The relationship between attachment style, subjective well-being, happiness and social anxiety among university students’

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Abstract

Individuals have to communicate healthy with each other for being happy in their life. However, it always cannot be as expected. Sometimes university students’ have difficulty about an interactive communication in social environment. This difficulty can be related to lots of factors. Some of them are individuals’ happiness level, subjective well-being level, attachment style and also social anxiety level. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between subjective well-being, attachment style, happiness in relationship and social anxiety. Scanning model is used in this research. This research was conducted on 305 students who were studying in Eskişehir Osmangazi University. The data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0. Results indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between subjective well-being and happiness in relationship. In addition, preoccupied, fearful and dismissing attached students’ social anxiety level is higher than secure attached students’ social anxiety level. Socially anxious student’s level of subjective well-being is lower than the others.

Keywords: Social anxiety, subjective well-being, happiness, attachment style;

1. Introduction

As a social being, human becomes involved in an interactive communication by entering into a social environment, including relationship with friends, relationship with family or relationship with lover. Although most people have grown used to enter like these social environments, most of them feel anxious social situations, such as taking important test, singing a song in front of others or interviewing for a job. These situations may creative physical symptoms to be seen as rapid heart rate, sweaty and shaking hands, and a dry mouth. It is a common fact that individuals feeling anxious in public tent to be reluctant talk to others, express emotions and talk on different topics.

Social anxiety is the excessive fear of being embarrassed and/or rejected by others (Heimberg, Luterek& Spokas, 2009). In general, expressing emotions and thoughts are beneficial for individuals, but on the other hand withholding feelings or opinions can be a detriment to mental health. According to Breen (2006), socially anxious people tend to avoid their emotions as a safety behavior to prevent the possible display of undesirable feelings to others which may invite social blunders, embarrassment, and rejection. These individuals can be expected to fear the negative consequences of openly expressing negative emotions such as anxiety and anger toward someone else.

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After all, these emotional reactions may cause people to view them as unappealing or vulnerable which, in turn, may be troublesome for their relationships.

Socially anxious people are more socially isolated, less likely to be married or in romantic relationships, and have unsatisfactory social relationships (Fuetsch & et al. 2000). While social anxiety plays a critical role in social relationships including friends, family, coworker; the other factor which crystallize happiness in relationship is attachment style.

The concept of attachment takes into account the value and power of the relationship established between children and their parents, how this relationship is formed, and how the quality of this relationship can affect the healthy development of children (Erözkan, 2009). According to attachment theory, people develop cognitive structures, or working models, that represent the extent to which they can rely on important people in their lives.

Of importance, these working models are thought to play a critical role in shaping people’s relationship experiences (Bonanno, Dekel, Fazzari & Faley, 2006). Li, Li and Dai (2008) found that patients differ in adult attachment styles and varied significantly in all indices of social support and depression. Secure subjects got higher scores in social support and lower scores of depression. Their depression level had significant positive correlations with attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, and was negatively correlated to all indices of social support. Previous research has indicated that attachment style is a comprehensive, effectual and determinant fact in human life, particularly humans’ social life. In addition, many studies have found secure attachment styles are differentially related to positive outcomes, such as life satisfaction, social efficacy (Perrone, Wright, 2010); career exploration (Chapeland & et al. 2005), high subjective well-being (Kafetsios, Sideridis, 2006).

The link between attachment style and well-being has been supported by multiple studies. For instance, Kafetsios & Sideridis (2006) found that anxious attachment and well-being were inversely associated and this was stronger for the younger group than it was for the older group. The other research’s findings revealed that avoidance dimension of attachment, gender, and anxiety dimension of attachment predicted the life satisfaction of university students (Kankotan, 2008). It can be seen that attachment style and well-being play a key role on individuals’ personal and social life. Furthermore individuals’ happiness in romantic relationship, life satisfaction and also subjective well-being level change according to attachment style. People with different attachment styles show different beliefs and feeling about their relationship, love, trustworthiness of love partners and their own love worthiness. As a result of attachment style, people derive different views about themselves from social environment.

Subjective well-being is another key aspect of relating that contributes to individuals’ social experiences like social anxiety and attachment style. Well-being is a relatively stable attribute that reflects the extent to which people experience positive affect and have favorable views of themselves and their lives (Amato& Dush, 2005). But, it cannot be thought that the level of subjective well-being which comprises positive ideas and feelings about life could be separated from the perceptions about the work environment which has a big part in people’s lives (Cenkseven-Önder, Sari, 2009).

Being in social environment and getting in contact with people are important factors affecting people’s life and subjective well-being. Moreover, quality of people’s life is determined by relationship with people, such as friends, family members or co-workers. When individuals feel that they are able to express easily their needs and emotions in their relationship, or if they believe that they can explain their ideas whenever they want, they perceive their relationship as desirable. In addition, when individuals communicate to each other without restraint or afraid of being rejected and/or embarrassed by others, they can behave authentically like themselves. As people introduce themselves in their relationship, they may find their similar thoughts, personality traits, hobbies and so on. According to Luo (2009), it is noteworthy that several findings replicated that greater similarity is associated with greater satisfaction. In sum, social anxious people refrain from self-introduction, they cannot find their similarity in relationship, and naturally they cannot be happy.

In conclusion, people need to get across with other people by entering into a social environment from his or her birth. Individuals’ success in life is positively related to interactive communication with social environment. Because university students’ lives including relationships with romance, relationships with friends and also relationships with university teachers, they can found easily possibility to give them different view which shapes relationship type, attachment style and level of subjective well-being about themselves. For this reason literature
need research including findings about relationship between subjective well-being, attachment style, happiness and social anxiety.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between subjective well-being, attachment style, relationship happiness, and social anxiety among university students. Because of accomplish this purpose; it is looked for an answer following questions:

1. Is there any correlation between university students’ social anxiety and happiness in relationship?
2. Is there any correlation between university students’ social anxiety and subjective well-being?
3. Is there any correlation between university students’ social anxiety and attachment style?

2. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between subjective well-being, attachment style, happiness in relationship and social anxiety. Scanning model is used in this research.

2.1. Participants

This research was conducted on three hundred and five university students of 1st and 4th classes who were studying in Faculty of Education (n=119), Faculty of Science and Art (n=67) and Faculty of Economical and Administrative Sciences (n=119) of Eskişehir Osmangazi University during the summer semester of 2009-2010.

2.2. Measures

In order to determine social anxiety levels of university students’, this research employed “Interaction and Audience Anxiousness Scale” developed by Leary (1983) and adapted into Turkish by Öztürk (2004). The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of the scale was found to be .91 (Öztürk, 2004). “The Subjective Well-Being Scale” is used in order to measure university students’ subjective well-being. This scale developed by Tuzgol-Dost (2005). Internal reliability for the Subjective Well-Being Scale was a Cronbach-alfa coefficient of .93. Test re-test reliability yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = .86$ (Tuzgol-Dost, 2006). “The Relationship Happiness Questionnaire” is developed by Fechter, Fitness and Blampied (1990) for couples. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of the scale was found to be .87. Test re-test reliability yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = .86$ (Tuterel-Kşlak, 2002). “Relationship Scales Questionnaire” is developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1987) and adapted to Turkish by Sümer and Güngör (1999). In their study, Sümer and Güngör (1999a) carried out a reliability analysis and found that the test-retest correlation coefficients ranged between .54 and .78 (Çelik, 2004).

3. Results

3.1. Correlation between University Students’ Social Anxiety and Happiness in Relationship.

Pearson correlation analysis results revealed that there is no correlation between social anxiety and happiness in relationship ($r = -.035, p < 0.05$) (Table 1).

Table 1. Correlations between social anxiety and happiness in relationship

| Social anxiety | Interaction Anxiety | Audience Anxiety |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Happiness in Relationship | -.035 | -.057 | .006 |

3.2. Correlation between University Students’ Social Anxiety and Subjective Well-Being

There is a negative correlation between subjective well-being and social anxiety ($r = -.122, p<0.05$). In addition, There is a negative correlation between subjective well-being and interaction anxiety($r = -.114, p<0.05$) (Table 2).
Table 2. Correlations between social anxiety and subjective well-being

|                           | Social anxiety | Interaction Anxiety | Audience Anxiety |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Subjective well-being     | -0.122*       | -0.114*             | 0.105            |

3.1. Correlation between University Students’ Social Anxiety and Attachment Style

Pearson correlation analysis results indicated that there is a positive correlation between social anxiety level and preoccupied (r=0.205, p<0.05), fearful (r=0.368, p<0.05), dismissing (r=0.375, p<0.05) attachment style (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlations between social anxiety and attachment style

| Preoccupied Attachment style | Secure Attachment Style | Fearful Attachment Style | Dismissing Attachment Style |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Social anxiety              | 0.205*                  | 0.057                    | 0.378*                     | 0.375*                      |

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between subjective well-being, relationship happiness and social anxiety among university students. In addition, the other aim of this study was to investigate whether university students social anxiety level change according to attachment style.

The current study is among the first to illustrate that university students’ social anxiety level does not change according to happiness in relationship. Examining previous research it can be said that study’s findings of the previous studies did not support other researches’ results. Previous research’s results revealed that social anxious people are unhappy in their relationship (Bogth & et al. 2005; Coles et al.2005; Ohayan & Schatzberg, 2010). However, According to Bogth & et al. (2005), social anxious students’ can try different way of communication other students. In the light of present study’s results it can be concluded that the best way of communication may be communicate by using technological instrument. Nowadays, university students’ often use internet and web site because of technological improvement and social alteration. Students’ spend time with this kind of web site including getting acquainted with new or former friend, expressing emotional needs and also talking their subjects of interest. In sum, although students’ are afraid of being rejected by others, they improve their communication skills by this way, and naturally they deal with problem about social anxiety outcomes.

Findings about this study results revealed relationship between subjective well-being and social anxiety. Moreover, this study is among the second to illustrate that there is a negative correlation between subjective well-being and interaction anxiety. Subjective well-being is comprehensive nature, including life satisfaction, pleasant emotion, thinking her or his life as desirable, sense of belonging and also satisfaction with domains work, marriage, and school, physical and mental health. This result can be interpreted to mean that most university students’ judgments about relationship are positive. Thinking their relationship, they evaluate their relationship as rewarding, desirable and heart warning. As psychological counselors and psychologists try to contribute to the subjective well-being of university students, the data derived from this study might be important for practical program, including communication skills, information about role of attachment style and awareness about emotional needs in relationship.

According the results, there is significant relationship between social anxiety level and attachment style. By taking importance to these results, it can be said that fearful, preoccupied and dismissing attachment affecting romantic relationship structure, also communication between couples negatively. Previous research suggests that individuals with social anxiety often experience difficulties when trying to form close interpersonal relationships (Erözkan, 2009). Also, Bacanlı (2008) stated that Individuals with inefficient social skills experience social anxiety. People having social anxiety tend to be unwilling to communicate with others. They speak less for shorter times and less often; they express themselves less and sometimes withdraw themselves from relations creating social anxiety.
Evaluating this result, it can be said that individuals with secure attachment style tend to be willing to deal with their own emotions or needs; Over and above they try to have relationship, including honesty, sincerity and unconditional love. As a result, they want to be happy in their relationship. Because university students’ happiness level change according to social anxiety level and attachment style, counselor working in psychological counseling center at university can use this research findings for prevention guidance program. By observing university students’ communication skills, structure of relationship and behavior pattern, which individuals at risk can be identified earlier, and then different treatment models can be determined for them.

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