Examining the Mediating Role of Rumination in the Relationship Between Early Maladaptive Schemas and Job Performance

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ABSTRACT

Background: Early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) and rumination have been recognized as significant factors influencing occupational performance; however, their direct and indirect interactions within the workplace have not been thoroughly investigated. This study aimed to analyze the effects of EMSs on job performance and the mediating role of rumination. **Methods**: A cross-sectional design was utilized, employing standardized questionnaires to evaluate EMSs, levels of rumination, and job performance among employees. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to ascertain the direct and indirect relationships between the variables. **Results**: The findings revealed that EMSs exerted a significant direct negative effect on job performance ($\beta = -0.33$) and indirectly diminished performance through rumination, which was strongly correlated with EMSs ($\beta = 0.65$; $\beta = -0.51$). These results are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of EMSs in triggering repetitive negative thinking patterns, thereby diminishing individuals' capacity to manage work-related stress. **Conclusions**: EMSs and rumination emerged as significant predictors of job performance. Interventions aimed at addressing rumination and fostering supportive organizational environments may alleviate the negative effects of EMSs and enhance employee productivity. The findings highlight the importance of identifying and managing these factors to promote mental health and organizational effectiveness.

Introduction

In the contemporary era, the economic and social development of nations relies heavily on the effective utilization of resources, particularly human capital; a more qualified and efficient workforce accelerates progress (Groen et al., 2017). Within the organizational frameworks of each country, institutions and organizations are established to achieve specific missions. The realization of these objectives—defined in terms of organizational effectiveness—and the optimal utilization of available resources—reflecting organizational efficiency—are directly contingent upon human resource performance. Indeed, employee performance, recognized as the most critical competitive factor in modern organizations, serves as a decisive indicator of the success or failure of organizational initiatives (Mirshekari et al., 2022).

Job performance is a fundamental concept in the fields of industrial and organizational psychology and human resource management, referring to the evaluation of an individual's efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling their job responsibilities. This concept encompasses a range of behaviors and outcomes that align

with organizational objectives and contribute to the attainment and progression of these goals (Groen et al., 2017). Job performance includes the spectrum of individual behaviors exhibited in the workplace, encompassing not only the execution of core and formally assigned job tasks (task performance) but also supportive, voluntary, and cooperative behaviors aimed at enhancing the work environment and improving organizational productivity (contextual performance) (van der Put et al., 2023).

From a psychological perspective, individual job performance is influenced by various factors, which can be categorized into cognitive and motivational domains. Among these, cognitive schemas—particularly early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) developed during an individual's formative years—play a critical role in shaping attitudes, behaviors, and psychological capacities in the workplace (Mirshekari et al., 2022). The activation of these schemas in occupational contexts can lead to the development of ineffective coping mechanisms, resulting in job dissatisfaction, psychological burnout, and decreased productivity at both individual and organizational levels (Mirshekari et al., 2022). Research indicates that early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) are directly linked to various dimensions of job performance (Mohammadi et al., 2020). Most schema domains demonstrate a negative correlation with performance indicators, wherein individuals with elevated levels of these schemas experience diminished effectiveness, reduced motivation, and poorer quality of workplace interactions (Yakın et al., 2019).

Early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) are fundamental patterns comprising memories, emotions, cognitions, and physiological responses that develop during childhood and continue to exert influence throughout an individual's life. These schemas form when a child's core emotional needs are consistently unmet or excessively satisfied, resulting in the development of maladaptive and inaccurate beliefs about the self, others, and the environment (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021). Schema therapy, developed by Young and colleagues in the 1990s, explains how these maladaptive patterns emerge through repeated experiences of emotional neglect or harmful interactions during sensitive developmental periods (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021).

Research indicates that early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) emerge from a complex interaction between genetic predispositions and environmental factors in early life, particularly the child's relationships with primary caregivers. Mismatches between parental parenting styles and the child's innate temperament, traumatic experiences, and chronic maladaptive interaction patterns can all contribute to the development of these schemas (Sajjadi et al., 2016). Schemas are classified into five principal domains, each representing a type of unmet emotional need. These domains include disconnection and rejection, impaired autonomy and performance, impaired limits, other-directedness, and excessive vigilance and inhibition (Rhein & Sukawatana, 2015). Within this framework, Young also defined eighteen specific schemas, each reflecting distinct maladaptive patterns of thought and behavior (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021).

In Young's schema therapy theory, these five principal domains reflect unmet emotional needs during childhood (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021). Research findings indicate that these domains can be associated with decreased job performance and increased occupational burnout, particularly when an individual is vulnerable in areas such as autonomy or exhibits perfectionism and excessive emotional inhibition (Bay & Novin Rooz, 2022).

The first domain, Impaired Autonomy and Performance, encompasses schemas related to an individual's perceived inability to manage life independently. Individuals with these schemas often view themselves as helpless, incapable, and lacking the necessary competencies to navigate life's challenges. Such beliefs are strong predictors of reduced job performance (Bay & Novin Rooz, 2022). Those who hold these schemas typically experience feelings of incompetence, inadequacy, and excessive reliance on others, which impede effective task execution, career advancement, and independent decision-making in professional settings (Fasolato et al., 2024).

The domain of Overvigilance and Inhibition includes rigid and unrealistic standards and expectations that individuals impose on themselves. This domain is characterized by an excessive focus on negative aspects, perceived threats, or mistakes, as well as the suppression of natural emotions (Fasolato et al., 2024). These schemas promote extreme perfectionism, heightened anxiety, and strict adherence to internalized rules, ultimately inhibiting creativity, depleting psychological resources, and contributing to occupational burnout (Bay & Novin Rooz, 2022).

Individuals with schemas in the Disconnection and Rejection domain often encounter cognitive challenges that impede their ability to form secure, stable, and satisfying emotional relationships. They tend to believe that their fundamental needs for love, affection, belonging, security, and stability will never be fully met (Zand & Asgari, 2023). These maladaptive patterns frequently originate from family environments marked by chaos and unpredictability, characterized by experiences of neglect, emotional instability, distrust, emotional coldness, rejection, shame, emotional deprivation, and social isolation (Fasolato et al., 2024). This domain fosters negative mental frameworks regarding interpersonal relationships, which can hinder trust-building, effective collaboration with colleagues, and the establishment of constructive work relationships—elements directly impacting team performance and organizational productivity (Csigo et al., 2024; Tutal & Yalçın, 2021).

In this context, the domain of Impaired Limits pertains to an inability to recognize and accept boundaries, responsibilities, and social rules. Individuals with these schemas may struggle with self-regulation, compliance with regulations, and respect for personal boundaries, negatively affecting their interpersonal relationships (Inanloo Ganji et al., 2019). These schemas typically arise in family environments deficient in discipline, responsibility, and cooperation, where negligence and self-centeredness are prevalent (Fasolato et al., 2024). Consequently, such schemas can lead to an individual's inability to maintain professional boundaries and fulfill occupational responsibilities, threatening organizational cohesion and discipline (Csigo et al., 2024; Tutal & Yalçın, 2021).

Finally, the domain of Other-Directedness encompasses the belief that the needs of others supersede one's own. These schemas are characterized by neglect of personal goals and excessive efforts to gain the approval of others, potentially weakening the pursuit of professional interests and obstructing career advancement (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021; Fasolato et al., 2024; Sajjadi et al., 2016). Research indicates that early maladaptive schemas arise from a complex interplay between traumatic emotional experiences in childhood and inherent traits such as temperament and personality structure. These fundamental cognitive patterns extend beyond transient disorders, influencing how individuals respond to occupational situations throughout adulthood and consistently affecting job performance (Zhang, 2010; Sajjadi et al., 2016).

Research indicates that rumination serves as a mediating mechanism that enhances the influence of early maladaptive schemas on job performance. Individuals with these schemas often engage in repetitive negative thought patterns, which diminish their ability to manage work tasks and professional interactions, ultimately leading to decreased effectiveness and performance quality (Tam, 2023; Webb et al., 2025). Rumination is characterized by a repetitive cognitive process in which an individual persistently reflects on negative events or unpleasant emotions without arriving at a resolution. This process heightens anxiety, depletes cognitive resources, and impairs concentration and problem-solving abilities (Lyubomirsky & Hoeksema, 1995).

Two primary forms of rumination have been identified: Affective Rumination, which concentrates on negative emotions and typically results in a decline in performance, and Cognitive Rumination, which focuses on problem-solving and issues, occasionally yielding beneficial outcomes (Lin & Bai, 2022). In the workplace context, negative rumination can drain the mental resources essential for task execution, leading to decreased efficiency and performance (Lin & Bai, 2022; Li, Xiong, & Lin, 2024). Research has shown that certain early maladaptive schemas, particularly those within the "Disconnection and Rejection" domain, predispose individuals to rumination; in response to work-related stress, these individuals are more likely to engage in cycles of repetitive negative thinking rather than implement effective coping strategies (Van Wijk-Herbrink et al., 2022; Meneguzzo et al., 2021; Webb et al., 2025).

Conversely, rumination itself exacerbates schema activation, creating a detrimental cycle that undermines occupational performance through cognitive resource depletion, negative affect, and maladaptive behavioral strategies (DeJong et al., 2016; Li et al., 2024; Babaeifard et al., 2024). Numerous studies have validated this mediating pattern in workplace settings. For example, Tam (2023) demonstrated that rumination fully mediates the relationship between negative workplace experiences and reduced extra-role behaviors; specifically, employees, in an effort to conserve psychological resources, tend to diminish their engagement in positive work behaviors in response to stress triggered by activated

schemas. Within the fields of human resources and industrial/organizational psychology, substantial evidence supports the mediating effect of rumination between schemas and job performance (Baghbanzadeh & Sobhi, 2020). Research suggests that high-intensity schemas are correlated with reduced career advancement and work efficiency, findings that are consistent with the mediating role of rumination in cognitive resource depletion (Khalilpour et al., 2024;Li et al., 2024).

Given the growing importance of job performance in organizational success and the impact of deep psychological factors on it, the present study seeks to examine the role of early maladaptive schemas as a fundamental and stable construct in explaining job performance, with particular emphasis on the mediating role of rumination. A review of the literature indicates that, although numerous studies have addressed the influence of schemas on mental health indicators, research on the relationship between these cognitive patterns and job performance—particularly the mediating role of rumination in this relationship—remains limited and fragmented. Moreover, the direct effect of rumination on job performance as an independent variable, especially with differentiation between its affective and cognitive types, has received comparatively little attention.

Furthermore, in most previous studies, schemas have been examined in a general manner, without distinguishing between their different domains, leaving the specific impact of each domain on organizational outcomes largely unexplored. In addition, the absence of integrated conceptual models capable of explaining the cognitive–emotional pathways leading to reduced job performance through constructs such as rumination represents another significant gap in the literature. The innovative aspect of the present research lies in linking core clinical psychology concepts, such as early maladaptive schemas and rumination, with industrial and organizational psychology variables, including job performance. This interdisciplinary approach enables more precise explanations of the underlying factors contributing to reduced productivity and opens new avenues for designing cognitive–emotional interventions in workplace settings. By developing a conceptual model grounded in a cognitive therapy framework, this study aims to illuminate the reciprocal influence pathways among these variables, thereby enriching both the theoretical and practical literature in this field.

Method

The present study employs correlational research utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM). This investigation examines the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and job performance, with rumination serving as a mediating variable, among employees of the Welfare Organization in Mashhad in the year 2025 (1404 in the Iranian calendar).

Sample and Sampling Method

The total number of employees in this organization was approximately 250. Given the relatively small population size, all employees were selected as the research sample through a census method. Questionnaires were distributed in printed form, resulting in the return of 192 completed questionnaires. The participants had a mean age of 37.29 years (SD = 9.53). Furthermore, 30.2% of participants were women, while 60.8% were men. In terms of educational attainment, 27 participants held an associate degree, 108 held a bachelor's degree, and 57 held a master's degree.

Tools Used

Early Maladaptive Schema Index

To evaluate early maladaptive schemas (EMSs), the Young Schema Questionnaire–Short Form (YSQ-SF) was employed. This 75-item questionnaire, developed by Young (1998), is designed to assess 15 early maladaptive schemas. The instrument categorizes these schemas into five domains: Disconnection and Rejection (items 1 to 25), Impaired Autonomy and Performance (items 26 to 45), Other-Directedness (items 46 to 55), Overvigilance and Inhibition (items 56 to 65), and Impaired Limits (items 66 to 75). Each item is evaluated using a 6-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (completely untrue) to 6 (completely true). Schema scores are calculated by determining the mean score of the items within each schema, with higher scores indicating a more significant presence of maladaptive schemas. The reliability

and validity of this instrument have been established through extensive research. For instance, a study by Welburn et al. (2002) found that all 15 subscales of the YSQ-SF exhibited adequate to excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.93. According to Nunnally (1978), an alpha coefficient above 0.70 is considered acceptable. Additionally, the questionnaire was standardized in Iran by Ghahari et al. (2020), who reported internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from 0.76 to 0.90 for the subscales and 0.96 for the overall scale.

Rumination Index

The Ruminative Response Scale (RRS), developed by Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow (1991), serves as a self-report questionnaire. Its initial translation and psychometric evaluation in Iran were conducted by Bagherinezhad et al. (2010). The questionnaire comprises 22 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 4 (often). The total score ranges from 22 to 88, with a cutoff score of 33. Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow reported test-retest reliability for this scale between 0.48 and 0.82, while its internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was found to be 0.90. In the Iranian version, Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.88.

Patterson Job Performance Questionnaire (JPQ)

To evaluate job performance, the standardized Patterson Job Performance Questionnaire (JPQ; Patterson, 1992) was utilized. This questionnaire consists of 15 items, which are scored on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Rarely" (1) to "Always" (4). The minimum possible score is 15, while the maximum score is 60. The reliability and validity of this questionnaire have been established in domestic studies. In a cross-sectional study conducted by Hoseini et al. (2015 [1394 in the Iranian calendar]), the Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was reported to be 0.84. Furthermore, Jokandan et al. (2011 [1390]) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79 and a split-half reliability of 0.86 in a study involving industrial employees. The validity of the instrument was further supported through correlations with other performance measurement tools and content validity in the aforementioned studies.

Procedure

Following the provision of necessary explanations and the acquisition of participants' consent regarding the confidentiality of their responses, as well as clarification of the study's purpose as a research project, the questionnaires were distributed among the employees and collected upon completion. For data analysis, descriptive statistics—including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation—were utilized, alongside parametric statistical techniques such as Pearson's correlation coefficient and path analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM). The analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27 and Smart-PLS version 4.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, as well as the correlation coefficients for the study variables.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Early Maladaptive Schemas	161.60	53.89	1	.65**	-.37**
2. Rumination	40.53	12.42	.65**	1	-.48**
3. Job Performance	53.12	6.97	-.37**	-.48**	1

** p<.01

As indicated in Table 1, there is a significant positive correlation between early maladaptive schemas and rumination (r = .65, p < .01). Furthermore, early maladaptive schemas show a substantial negative correlation with job performance (r = −.37, p < .01). Additionally, rumination reveals a significant negative correlation with job performance (r = −.48, p < .01).

Table 2 displays the values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and HTMT ratios for the variables under investigation.

Table 2 - Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, HTMT.

Variables	CA	CR	(AVE)	1	2	3
1.Early Maladaptive Schemas	0.88	0.89	0.68			
2.Job Performance	0.93	0.93	0.49	0.37		
3.Rumination	0.93	0.94	0.44	0.69	0.51	-

According to Table 2, all constructs demonstrated Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Although the average variance extracted (AVE) for Rumination (0.44) and Job Performance (0.49) fell slightly below the 0.50 benchmark, their high composite reliability values support acceptable convergent validity. These findings indicate adequate reliability and convergent validity, suggesting that the measurement model is both reliable and appropriate for further structural analysis.

Table 3 displays the Hetero Trait-Mono Trait (HTMT) ratios used to evaluate discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 3 - Hetero Trait-Mono Trait Ratio (HTMT) for Discriminant Validity.

Constructs	HTMT	95% CI (Bootstrap)	Result
early maladaptive schemas↔ Rumination	0.69	[0.617, 0.766]	< 0.90 → acceptable
early maladaptive schemas ↔ Job Performance	0.37	[0.281, 0.495]	< 0.90 → acceptable
Rumination ↔ Job Performance	0.51	[0.382, 0.647]	< 0.90 → acceptable

As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values were below 0.90, and the 95% confidence intervals did not include 1. These findings confirm discriminant validity, indicating that the constructs are conceptually distinct from one another.

Structural Model Evaluation

Table 4 displays the path coefficients and significance results obtained through bootstrapping for the structural model.

Table 4 - Path Coefficients and Significance (Bootstrapping Results).

Path	β	t	p	Result
Schema → Rumination	.65	18.93	.000	Supported
Rumination → Job Performance	-.51	8.11	.000	Supported
Schema → Rumination → Job Performance	-.33	6.98	.000	Supported (Mediation)

According to Table 4, there is a significant positive effect of schemas on rumination ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant negative effect of rumination on job performance ($\beta = -0.51$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the indirect effect of schemas on job performance through rumination was found to be significant, thereby affirming the mediating role of rumination ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5 displays the explained variance (R^2) of the endogenous constructs, while Table 6 provides the model fit indices.

Table 5- Explained Variance of Endogenous Constructs (R^2).

Endogenous Construct	R²	Interpretation
Rumination	0.42	Moderate
Job Performance	0.26	Weak to moderate

Table 6- Model Fit Indices.

Index	Value	Criterion	Result
SRMR	0.08	< 0.08	Good
NFI	0.68	> 0.90	Weak

As presented in Table 5, the explained variance for rumination was moderate (R^2 = 0.42), while the explained variance for job performance was comparatively low (R^2 = 0.26). Furthermore, Table 6 indicates that the SRMR index was below 0.08, suggesting an overall satisfactory model fit. However, the NFI index was below the acceptable threshold of 0.90; this discrepancy may be attributed to the limited sample size or the complexity of the model.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the structural model of the study. Figure 1 presents the estimated model generated by the PLS algorithm, while Figure 2 depicts the same model following the application of the bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of the path coefficients.
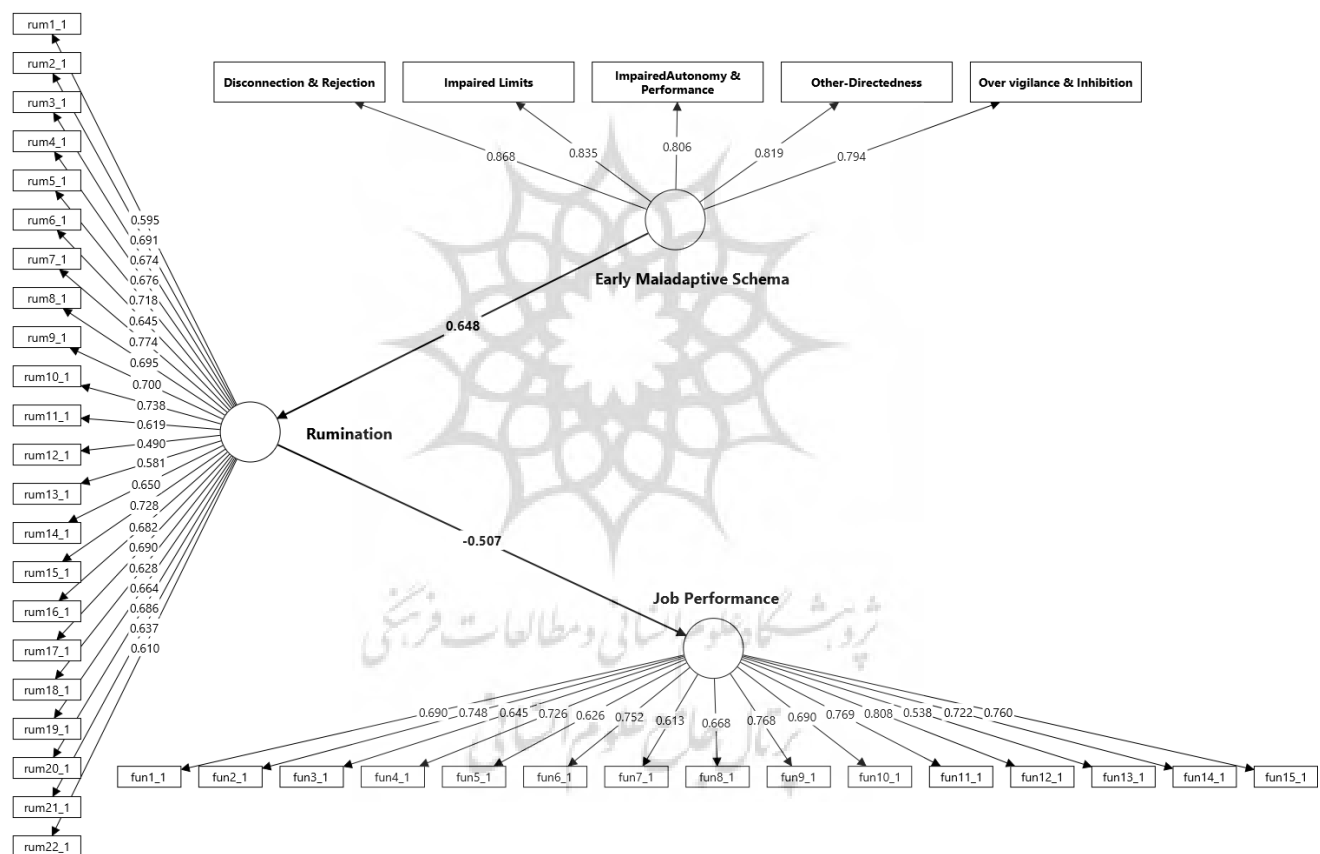
Figure 1- Estimated Structural Model (PLS Algorithm).

(rum1_1 to rum22_1: These indicators correspond to the items of the Rumination Questionnaire; fun1_1 to fun15_1: These indicators represent the items of the Job Performance Questionnaire)
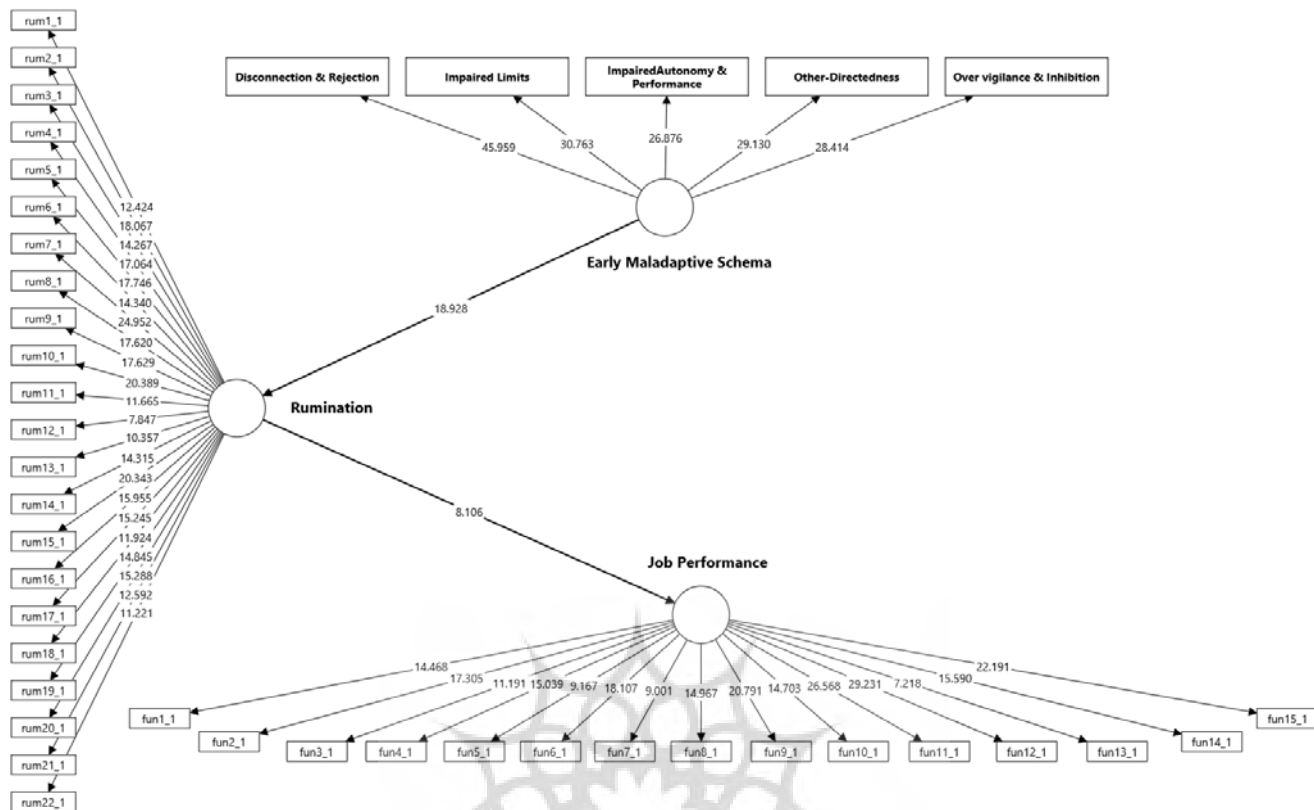
Figure 2- Structural Model after Bootstrapping.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the proposed model consists of three primary constructs: early maladaptive schemas, rumination, and job performance. The path coefficients are indicated on the arrows. The results revealed that early maladaptive schemas positively and significantly predicted rumination ($\beta = 0.65$). Additionally, rumination exhibited a negative and significant relationship with job performance ($\beta = -0.51$). These findings imply that rumination serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and job performance.

In Figure 2, the path coefficients along with the t-statistics are reported. The results of the bootstrapping procedure indicated that all primary paths in the model were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Specifically, the path from early maladaptive schemas to rumination ($\beta = 0.65$, $t = 18.93$) and the path from rumination to job performance ($\beta = -0.51$, $t = 8.11$) were significant. Therefore, the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and job performance is confirmed.

Discussion

The present study aims to investigate the mediating role of rumination in the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and job performance. This issue is significant because job performance serves as a critical indicator of productivity and organizational success, influenced by an individual's cognitive and emotional factors (Groen et al., 2017; Mirshekari et al., 2022). Early maladaptive schemas are stable cognitive structures developed during childhood, which contribute to fundamental negative beliefs about oneself, others, and the environment. These schemas can trigger dysfunctional coping patterns and chronic psychological stress in workplace settings (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021; Rhein & Sukawatana, 2015). Prior research indicates that these schemas are directly associated with decreased job performance and also exert persistent indirect effects through mechanisms such as rumination (Tam, 2023; Webb et al., 2025).

The findings of the present study indicate that early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) exert a significant negative direct effect on job performance, such that the activation of these schemas—particularly in domains such as mistrust/abuse, defectiveness/shame, and dependence/incompetence—creates persistent negative perceptions of the work environment and one's personal competencies, thereby undermining decision-making processes and motivation (Bagbanzadeh & Sobhi, 2022; Li, Xiong, & Lin, 2024). These negative perceptions deplete an individual's cognitive and emotional resources and diminish job performance, even in the absence of overt rumination. From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, such chronic depletion of cognitive and psychological resources reduces an individual's resilience in the workplace (Hobfoll, 1989; Qian et al., 2024). Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrated that EMSs have a significant positive correlation with rumination, highlighting the strong role of early maladaptive schemas in triggering negative thinking cycles.

The activation of early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) directs individuals toward the repetition and reprocessing of negative thoughts and past experiences, such that even minor environmental stimuli can trigger maladaptive cognitive cycles (Baxendell et al., 2025; Van Wijk-Herbrink et al., 2021). The structural findings of the study indicated that the effect of EMSs on rumination is both positive and significant. For instance, an individual with a defectiveness/shame schema may, after receiving negative feedback, repeatedly replay similar scenarios in their mind without arriving at an effective solution. This process, in addition to its emotional burden, induces cognitive fatigue and diminishes the capacity for concentration and problem-solving (Van Wijk-Herbrink et al., 2021). In this regard, Khalilpour et al. (2024) and Van Wijk-Herbrink et al. (2021) demonstrated that the intensity and persistence of rumination are largely determined by the content of the activated schema, with schemas functioning as frameworks that shape both the meaning of events and the pathways of cognitive processing.

Rumination also directly depletes individuals' cognitive and emotional resources, thereby impairing their ability to effectively monitor performance and maintain focused attention (Tanovic et al., 2017). Systematic reviews have shown that work-related rumination is associated with outcomes such as reduced sleep quality, increased fatigue and psychological burnout, and decreased creativity and innovation (Querstret & Cropley, 2012; Blanco-Encomienda et al., 2020; Qian et al., 2024). The findings of the present study revealed that rumination has a significant negative effect on job performance, a result further supported by the negative correlation observed between rumination and job performance. These results confirm that even employees with high technical skills are unable to fully utilize their competencies due to the cognitive exhaustion induced by rumination (Tam, 2023; Lin & Bai, 2022).

In addition to direct effects, the findings revealed that early maladaptive schemas (EMS) also exert a significant indirect effect on job performance through rumination. Path analysis indicated that the indirect effect of EMS through rumination is significant, and that rumination plays an important mediating role in the relationship between EMS and job performance (Tam, 2023; Webb et al., 2025). For instance, activation of the "mistrust/abuse" schema leads to the frequent reviewing of colleagues' behaviors and searching for signs of betrayal or abuse, which not only damages working relationships but also impairs focus on core tasks. These findings are consistent with prior studies indicating that EMS, by establishing

negative cognitive frameworks, increase the likelihood of engagement in repetitive and unconstructive thinking (Baxendell et al., 2025; Van Wijk-Herbrink et al., 2021). Research by Lin & Bai (2022) and Tam (2023) has provided compelling evidence that chronic rumination is an independent predictor of diminished job performance and even premature turnover. In such a state, even employees with high technical skills are unable to utilize their capabilities optimally due to the cognitive exhaustion resulting from recurrent negative thoughts.

The findings of the current study indicate that the direct and indirect effects of early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) on job performance are interrelated, leading to reductions in job performance due to the depletion of cognitive resources, diminished concentration, decreased creativity, and impaired capacity for effective workplace interaction. These results align with young's schema therapy theory, which conceptualizes maladaptive childhood beliefs as stable cognitive frameworks that influence various domains of life, including the workplace (Tutal & Yalçın, 2021; Rhein & Sukawatana, 2015).

From an applied perspective, the findings of this study indicate that individual-level interventions, such as training in the identification of early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) and cognitive–behavioral therapy focused on rumination (RF-CBT), can disrupt maladaptive thought cycles and enhance job performance (Li & Tang, 2024). At the organizational level, managing workload, creating supportive environments, and reducing stress-inducing stimuli lower the likelihood of EMS activation and, consequently, rumination. Moreover, it is essential for policymakers to prioritize employees' mental health as a key determinant of productivity (van der Put et al., 2023).

Limitations

Despite the valuable findings, the current study has several key limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results:

1. **Cross-sectional nature of the data**: The study's cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences. Although the proposed structural model received statistical support, it cannot be conclusively determined that EMSs directly lead to reduced job performance.
2. **Use of self-report measures**: All variables were assessed through self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to respondents' cognitive or emotional biases, including the tendency to provide socially desirable responses.
3. **Sample size and composition**: Limitations in sample size and the focus on a specific occupational group constrain the generalizability of the findings to other populations or industries.
4. **Lack of differentiation in rumination dimensions**: The present study examined rumination as a general construct; however, rumination can be categorized into emotional and cognitive dimensions, which may have distinct effects on performance.

Future Directions

1. **Longitudinal and Diary Designs**: Employing longitudinal designs and experience sampling methods (EMA) will facilitate the examination of the dynamics of Emotional Management Strategies (EMSs) and rumination over time within real workplace contexts.
2. **Multi-Source Methods**: Integrating multi-source data, such as supervisor evaluations and objective job performance metrics, can help address the limitations associated with self-report bias.
3. **Differentiation of Rumination Dimensions**: Future research should explore the distinct effects of emotional rumination and cognitive rumination on job performance, as cognitive rumination may possess adaptive effects in certain contexts.
4. **Organizational Interventions**: Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions such as Rumination-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (RF-CBT) and workplace wellness programs can provide practical strategies to mitigate the negative impact of EMSs on performance.

5. **Multilevel Analyses**: Investigating the interactions between EMSs and rumination at both individual and team levels can illuminate how these patterns affect group performance and overall organizational productivity.

Conclusion

The results of this study consistently demonstrate that early maladaptive schemas (EMSs) not only directly impair job performance but also exert an indirect negative effect by activating cycles of rumination. This finding supports the perspective that job performance is not merely a function of skills or environmental conditions, but is significantly influenced by deep and stable cognitive-emotional constructs. In this context, EMSs serve as "cognitive filters" that distort an individual's perception of workplace situations, leading to maladaptive thinking processes, particularly rumination. This mechanism ultimately results in decreased motivation, reduced creativity, and diminished quality of interpersonal interactions in the workplace.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results underscore the importance of integrating clinical frameworks, such as schema therapy, with the field of industrial-organizational psychology. Such an approach can facilitate the development of multilevel models that clarify the cognitive-emotional pathways underlying job performance. Practically, identifying and addressing EMSs and rumination can serve as central targets for organizational interventions. Interventions such as rumination-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (RF-CBT) and workplace cognitive empowerment programs can alleviate repetitive negative thoughts, free up employees' cognitive resources, and enhance job performance.

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