



THE INVESTIGATION OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ACCORDING TO GENDER AND COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY OF LEVEL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP BELIEFSⁱⁱ

Vildan Serpin Eşiyok¹, Binnaz Kiran Esen²ⁱ

¹Ministry of Education, Mersin, Turkey

²Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey

Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the whether there is a difference among according to gender and cognitive flexibility levels of university students' romantic relationship beliefs. The data was collected from 635 students (343 female, 292 male) who have been studying in different faculties of Mersin University in Turkey. In order to determine the cognitive flexibility levels of the university students' "Cognitive Flexibility Scale", to determine their romantic relationship beliefs "Romantic Beliefs Scale" were used. Analysis of the data was made using SPSS 20 software package program. In the analysis of the survey data, Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique were used in order to analyze whether LSD test was used to test the source of differences. The level of significance in the study was considered to be .05. According to the results of the research, there is a meaningful difference of the between variables (Love is a way and Idealization). Cognitive flexibility levels of university students increases belief in romantic relationships is also increasing.

Keywords: cognitive flexibility, romantic relationship, romantic relationship beliefs, university students

1. Introduction

University student is required and expected a period of life for many young people. College life is described as an important development period by Gizir (2005). Because

ⁱ Correspondence: email binkiran2009@gmail.com

ⁱⁱ This study was taken from a master's thesis directed by Kiran Esen.

many young people have new academic, personal and social life in university. They are in freedom and autonomy environment different from high school. College life's new experiences include vocational courses, friendship and different relations teachers (Atak and Kacur, 2011). Romantic relationships are important for students who will pursue careers. They have to find solutions to problems in romantic relationships are easy or difficult they may be based on cognitive flexibility or rigidity.

Cognitive flexibility, an individual; a) be aware of alternative routes and options, b) can be flexible in adapting to new situations, c) be flexible in cases where competence is defined as the feeling itself (Martin, Anderson and Thweatt, 1998). Cognitive flexibility is facing the new environment and unforeseen circumstances, the human ability to adapt to the cognitive processing strategies (Cañas, Fajardo and Salmerón, 2013). Martin and Anderson (1998) accept cognitive flexibility as an important component of communication skills. Ciairano, Bonina ve Miceli'de (2006) have indicated children with higher cognitive flexibility, they become much more cooperative. Studies indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between cognitive flexibility and intellectual flexibility and self-pity, assertiveness and responsiveness, social competence expectations, positive problem-solving skills, figural creativity, anger (Martin, Staggars and Anderson, 2011; Martin and Anderson, 1998: Bilgin, 2009: Çuhadaroğlu, 2011: Diril, 2011: Çelikkaleli, 2014). And also there is a significant negative correlation between cognitive flexibility and marital conflicts, perceived stress, constant anger, anger inside and anger outside, unreasonable beliefs, obsessive attachment style and anxiety. (Ahn, Kim and Park, 2008: Altunkol, 2011: Diril, 2011: Gündüz, 2013). There was no difference between men and women (Öz, 2012; Diril, 2012; Çuhadaroğlu, 2011). As you can see, cognitive flexibility is usually positive idea and behaviors. Romantic relationship beliefs are the other variable of this study.

Other variable is romantic relationships beliefs of individuals. Romantic relationships beliefs created by the individual's cognitive structure are very effective on the romantic relationship process (Knee, Patrick and Lonsbary, 2003). Rational relational beliefs in a romantic relationship show that love, royalty, satisfaction and positive feelings (Sprecher and Metts, 1999). Cash (1984) notes that relational no relationship beliefs are associated with negative cognitive regulation.

In addition, the cultural differences and the characteristics of the family members are also important factors affecting the romantic relationships beliefs (Möller and Van Zyl, 1991, Sprecher, Cate and Levin, 1998, Sprecher and Toro-Morn, 2002). Studies show that the beliefs of non-rational relations; depressive symptoms, negative cognitive regulation, insensitivity and external locus of control, low relationship satisfaction,

loneliness, self-esteem, physical abuse, emotional abuse and problem solving, anxious and avoidant attachment styles, and negative attitudes toward marriage (Cash, 1984: Cramer, 2004: Turan, 2010: Kaygusuz, 2013: Sari and Mutlu-Tagay, 2015: Karabacak and Ciftçi, 2015). Rational romantic relationship beliefs are positively associated with love, satisfaction and loyalty, fearless and indifferent attachment styles (Sprecher and Metts, 1999: Beştav, 2007). In addition, romantic relationship beliefs are the determinants of the relationship styles (Moore and Leung, 2001). Romantic associative expectations of men and women can be different (Satir, 2001).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the whether there is a difference among according to gender and cognitive flexibility levels of university students' romantic relationship beliefs. In addition, according to gender and cognitive flexibility levels of university student romantic relationship beliefs were examined differed on whether the total score and subscale scores.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The study group is consisted of total 635 students (343 female, 292 male) who have been studying in different faculties of Mersin University in Turkey in the academic year of 2011-2012.

2.2. Instruments

In order to determine the cognitive flexibility levels of the university students' "Cognitive Flexibility Scale", to determine their romantic relationship beliefs "Romantic Beliefs Scale" were used.

2.2.1 Cognitive Flexibility Scale: The Scale which was developed by Bilgin (2009) demonstrated an internal consistency coefficient of 92. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of scale has been found as 92.

2.2.2 Romantic Beliefs Scale: The Scale which was developed by Sprecher and Metts (1989) demonstrated an internal consistency coefficient of 81 and test-retest reliability of 75. The Turkish version was done by Küçükarslan (2011). The reliability of the Turkish was calculated as 84. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of scale has been found as 86.

2.3 Analysis of Data

Analysis of the data was made using SPSS 20 software package program. In the analysis of the survey data for both the cognitive flexibility as well as romantic relationship, beliefs in order to determine the relationship between continuous variables and Pearson Correlation Coefficient technique were used. Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) technique were used in order to analyze whether there is a meaningful difference of the between variables. LSD test was used to test the source of differences. The level of significance in the study was considered to be .05.

3. Findings

The findings obtained the purpose of the research analyses is given below

1. The results showed that based on individuals' cognitive flexibility levels, there is a meaningful difference between the Romantic relationship beliefs total score [$F_{(2-629)}= 4.76, p<.01$], Regarding gender, the results suggested that there is a meaningful difference between male and female subjects in the Romantic relationship beliefs total score [$F_{(1-629)}= 36.08, p<.01$], and in the interaction of gender and cognitive flexibility [$F_{(2-629)}= 5.24, p<.01$]. Those with "low" cognitive flexibility have higher beliefs of non-rational romantic relationships.
2. The results showed that based on individuals' cognitive flexibility levels, there is a meaningful difference between the "Love finds a way" subscales' score [$F_{(2-629)}= 23, p<.01$]. In addition regarding gender, the results suggested that there is a meaningful difference between male and female subjects in the "love finds a way" subscale's score [$F_{(1-629)}= 8063, p<.01$], and in the interaction of gender and cognitive flexibility [$F_{(2-629)}= 8.29, p<.01$]. Those with "low" cognitive flexibility have higher beliefs of non-rational "Love finds a way" subscales'.
3. The results showed that based on individuals' cognitive flexibility levels, there is not a meaningful difference between the "One and only" subscales' score [$F_{(2-629)}= 0.919, p>.05$] and "Love at first sight" subscales' score [$F_{(2-629)}= 1.94, p>.05$]. In addition regarding gender, the results suggested that there is not a meaningful difference between male and female subjects in the "One and only" subscale's score [$F_{(1-629)} = 3.564, p>.05$], and in the interaction of gender and cognitive flexibility [$F_{(2-629)} = 3.86, p>.05$]. But "Love at first sight" subscales' score [$F_{(1-629)} = 7.62, p>.05$] is different.
4. The results showed that based on individuals' cognitive flexibility levels, there is a meaningful difference between the "Idealization" subscales' score [$F_{(2-629)} = 8.2, p<.01$]. In addition regarding gender, the results suggested that there is a

meaningful difference between male and female subjects in the "Idealization" subscale's score [$F_{(1-629)}=12.7, p<.01$].

4. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of statistical analysis obtained from the research, cognitive flexibility levels of university students increases belief in romantic relationships is also increasing. Romantic relationship beliefs subscales examined data on the level of cognitive flexibility increases. It is observed that increased the relationship beliefs "Love finds a way" and "Idealization" however no relationship was found between "One and only" and "Love at first sight" relationship beliefs. In addition, it was seen that male students have more romantic relationship beliefs such as "Love finds a way" and "Love at first sight" than female students. Küçükarslan (2011) found the university students who live a first romantic relationship "Love finds a way", "One and only" and "Idealization" has been found that a higher level than students in other groups.

Considering the theoretical aspect is expected to show negative correlation of irrational belief in romantic relationships with cognitive flexibility. But according to the results of this research, cognitive flexibility levels of university students increases belief in romantic relationships is also increasing. This situation is explained cultural impact. Because of cultural differences and characteristics of the family lives of individuals are important factors affecting romantic relationship beliefs (Möller ve Van Zyl, 1991; Sprecher, Cate and Levin, 1998; Sprecher and Toro-Morn, 2002). When examining the literature has been reached with very little research on the romantic relationship with cognitive flexibility. Ahn, Kim and Park (2008) have found a negative correlation between cognitive flexibility and the intensity of marital conflict. Eidelson and Epstein (1981) indicated the couples are having unrealistic belief in a romantic relationship; failed marriages will not change so they believe should be ended. According to women, men are more romantic and less realistic (Knox, Sporkowski and Sporkowski 1968; Sprecher and Metts, 1999). The complexity of relationships in daily life necessitates cognitive flexibility (Martin, Anderson and Thweatt, 1998). People with high levels of cognitive flexibility have high problem solving abilities (Flett, Hewitt, Shapiro and Rayman, 2001). Those who are not socially inclusive are more likely to accept nonfunctional relationship beliefs (Cash, 1984). Also, the beliefs of couples have a serious impact on their relationships (Knee, Patrick and Lonsbary, 2003). Individuals with high levels of cognitive flexibility are in good mental health. Individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and expectations towards each other in romantic relationships are influenced

by the cognitive structures of individuals. The level of cognitive flexibility also affects the beliefs of romantic relationships.

Some suggestions are made based on results. Individuals with high levels of cognitive flexibility, have good mental health. This study will help school counselors and adolescents. According to the results of research, psycho educational activities organized for adolescents by the school counselors is recommended.

References

1. Ahn, A. J. Kim, B.S.K & Park, Y.S. (2008). Asian Cultural Values Gap, Cognitive Flexibility, Coping Strategies, and Parent-Child Conflicts Among Korean Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* Copyright 2008 by the *American Psychological Association* 2008, Vol. 14, No. 4, 353–363
2. Altunkol, F. (2011). *Üniversite öğrencilerinin bilişsel esneklikleri ile algılanan stres düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi. Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.
3. Atak, M. and Kacur, M. (2011). Üniversite öğrencilerinin sorun alanları ve sorunlarla başetme yolları: Erciyes Üniversitesi Örneği. *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, Sayı: 31 Yıl:2011/2 (273-297 s.).
4. Beştav, G. F. (2007). *Romantik ilişki doyumu ile cinsiyet, bağlanma stilleri, rasyonel olmayan inançlar ve aşka ilişkin tutumlar arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara.
5. Bilgin, M. (2009). Developing a cognitive flexibility scale: Validity and reliability studies. *Social Behavior and Personality*. 2009, 37(3), 343-354.
6. Cash, T.F. (1984) The Irrational Beliefs Test: Its Relationship with Cognitive-Behavioral Traits and Depression. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, November, 1984, Vol.40.No.6.
7. Cañas, J. J. Fajardo, I. and Salmerón, L. (2013) Cognitive flexibility. <http://www.ugr.es/~ergocogn/articulos/cognitive-flexibility1.pdf> 14 Nisan 2013 tarihinde ulaşılmıştır.
8. Ciairano, S., Bonina, S. & Miceli, R. (2006), Cognitive Flexibility and Social Competence From Childhood To Early Adolescence. *Cognition, Brain & Behavior, Romanian Association for Cognitive Science*, Volume X, No. 3 (September), 343-366, Italy.

9. Cramer, D. (2004). Effect of the destructive disagreement belief on relationship satisfaction with a romantic partner or closest friend. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 77, 121-133 © 2004 The British Psychological Society www.bps.org.uk.
10. Çelikkaleli, Ö. (2014). Bilişsel Esneklik Ölçeği'nin geçerlik ve güvenirliği. *Türk Eğitim Derneği, Eğitim ve Bilim*, Cilt: 39. Sayı: 176, 339-346.
11. Çuhadaroğlu, A. (2011). *Bilişsel esnekliğin yordayıcıları*. Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.
12. Diril, A. (2011). *Lise öğrencilerinin bilişsel esneklik düzeylerinin sosyo-demografik değişkenler ve öfke düzeyi ile öfke ifade tarzları arasındaki ilişki açısından incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.
13. Eidelson, R.J. and Epstein, N. (1982). Cognition and relationship maladjustment: development of a measure of dysfunctional relationship beliefs. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 50, No. 5, 715-720.
14. Flett, G.L. Hewitt, P.L. Shapiro, B. and Rayman, J. (2001). Perfectionism, Beliefs, and Adjustment in Dating Relationships. *Current Psychology: Developmental, Learning, Personality, Social*. Vol.20.No.4,289-311.
15. Gizir, C.A. (2005). Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Son Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Problemleri Üzerine Bir Çalışma. *Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, Cilt 1, Sayı 2, Aralık 2005, ss. 196-213.
16. Gündüz, B. (2013). The contributions of attachment styles, irrational beliefs and psychological symptoms to the prediction of cognitive flexibility. *Educational Sciences: Theory& Practice-* 13(4) 2079-2085- 2013 Educational Consultancy and Research center.
17. Karabacak, A. and Çiftçi, M. (2015). Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Evliliğe İlişkin Tutumları İle Romantik İlişkilerde Akılcı Olmayan İnançları Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi. *13. Ulusal Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Kongresi* 7, 8, 9 Ekim, 2015 Mersin.
18. Kaygusuz, C. (2013). Irrational beliefs and abuse in university student's romantic relations. *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 51, 141- 156.
19. Knee, R.C. Patrick, H. and Lonsbary, C. (2003). İmplicit Theories of Relationship: Orientations Toward Evaluation and Cultivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol.7, No: 1, 41-55.

20. Knox, D. H. Sporkowski, Jr. and Sporkowski, M.J. (1968). Attitudes of College Students toward Love. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 638-642
Published by: National Council on Family Relations Stable URL:
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/349508>.
21. Küçükarslan, M. (2011). *Mersin Üniversitesi öğrencilerinin romantik ilişkilere yönelik inançlarının cinsiyet, sınıf düzeyi ve romantik ilişki yaşama durumu değişkenlerine göre incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi. Mersin Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Mersin.
22. Moore, S.M. ve Leung, C. (2001). Romantic beliefs, styles, and relationships among young people from Chinese, Southern European, and Anglo-Australian backgrounds. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* Volume 4 Issue 1 pages 53–68, April 2001.
23. Martin, M. M. and Anderson, C. M. (1998). The cognitive flexibility scale: Three validity studies. *Communication Reports*. Volume: 11, No: 1.
24. Martin, M. M. Anderson, C.M. and Thweatt, K.S. (1998). Aggressive communication traits and their relationships with the cognitive flexibility scale and the communication flexibility scale. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*. Volume: 13, No. 3.
25. Martin, M. M. Staggers, S. M. and Anderson, C. M. (2011). The relationships between cognitive flexibility with dogmatism, intellectual flexibility, preference for consistency, and self-compassion. *Communication Research Reports*. Vol. 28, No. 3, July–September 2011, pp. 275–280.
26. Möller, A.T. and Van Zyl, P.D. (1991). Relationship Beliefs, Interpersonal Perception and Marital Adjustment. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol.47, No.1.
27. Öz, S. (2012). *Ergenlerin cinsiyet, sosyo-ekonomik ve öğrenim kademesi düzeylerine göre bilişsel esneklik, uyum ve kaygı puanları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Adana.
28. Sarı, T. and Mutlu Tagay, Ö. (2015). Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Akılcı Olmayan Romantik İlişki İnançlarının Bağlanma Boyutları ve Cinsiyet Açısından İncelenmesi. 13. Ulusal Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Kongresi 7, 8, 9 Ekim, 2015 Mersin.
29. Satir, V. (2001). *İnsan Yaratmak*. Beyaz Yayınları, Birinci Basım, İstanbul.
30. Sprecher, S. Cate, R. Levin, L. (1998). Parental Divorce and Young Adults' Beliefs About Love. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, Vol. 28: 3, 107 – 120 To link to this Article: DOI:10,1300/J087v28n03_06. URL:
http://dx.doi.org/10,1300/J087v28n03_06.

31. Sprecher, S. and Metts, S. (1999). Romantic beliefs: Their influence on relationships and patterns of change over time. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*. Vol. 16 Issue 6, p834. 18p. 4 Charts.
32. Sprecher, S. and Toro-Morn, M. (2002). A Study of Men and Women From Different Sides of Earth to Determine if Men are From Mars and Women are From Venus in Their Beliefs About Love and Romantic Relationships. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 46, No. 5/6.
33. Turan, A.F. (2010). *Üniversite öğrencilerinin ilişkilere yönelik bilişsel çarpıtmalarını yordamada yalnızlık, benlik saygısı, yaş, cinsiyet ve romantik ilişki yaşama durumunun rolü*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Anadolu Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Eskişehir.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).