

Summary

Relationship of Early Maladaptive Schemas and Loneliness with University Orientation

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Starting a university education is a whole new phase in an individual's life in which many academic, social and personal changes take place. At the same time, it means students are expected to be oriented in many different fields. In this study, the relationship between early maladaptive schemas, loneliness and university orientation level were examined. A lot of studies in the literature showed that during the university orientation phase, while loneliness and anxiety seem to increase (Larose & Boivin, 1998), social support tends to decrease (Larose & Boivin, 1998). As it was also emphasized in the literature, university orientation seems to be predictive in many decisions students make during their education. Furthermore, many studies revealed that even the decision to pursue the university education can be predicted by students' university orientation (Bean, 1980, 1983; Spady, 1970; Terenzi, Lorang, & Pascarella, 1981; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1997; Woosley & Miller, 2009). Hence, the aim of the study was to explore the variance of university orientation explained by early maladaptive schemas and loneliness level of students.

Method

Independent variables of the current study were determined as early maladaptive schemas and loneliness while the dependent variable was specified as university orientation level. Institutional Integration Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale and Young Schema Questionnaire-Short Form were used to collect data from participants. In addition, in order to obtain demographic information, a demographic information form, involving questions such as age, gender and major, was presented to the participants.

Three hundred and twelve second-year university students participated to the study. Two hundred and forty one (77.2%) of the participants were female while 71 (22.8%) of the participants were male. Mean age of the

participants was 20.04 ($SD = 2.07$), and their age range changed between 18 and 32. In terms of their departments, 160 (51.3%) of the participants were students of Psychological Counseling and Guidance department; 32 (10.3%) of the participants were students of Computer and Instructional Technologies department; 23 (7.4%) of the participants were students of Turkish Language Education department, 19 (6.1%) of the participants were students of Primary Education department, 18 (5.8%) of the participants were students of Early Childhood Teaching department, and finally 14 (4.5%) of the participants were students of English Language Teaching department.

Results

In order to control the regression process depending on the correlations of the variables, sequential (hierarchical) regression was preferred. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was carried out in three stages based on the results of the correlation analyses. In the first stage, loneliness, which showed the highest correlation, was added to the equation. In the second stage, disconnection schema and impaired autonomy schema domains were included into the equation. Finally, in the last stage, three models were tested by including impaired limits schema domain, others oriented schema domain and high standards schema domain into the equation.

In Model 1, as an independent variable, only loneliness was added to the equation. As a result of Model 1, loneliness significantly explained the variance of university orientation, $R^2 = .28$, $F_{1,304} = 118.67$, $p = .00$. In Model 2, disconnection schema domain (DSD) and impaired autonomy schema domain (IASD) were added to the regression equation along with the loneliness. According to the Model 2, DSD, IASD and loneliness significantly explained university orientation $R^2 = .31$, $F_{1,301} = 6.90$, $p = .00$. In Model 3, all independent variables were added to the regression equation. It showed that loneliness, dis-

connection schema domain, impaired autonomy schema domain, impaired limits schema domain, others oriented schema domain and high standards schema domain explained the university orientation significantly, $R^2 = .34$, $F_{1,298} = 4.26$, $p = .00$. Standardized regression coefficients (β) showed that loneliness, as one of the independent variables, was found significant with the highest correlation in all three models ($\beta = .53$, $\beta = -.36$, $\beta = -.32$, respectively). However, while an important difference was seen between Model 1 and Model 2, the same difference could not be observed between Model 2 and Model 3. Another variable which was found significant and highly correlated in the last two models was the disconnection schema domain ($\beta = -.17$, $\beta = -.22$). Impaired autonomy schema domain shows significance in Model 3 in which all variables were included in the equation ($\beta = -.19$).

Discussion

Findings of the current study showed that more than one third of the university orientation could be explained by loneliness and disconnection schema domain as well as impaired autonomy schema domain from early maladaptive domains. Impaired limits schema domain, others oriented schema domain and high standards schema domain did not show significance in predicting the university orientation.

Unfortunately, the studies conducted in Turkey regarding maladaptive schemas have mostly been carried out with clinical groups while general population's relationship with its features such as compliance, loneliness, coping mechanisms and hope have not been studied efficiently. Limited number of studies investigating the role of maladaptive schemas in non-clinical group mostly aimed to examine the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and stress level of high school students preparing for university entrance exam in different contexts. These studies reached the conclusion that the schemas that were within the disconnection and rejection schema domains affect a person's confidence negatively, lead the person to think that s/he is alone, cause the person to excessively care about others' opinions and prevent individualism and thus seem to negatively affect the level of general pre-exam anxiety of young people (Atlı Özbaş, Sayın, & Coşar, 2012; Kapçı & Hamamcı, 2010; Yıldırım & Ergene, 2003). Even though these studies help in providing some prediction on academic performance of university-age young adults under stress, they are not enough to understand the experiences of university students. Among the non-clinical studies in the literature, none of them examined the relationships between early maladaptive schemas. Thus, the results of the current study are important in many aspects.

First of all, this is one of the first study in the literature showing the relationship between university orientation and early maladaptive schemas with loneliness. Second point that makes the current study important is that disconnection schema domain was found to be positively associated with loneliness but negatively associated with orientation level. This domain consists of schemas such as emotional deprivation, repressing emotions, social isolation/insecurity and imperfection. Individuals with one of these schemas involve a deep belief that their desires and emotions will not fully be met as well as a belief that they are imperfect, faulty, ugly and worthless or they will not be loved by others (Klosko, Young, & Weishaar, 2003). Moreover, individuals within this schema domain tend to have intense feelings of shame. They think that they are different from others or they do not fit in the social groups other than their families. Therefore, in their relationships with others, they tend to avoid communications, spontaneous actions or thoughts (Young, 1999). Thus, this characteristic of the schema domain can also explain its strong relationship with loneliness.

Along with its strengths mentioned above, the present study has some limitations. One of the most important limitation is that the schemas which were involved in the study were analysed under the frame of schema domains and the differences between schemas among each other and variances were disregarded. This limitation may affect the generalizability of the results since the differences of correlation of schemas with loneliness level and with different orientation types are hidden. Another limitation is that the current study is a preliminary study. Because there are no studies in the literature supporting a model, all variables involved in the equation were considered as independent variables. In further studies, developing models involving loneliness, resilience and coping mechanisms as mediating variables would be appropriate.

Despite its limitations, the present study provided important data for creation of orientation studies, which were commonly studied especially in universities. It can be said that there is a fundamental relationship between one's internalized representation of her/himself and subsequent psychological adjustment (Bowlby, 1988). Therefore, understanding the internalized representations of individuals seem very important in terms of developing appropriate intervention programs and providing psychological help for them.