants rate the adjectives on the scale based on how well they describe themselves in their sexual life. Koçak and Fıfıloğlu [25] found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient as .85, .82, and .77 for the subscales in the adaptation study of the scale into Turkish.

### Styles of Coping with Stress Scale

Originally designed by Folkman and Lazarus [26] with 66 components, this scale was condensed by ahin and Durak [27] for Turkish adaption to just 30 items. In the study of adapting this scale, which does not have a cut-off point, into Turkish, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were found to be .87, .80, .66, .75 and .71 for the sub-dimensions.

### Collecting Data

Data collection was carried out between January 2022 and March 2022. After the scales in the research were transferred to the "www.googleform.com" address, online transmission was provided to the existing participants via various social media platforms and digital channels.

The application took an average of 15 minutes.

### Ethical Approval

This research developed from x's thesis. The necessary permission to carry out the research was obtained from the Istanbul X University Ethics Committee Unit with the decision number 01 on 20.01.2022.

**Table 1. Findings of the realibility of Sexual Self-Schema Scale, Stress Coping Styles Scale, and Separation Individuation Scale**

	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
<b>Sexual Self-Schema Scale</b>		
Loving/Compassionate	11	.90
Sensual/Stimulating	12	.81
Direct/Outspoken	10	.74
<b>Stress Coping Style Scale</b>		
Optimistic	5	.78
Self Confident	7	.88
Submissive	7	.76
Helpless	6	.60
Seeking of Social Support	4	.61
<b>Seperation Individuation Scale</b>		
Division	12	.82
Separation Differentiation	14	.85
Relational Problems	13	.83

**Statistical Analysis**

Statistical evaluations were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 25.0 package program [50]. First, it was checked whether there was a normal distribution or not. For this, the skewness-Kurtosis values were checked. According to George and Mallery [28], Skewness and kurtosis values between -2 and +2 are deemed sufficient for a normal distribution. Descriptive analysis used for Sexual Self-Schema Scale, Stress Coping Styles Scale, and Separation Individuation Scale and age of participants. Descriptive statistics give information about the mean, standart deviation, minimum and maximum value. Frequency analysis used for categorical variable like Sociodemographic characteristics of participants. Pearson Correlation analysis used for between relationship of Sexual Self-Schema Scale, Stress Coping Styles Scale, and Separation Individuation Scale. PROCESS 3.5 by Andrew F. Hayes used for mediation effect (indirect effects) of Stress Coping Styles Scale on The Relationship Between Separation Individuation Scale and Sexual Self-Schema Scale. The number of questions and Cronbach Alpha values regarding the scales and their subscales are given (Table 1).

**RESULTS**

*Descriptive Statistics Findings*

Mean age of the participants ( $30 \pm 8$  years), mean years of romantic relationship ( $6 \pm 6$  years), mean number of siblings ( $3 \pm 2$ ), mean sibling rank ( $2 \pm 1$ ), mean sibling rank ( $2 \pm 1$ ), and age apart from parents ( $4 \pm 3$ ) (Table 2).

Average of loving-compassionate ( $50.19 \pm 11.20$ ), mean of sensual/stimulating ( $44.53 \pm 10.26$ ), mean of direct/outspoken ( $41.43 \pm 8.45$ ), mean of optimistic approach ( $2.64 \pm 0.66$ ), mean of self-confident approach ( $2.94 \pm 0.65$ , mean of helpless approach ( $2.31 \pm 0.62$ ), mean of submissive approach ( $1.97 \pm 0.51$ ), approach to seeking social support mean ( $2.80 \pm 0.61$ ), separation individuation scale mean ( $141.30 \pm 60.20$ ), division mean ( $44.72 \pm 20.02$ ), separation differentiation mean ( $47.49 \pm 23.36$ ), relational problems mean ( $49.08 \pm 20.75$ ) (Table 2).

*Findings Obtained Using Pearson Correlation*

Loving Compassionate and Optimistic Approach ( $r = .304, p < 0.001$ ) variables were moderately, positively correlated with each other, Loving Compassion-

**Table 2. Descriptive values of Sexual Self-Schema Scale, Stress Coping Style Scale and Separation Individuation Scale**

	n	Mininum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
<b>Sexual Self-Schema Scale</b>					
Loving/Compassionate	403	16	66	50.19	11.20
Sensual/Stimulating	403	16	68	44.53	10.26
Direct/Outspoken	403	16	60	41.43	8.45
<b>Stress Coping Style Scale</b>					
Optimistic	403	1	4	2.64	0.66
Self Confident	403	1	4	2.94	0.65
Submissive	403	1	4	2.31	0.62
Helpless	403	1	4	1.97	0.51
Seeking of Social Support	403	1	4	2.80	0.61
<b>Seperation Individuation Scale</b>					
Division	403	12	110	44.72	20.02
Separation Differentiation	403	14	129	47.49	23.36
Relational Problems	403	13	113	49.08	20.75

**Table 3. Findings of the relationships between Sexual Self-Schema Scale, Stress Coping Styles Scale and Separation Individuation Scale**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>1-Loving/compassionate</b>	1											
<b>2-Sensual/stimulating</b>	.531**	1										
<b>3-Direct/outspoken</b>	.432**	.600**	1									
<b>4-Optimistic</b>	.304**	.253**	.292**	1								
<b>5-Self confident</b>	.360**	.373**	.408**	.693**	1							
<b>6-Submissive</b>	.123*	.020	-.227**	-.216**	-.108*	1						
<b>7-Helpless</b>	.070	.065	-.088	.100*	.030	.474**	1					
<b>8-Seeking of social support</b>	.207**	.075	.104*	.069	.062	-.042	-.029	1				
<b>9-Separation individuation scale</b>	-.023	.165**	-.082	-.131**	-.159**	.451**	.242**	-.133**	1			
<b>10- Division</b>	.077	.210**	-.015	-.126*	-.117*	.446**	.230**	-.110*	.908**	1		
<b>11-Separation differentiation</b>	.075	.194**	-.052	-.025	-.075	.449**	.253**	-.108*	.931**	.828**	1	
<b>12-Relational problems</b>	-.210**	.045	-.150**	-.207**	-.238**	.324**	.170**	-.141**	.861**	.641**	.677**	1

\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \* $p < 0.05$  Used test; Pearson Correlation

ate and Self-Confident Approach ( $r = .360, p < 0.001$ ) variables were moderately, positively correlated with each other. Weak and positive relationship between Loving Compassionate and Helpless Approach ( $r = .123, p = 0.014$ ) variables, weak and positive correlation between Loving Compassionate and Seeking of Social Support Approach ( $r = .207, p < 0.001$ ) variables positive relationship, Loving Compassionate and Relational Problems ( $r = -.210, p < 0.001$ ) variables have weak, negative relationships with each other (Table 3).

Weak and positive correlations between the Sensual Stimulating and Optimistic Approach ( $r = .253, p < 0.001$ ) variables, moderate and positive correlations between the Sensual Stimulating and Self-Confident Approach ( $r = .373, p < 0.001$ ) variables. Positive correlation is weak level and positive relationship between Sensual Stimulating and Separation Individuation Scale ( $r = .165, p < 0.001$ ) variables, a weak relationship between Sensual Stimulating and Separation ( $r = .210, p < 0.001$ ) variables there is a weak level and positive relationship between the variables of the Sensual Stimulating and the separation differentiation ( $r = .194, p < 0.001$ ) (Table 3).

Weak and positive relationship between Direct/Outspoken and Optimistic Approach ( $r = .292, p < 0.001$ ) variables, moderate and positive relationship between Direct/Outspoken and Self-Confident

Approach ( $r = .408, p < 0.001$ ) variables, Weak, negative relationship between Direct Outspoken and Desperate Approach ( $r = -.227, p < 0.001$ ) variables, eak level between Direct/Outspoken and Helpless Approach ( $r = .104, p = 0.036$ ) variables There is a weak, negative relationship between the variables of Direct/Outspoken and Relational Problems ( $r = -.150, p < 0.001$ ) (Table 3).

Weak and negative correlation between Optimistic Approach and Separation Individuation Scale ( $r = -.131, p < 0.001$ ) variables, weak and negative relationship between Optimistic Approach and Division ( $r = -.126, p = 0.011$ ) variables, Optimistic Approach and Relational Problems ( $r = -.207, p < 0.001$ ) variables have weak, negative correlations with each other (Table 3).

Weak and negative correlations between Self-Confident Approach and Separation Individualization Scale ( $r = -.159, p < 0.001$ ) variables, weak and negative correlations between Self-Confidence Approach and Splitting ( $r = -.117, p = 0.018$ ) variables. Relationship, Self-Confident Approach and Relational Problems ( $r = -.238, p < 0.001$ ) variables have weak, negative correlations with each other (Table 3).

Intermediate, positive relationship between Helpless Approach and Separation Individuation Scale ( $r = .451, p < 0.001$ ) variables, Intermediate, positive relationship between Helpless Approach and Division ( $r =$

**Table 4. Results of the findings of the mediation role of the optimistic approach in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Scheme of relational problems**

Model		R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SH	β	t	p value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.29	.04	55.40	1.33		41.79	< 0.001*	52.79	58.01
	Relational Problems			-0.11	0.02	-0.21	-4.31	< 0.001*	-0.16	-0.06
2	(Constant)	.36	.11	41.87	2.71		15.45	< 0.001*	36.54	47.20
	Relational Problems			-0.08	0.02	-0.15	-3.20	0.001*	-0.13	-0.03
	Optimistic Approach			4.59	0.81	0.27	5.66	< 0.001*	3.00	6.19
	Undirect Total Effect (Mediator)			-	0.01				-0.01	-0.01

\*p < 0.05, Used test: PROCESS 3.5

= .446, p < 0.001) variables, there is a moderate, positive relationship between the variables of Helpless Approach and Seperation Differentiation (r = .449, p < 0.001), and there is a moderate, positive relationship between the Helpless Approach and Relational Problems (r = .324, p < 0.001) variables (Table 3).

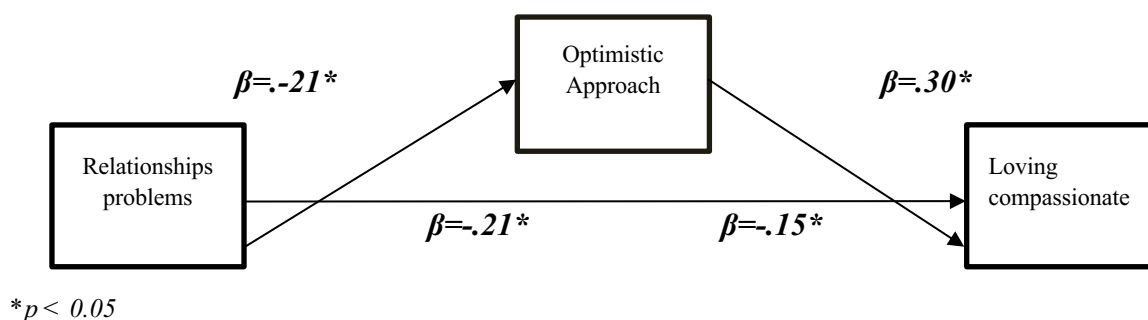
Weak and positive correlation between the Submissive Approach and Separation Individuation Scale (r = .242, p < 0.001) variables, a weak level and positive relationship between the Submissive Approach and Splitting (r = .230, p < 0.001) variables, Submissive Approach and Separation Differentiation (r = .253, p < 0.001) variables have a weak, positive relationship with each other, Submissive Approach and Relational Problems (r = .170, p < 0.001) variables have a weak, positive relationship with each other (Table 3).

Weak and negative relationship between the Social Support Approach and Separation Individuation Scale (r = -.133, p < 0.001) variables, and the weak level be-

tween the Social Support Approach and Division (r = -.110, p = 0.027) variables and negative relationship, the weak and negative relationship between the Social Support Approach and the Seperation Differentiation (r = -.108, p = 0.031) variables and there is a weak level and negative relationship between the Social Support Approach and Relational Problems (r = -.141, p < 0.001) variables (Table 3).

**Findings Obtained from the Hierarchical Regression Analysis**

It was seen that the relational problems independent variable in the first model explained 04% of the variance in the loving-kindness sexual self-schema dependent variable score. In the established regression model, the optimistic approach independent variable was added in the second stage. It was seen that the independent variable of the optimistic approach explained 7% of the variance in the dependent variable score of the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema.



**Fig. 1. Beta values of the Mmediating role of the optimistic approach in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Schema of relational problems**

**Table 5. Results of findings on the mediating role of self-confident approach in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Schema of relational problems**

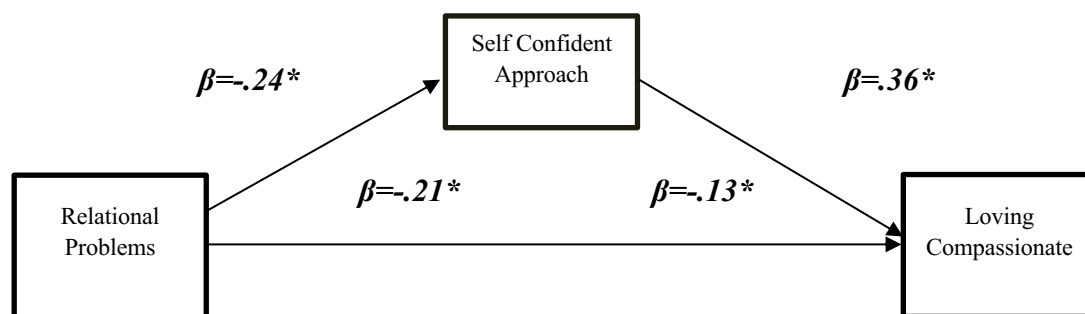
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SH	β	t	p value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.29	.04	55.40	1.33		41,79	< 0.001*	52.79	58.01
<b>1 Relational Problems</b>			-0.11	0.02	-0.21	-4,31	< 0.001*	-0.16	-0.06
(Constant)	.36	.14	36.68	2.98		12,30	< 0.001*	30.82	42.54
<b>Relational Problems</b>			-0.07	0.02	-0.13	-2,78	0.006*	-0.11	-0.02
<b>2 Self Confident Approach</b>			5.71	0.83	0.33	6,92	< 0.001*	4,09	7.34
<b>Undirect Total Effect (Mediator)</b>			-0.04	0.01				-0.07	-0.02

\*p < 0.05, Used test: PROCESS 3.5

Relational problems and optimistic approach independent variables were determined according to these results, which explained 11% of the variance in the score of the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema dependent variable. With the addition of the optimistic approach argument in the second stage, the beta value of the relational problems argument decreased from .21 to .15. After this process, the Bootstrapping method was used. As the lower and upper limit values of the 95% confidence interval of the decrease in beta value of the independent variable and the indirect total effect did not include zero, the mediation effect was found to be significant. When all these results were evaluated, it was observed that there was partial mediation (Table 4) (Fig. 1).

The relational problems independent variable in the first model explained 04% of the variance in the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema dependent

variable score. In the established regression model, the independent variable of self-confident approach was added in the second stage. The independent variable of the self-confident approach explained 10% of the variance in the dependent variable score of the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema. It was determined according to these results that the independent variables of relational problems and self-confident approach schema explained 14% of the variance in the score of the loving-compassionate sexual self schema dependent variable. With the addition of the self-confident approach scheme argument in the second stage, the beta value of the relational problems argument decreased from .21 to .13. After this process, the Bootstrapping method was used. As the lower and upper limit values of the 95% confidence interval of the decrease in beta value of the independent variable and the indirect total effect did not include zero, the medi-



\*p < 0.05

**Fig. 2. Beta values of the mediating role of self-confident approach in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Schema of relational problems**

**Table 6. Results of findings on the mediating role of seeking social support Approach in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Schema of relational problems**

Model		R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	SH	β	t	p value	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	.29	.04	55.40	1.33		41.79	< 0.001*	52.79	58.01
	Relational Problems			-0.11	0.02	-0.21	-4.31	< 0.001*	-0.16	-0.06
2	(Constant)	.36	.07	45.48	2.96		15.36	< 0.001*	39.66	51.30
	Relational Problems			-0.09	0.02	-0.19	-3.81	< 0.001*	-0.14	-0.05
	Seeking Social Support Approach			3.31	0.89	0.18	3.73	< 0.001*	1.57	5.06
	Undirect Total Effect (Mediator)			-0.01	0.01				-0,03	-0.01

\*p < 0.05, Used test: PROCESS 3.5

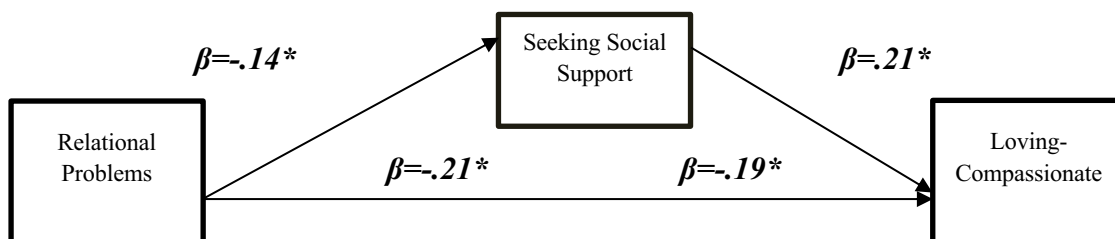
ation effect was found to be significant (Table 5) (Fig. 2).

The relational problems independent variable in the first model explained 04% of the variance in the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema dependent variable score. In the established regression model, the independent variable of approach to social support was added in the second stage. It was observed that the independent variable of approach to seeking social support explained 03% of the variance in the dependent variable score of the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema. It was determined that the independent variables of relational problems and approach to seeking social support explained 07% of the variance in the score of the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema dependent variable. In the second stage, the beta value of the relational problems independent variable decreased from-.21 to-.19 with the addition of the independent variable of approach to seeking social support. After this process, the Boostrapping method

was used. As the lower and upper limit values of the 95% confidence interval of the decrease in beta value of the independent variable and the indirect total effect did not include zero, the mediation effect was found to be significant (Table 6) (Fig. 3).

**DISCUSSION**

In this study, the role of coping styles in the relationship between separation individuation and sexual self-schema was investigated. When the mediation analysis results were examined in this context, it was determined that problem-focused coping styles had a partial mediation role in the relationship between relational problems in separation-individuation and the loving-compassionate sexual self-schema. In the direction of the findings, in the literature review, it is seen that the relationship between the child and the caregiver in the early period and the separation-individuation process



\*p < 0.05

**Fig. 3. Beta values of the mediating role of seeking social support in predicting the Loving-Compassionate Sexual Self-Schema of relational problems**



that continues throughout life are in mutual interaction. It is thought to be associated with lifelong variables such as methods of coping with stress, romantic and social relationships. Other studies in the literature [2-4, 29, 30] supports our findings. Aarstad [31] examined the relationship between attachment styles and sexual self-schema. When the results of the study were examined, it was seen that sexual self-schemas could affect the quality of the relationship and attachment styles could affect sexual function. When the literature studies and our current study are evaluated together in examining the relationship between sexual self-schemas and attachment [12, 24, 31-33], firstly, individuals with higher levels of positive sexual self-concepts reported better relationship quality; Secondly, it can be said that insecure (i.e. anxious or avoidant) attachment and separation individuation problems are associated with weaker sexual satisfaction in both genders. In addition, it can be said that there is a negative relationship between avoidant/anxious attachment and sexual satisfaction. In this direction, there is a relationship between being able to overcome the separation-individuation process in a healthy way and the preference of problem-oriented methods in coping with stress [34].

There was a significant relationship between sexual self-schemas and gender differences. Accordingly, men describe their sexual self-schemas as direct/outspoken more often than women. When the studies in the literature are examined [18, 31], gender differences between male and female sexual self-schemas were due to high anxiety problems, low level of knowledge about sexuality, introversion, negative body image perception, lack of sexual fantasy, and limited sexual experience. In accordance with the evaluation made within the framework of the literature, it can be said that in the current study, female participants were more conservative, shy and shy compared to men, and this result was influenced by the evaluation of women's sexuality in line with taboos such as chastity and gender roles. As a matter of fact, Turkish society is one of the societies in which sexuality is considered taboo and sexual issues are not openly expressed in terms of its social and cultural structure [35].

In this study, the most frequently used source for obtaining sexual information by individuals was the internet, and the least referenced source was the parents. Considering the importance of sexual life in the

life of the individual, it is very important for parents to communicate with children in order to prevent them from acquiring false information about sexuality away from science, and especially to protect children in developmental age from digital risks. Obtaining inaccurate information about sexuality leads to the formation of sexual myths, which is one of the main effective factors in sexual dysfunction [36, 37]. Sexual myths are the most exaggerated, far from reality and unscientific, guilt, inadequacy, fear of failure, which are mostly exaggerated, unrealistic and unscientific, which they have recently obtained from sources of false or false information, especially from social media outlets and the internet, on issues that affect individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Belief and thought systems that cause negative emotions such as [38-40, 41].

In the findings, men use the optimistic approach more frequently in coping with stress. Gündüz [42] found that male counselor candidates had higher levels of self-confidence and optimistic approach than female counsellors. In the literature, studies proving that women adopt more emotional coping styles compared to men, similar to our current result [8, 43], while also contrasting studies [44, 45] was also observed.

In this study, individuals who do not have an emotional relationship adopt an emotion-focused (submissive) approach in coping with stress and cannot survive the separation-individuation process in a healthy way, but individuals who are in emotional relationships prefer more effective (problem-focused) coping methods in coping with stress, and healthy separation is a key part of individuation higher in individuals. Lloyd [46] found that the separation-individuation process was effective on the emotional relationships established in the later period.

In the findings, as the number of siblings increases, the use of social support decreases. It is thought that the reason for this is that individuals receive adequate social support from their siblings. In the study of Azızoğlu [47], no relationship was found between the number of siblings and seeking social support. Therefore, it can be thought that the factor that determines the need for seeking social support is related to the quality of the relationship with siblings rather than the number of siblings.

It was observed that individuals with longer duration of romantic relationship preferred problem-ori-

ented methods (self-confident approach, seeking social support) to cope with stress, and the frequency of seeking social support decreased as the duration of the emotional relationship increased. It is thought that the reason for this is that the need for social support is met with the increase in the closeness of the relationship with the partner. There is no study in the literature examining the existing variables together. In addition, according to the findings obtained in the study, it was observed that as the level of education increased, the frequency of individuals to resort to problem-oriented approaches in coping with stress increased. Similarly, in the study of Gürlek Yüksel [48], it was observed that the use of problem-focused coping styles increased with the increase in education level, the study is supported by the relevant literature.

As a result, when the sexual self-schemas are examined according to the education level, it is found that the individuals with a postgraduate degree or higher have a higher level of loving-compassionate sexual self-definition than the primary school graduates. Compared to primary and high school graduates, associate degree graduates were found to describe themselves as lascivious and provocative. In the study conducted by Uzunoğlu [49], no significant relationship was found between education level and sexual self-schemas. In the literature, different studies dealing with the relationship between these two could not be found.

## CONCLUSION

The findings obtained in the study are important in terms of revealing the importance of internal models of the relational self (for example, separation-individuation) on sexual functioning and the importance of internal models of the sexual self (for example, sexual self-schema) in relationship functioning. In this study, it was found that there was a significant relationship between separation, individuation and loving/compassionate sexual self and self-confident, optimistic approach, seeking social support. Predicts the compassionate sexual self-schema; It was determined that coping styles were a partial mediating variable in the relationship between relational problems and the loving/compassionate sexual self-schema.

## Authors' Contribution

Study Conception: KG, GA; Study Design: HF, GA; Supervision: HF, KG; Funding: N/A; Materials: KG, HF, GA; Data Collection and/or Processing: GA, KG; Statistical Analysis and/or Data Interpretation: KG, HF, GA; Literature Review: KG, HF, GA; Manuscript Preparation: KG, GA, and Critical Review: KG, HF.

## Conflict of interest

The authors disclosed no conflict of interest during the preparation or publication of this manuscript.

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