Presentation Abstract

Surname
Marchese

Name
Elisa Vittoria

Other Authors
Adriano Schimmenti

Field of Expertise
Psicoterapy

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Rethinking the Karpman's Drama Triangle: A Developmental Perspective on Childhood Trauma, Attachment, and Dissociation

Abstract
Karpman's Drama Triangle is widely used in clinical contexts, yet empirical research on this construct remains limited. This study provides an empirical examination of the Drama Triangle in relation to childhood maltreatment, attachment, and dissociation. A sample of 573 participants (64.2% female), aged 18-76 years (M=30.74; SD=11.64), completed self-report measures of Drama Triangle roles, childhood trauma, adult attachment styles, and dissociation. A Correlation Network Analysis (CNA) was conducted to examine the relationships among variables. The CNA revealed a network centered on the Victim role, strongly connected to childhood emotional abuse, which showed high centrality within the network. The Victim role also showed positive associations with fearful and preoccupied attachment, dissociation, and the Rescuer role. Dissociation, in turn, was linked to the Persecutor role, while the Rescuer and Persecutor roles were associated with preoccupied and fearful attachment, respectively. This study suggests that the Drama Triangle may be better understood within a broader framework of attachment trauma processes. The centrality of the Victim role may originate in early traumatic experiences that also shape the configuration of other roles. Clinically, focusing solely on shifts between roles may be insufficient, as these dynamics may be differentially driven by underlying trauma-related, attachment, and dissociative processes.

Professional Picture

