

# Relationship Manipulations and Their Impact on Individuals' Development

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**Abstract.** In the contemporary fabric of society, the tapestry of interpersonal connections weaves a profound impact on the emotional and psychological landscape of individuals. Among the intricate threads of relational dynamics, the looming shadow of manipulative behaviors casts a growing concern. Emotional manipulation, as elucidated by Dr. Harold Hong and Kara Nassour, delineates a complex interplay of influence, rooted in deep-seated behaviors or unresolved childhood wounds. This nuanced concept is initially introduced and subsequently unfurled within the introductory segment. Within the intricate dance of relationships, manipulative tactics unfurl like tendrils seeking to ensnare, control, or deceive partners, often sowing seeds of discord and disillusionment. The gravity of this issue reverberates through its capacity to inflict profound emotional turmoil, fracture the bedrock of trust, and corrode the very essence of relational vitality.

**Keywords:** Emotional manipulation, relationship, psychological well-being.

## 1. Introduction

This research paper embarks on a journey into the intricate realm of manipulative behaviors within relationships, aiming to unravel its multifaceted nature and the profound ramifications it bestows upon individuals. Through a meticulous exploration of existing literature coupled with a systematic review, our objective is to illuminate the prevalence of such behaviors, delineate their diverse manifestations, and elucidate the far-reaching consequences they entail. In our quest for understanding, the present study endeavors to identify gaps in the current landscape of knowledge, paving the way for insights that contribute to a deeper comprehension of how manipulative dynamics within relationships reverberate through individuals' mental well-being, self-perception, and overall satisfaction in the realm of interpersonal connections. By peeling back the layers of manipulation, this study aims to unveil its subtle nuances and stark realities, shedding light on the mechanisms through which it insidiously undermines the fabric of trust and intimacy. Through this inquiry, this study aspires to not only raise awareness but also to empower individuals with the knowledge needed to recognize and navigate such dynamics effectively, fostering healthier, more fulfilling relationships grounded in authenticity and mutual respect. Ultimately, by interrogating the complexities of manipulative behaviors within relationships, this study aspires to contribute to the collective endeavor of fostering relational environments characterized by empathy, transparency, and genuine connection, thus enriching the tapestry of human interactions with threads of understanding and resilience.

## 2. Method

The research methodology involves a systematic review of pertinent literature using reputable sources, primarily Google Scholar, to comprehensively explore the interconnected topics of emotional manipulation, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. The search strategy will employ identified keywords, ensuring a focused and thorough examination. Screening criteria will be established, emphasizing 3-5 key aspects such as publication date, relevance to emotional manipulation, exploration of relationship dynamics, and analysis of the impact on psychological well-being. Inclusion and exclusion criteria will guide the selection process, favoring sources aligned with research objectives and excluding irrelevant material. Data extraction will involve retrieving key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks from selected sources. A

quality assessment will be conducted to evaluate the reliability of chosen materials. Synthesis and analysis will identify patterns and themes, allowing for a comparative examination of different studies.

### **3. Manipulation & Violence**

#### **3.1. Manipulation and Dating Violence**

Manipulation has been more prevalent. Collin investigated into the relationship between university students' exposure to manipulation and instances of dating violence. A significant relationship between the two was identified, and gender was found not to be a discriminating variable. The findings of the study emphasized the importance of being receptive to manipulation as a factor that increases a person's risk of dating violence. While the manipulation questionnaire was created using the Manipulation in Human Relations Scale, the dating intensity questionnaire used in the study was developed through a review of the literature. Notably, there is a lack of scales measuring the determination of the victim and the extent of the damage suffered for these crucial violence-related variables. Consequently, developing scales for these variables is deemed crucial for assessing severity and consequences [1].

The absence of scales for victims necessitates pilot studies for surveys in future research to enhance the reliability and safety of the obtained data. Moreover, the lack of defined subgroups for dating violence by authorities poses challenges in conducting studies on common ground. Defining subgroups with distinct content in dating violence studies complicates result comparisons and renders the research susceptible to criticisms regarding its reliability. Previous studies by Karatay, Dikmen, Özyayın, Yılmaz, Açıkgöz and colleagues, revealed varying types of violence experienced in dating relationships. The study aligns with these findings, indicating a higher prevalence of emotional, social, and verbal violence within dating violence subgroups, all of which were associated with manipulation.

Contrary to statistically significant differences found in some studies related to gender and dating violence, our research, in line with other studies, did not identify such differences. Furthermore, our results concur with the research of Jouriles, McDonald, Mueller, and Grych, indicating that exposure to family violence correlates with increased potential for emotional dysregulation and a higher likelihood of engaging in dating violence. This emphasizes how people who are the victims of abusive manipulation—a type of violence that occurs in many relationships—have a higher chance of encountering dating violence. These findings highlight the interconnectedness of these experiences in the context of dating violence by indicating that the effects of violence during developmental stages affect both the perpetrators and the victims [1].

#### **3.2. Childhood Trauma: Lasting Effects**

Mental abuses are also prevalent among children even if most don't realize it. The researchers emphasize the critical role of childhood as the early stage of the development of positive character traits. During this stage, traumatic events can have lingering effects that continue into adulthood. Children, still in the process of learning how to develop cognitions and emotions, may struggle to comprehend the meaning of trauma [2]. According to the study, kids who are abused by close family members or caregivers may feel betrayed, have their developmental processes disrupted, develop negative conceptions of themselves and other people, and believe that the world is dangerous. A child's worldview, sense of self, and level of trust in others can all be profoundly impacted by relationships that are characterized by rejection or a lack of safety [3]. This is further supported by Bakker and colleagues, who establish a connection between early childhood trauma and the emergence of personality traits like neuroticism [4].

Early life trauma can have an effect on adult relationships. Adults who have experienced trauma in the past are more likely to report feeling uneasy in close quarters, finding it difficult to trust people, and not wanting to rely too much on others or let them get too close. Additionally, they may perceive that others are hesitant to form close connections with them, harbor concerns about being unloved, and grapple with fears of rejection or abandonment [5]. According to the research, developing healthy

attachments and relationships during childhood is crucial for a higher quality of life as an adult. This is especially true when it comes to developing a positive sense of self, understanding others, and promoting relationships' general well-being [6].

Furthermore, according to the data from Heather L. Dye, the effect of mental abuse was even more robust compared to that of physical abuse. For those who reported emotional abuse, the correlation analysis showed moderately positive associations with DASS-D, DASS-A, DASS-S, and N. Those who reported physical and/or sexual abuse, on the other hand, showed only weak to no correlations with any of the DASS subscales. The null hypothesis was rejected because emotional abuse showed moderately positive correlations with stress, anxiety, depression, and neuroticism personality traits. The correlations between emotional abuse and DASS-D, DASS-A, DASS-S, and N were stronger than those between emotional abuse and physical or sexual abuse [7].

Additionally, the research incorporates principles from Robert Cialdini's analysis, unveiling key mechanisms contributing to successful social manipulation. These include scarcity, authority, social proof, reciprocity, commitment/consistency, liking (benevolence), and automatic behavior (stereotypical thinking). The synthesis of these principles and typologies furnishes a nuanced understanding of manipulation within the intricate fabric of human interactions. Ultimately, the study provides a comprehensive framework for comprehending the multifaceted nature of manipulation, encouraging further exploration into the dynamics of human behavior in social contexts.

### **3.3. Psychopathy and Emotional Manipulation**

Psychopathy, perceived as a multifaceted construct encompassing various traits and behaviors, has been consistently associated with manipulative and deceptive tendencies. This understanding sets the stage for hypothesizing about the interplay between psychopathy and emotional manipulation. It was postulated that the overarching factor of emotional manipulation would demonstrate a positive correlation with both primary and secondary psychopathy. This hypothesis stemmed from the notion that psychopathy, irrespective of its primary or secondary manifestation, is inherently characterized by manipulative tendencies. Moreover, based on the differences reported in the literature, it was hypothesized that there would be a stronger correlation between emotional manipulation and primary psychopathy than there would be between it and secondary psychopathy. This speculation was grounded in previous findings suggesting that primary psychopathy exhibits a more pronounced proclivity towards manipulative behaviors.

### **3.4. Parental Manipulation: Child's Well-Being**

Parental manipulation, aimed at sabotaging a child's relationship with one parent, severely affects the child's mental well-being. Family courts prioritize shielding children from harm during divorce proceedings, regardless of the level of animosity between the parents.

Parental manipulation can be likened to brainwashing, where one parent undermines the child's relationship with the other through various tactics. These tactics include speaking negatively about the other parent, erasing their presence from the child's life, falsely portraying them as dangerous, or restricting contact. This manipulation often forces children into a conflicted position, used as pawns by one parent against the other to achieve personal goals or retaliate for perceived injustices during the divorce.

Sadly, parental manipulation is more prevalent than commonly thought, occurring in 11 to 15 percent of divorces involving children. Children subjected to this manipulation suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and trust issues, increasing their vulnerability to substance abuse. In severe cases, children may internalize the hatred directed at the alienated parent, believing they were never loved, hindering their ability to form healthy relationships in the future. This cycle can perpetuate itself, with alienated children later alienating their own offspring.

Preventing children from having a loving relationship with one parent is considered a form of abuse in family law. Forced separation, except in cases of physical abuse, can lead to post-traumatic

stress disorder in children. They become adept at manipulation, perpetuating instability in their lives and struggling to form healthy relationships.

### **3.5. Manipulative Tactics: Effects & Correlations**

Chronic conditions linked to abuse, such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and PTSD, can be brought on by emotional manipulation. In extreme cases, it can be categorized as emotional abuse, enabling the maintenance of power within a relationship [8].

The experience of isolation and emotional numbness transforms individuals from active participants in life to mere observers, diminishing emotional responses even in situations that should evoke joy. This leads to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and a belief in the inability to rekindle emotions. Seeking approval becomes a coping mechanism, expressed through excessive achievements, people-pleasing behaviors, and an intense focus on maintaining a flawless appearance, all rooted in a prolonged sense of inadequacy [9].

Feelings of resentment may manifest as frustration, impatience, irritability, and a tendency to blame others, making it challenging to release resentment after enduring mistreatment. Excessive judgment, characterized by scrutinizing actions and setting exceptionally high standards, serves as a way to regain control after a period of powerlessness. Overcoming these challenges requires time and self-compassion. Depression and anxiety may follow manipulation or emotional abuse, fueled by a multitude of lies, but healing is possible over time [10]. Additionally, individuals may experience surprise, confusion, self-doubt, anxiety, passivity, shame, guilt, and avoidance behaviors like avoiding eye contact and walking on eggshells, all contributing to a complex emotional landscape in the aftermath of manipulation [8].

Psychopathy, seen as a comprehensive construct, is associated with manipulative and deceptive behaviors. It was predicted that there would be a positive correlation between primary and secondary psychopathy and the general emotional manipulation factor [10]. Another theory suggested that there would be a stronger correlation between emotional manipulation and primary psychopathy than there would be between it and secondary psychopathy because the researchers found a specific link between primary psychopathy and manipulation [2].

## **4. Conclusion**

This research journey delves into the intricate realm of manipulative behaviors within relationships, aiming to unravel its complexity and profound impact on individuals. Through an extensive review of existing literature, this paper sheds light on the prevalence, diverse manifestations, and far-reaching consequences of manipulation. It identifies gaps in knowledge, paving the way for deeper comprehension and awareness of manipulative dynamics and their effects on mental well-being, self-perception, and satisfaction in interpersonal connections. The systematic approach to literature review involves using reputable sources and keywords to ensure a comprehensive examination of emotional manipulation, interpersonal relationships, and psychological well-being. Screening and selection criteria are employed to identify relevant studies, followed by data extraction, quality assessment, and synthesis of key findings. This meticulous process allows for a comparative analysis of different studies, revealing patterns and themes within the research landscape. The review highlights various aspects of manipulation, including its association with adverse childhood experiences, its impact on individuals' mental health, and its correlation with psychopathy. It underscores the significance of forming positive relationships during childhood and the detrimental effects of parental manipulation on children's well-being. Furthermore, the paper explores the mechanisms and consequences of emotional manipulation, such as chronic conditions associated with abuse and the complex emotional landscape that ensues. It also examines the role of psychopathy in manipulation, hypothesizing correlations between primary and secondary psychopathy and emotional manipulation. Overall, this comprehensive review provides a framework for understanding manipulation, encouraging further research into its dynamics and implications in social contexts. It emphasizes the importance of

fostering healthy relationships and awareness of manipulative behaviors to promote authenticity, empathy, and genuine connection in human interactions.

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