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EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN FEAR OF HAPPINESS, SEPARATION ANXIETY AND RELIGIOUS COPING OF ADOLESCENTS IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

This study primarily includes the investigation of separation anxiety, religious coping, fear of happiness and life satisfaction. Separation anxiety consists of sub-factors of school phobia, fear of harm befalling family members, being away from the secure base, general anxiety and extended analysis as psychological adjustment with other psychological variables. The data was collected from adolescents in Turkey ($N=187$). We applied statistical procedures first assessed whether the independent variables influence on demographic variables and summarized partial correlations among the religious and psychological constructs used to clarify the separation anxiety. Among separation anxiety sub-factors, the being away from a secure base representing most consistent factor was positively associated with fear of happiness, negatively correlated with religious coping and life satisfaction. In general, separation anxiety assesses possible psychological challenges of school students and displays association with fear of happiness. Religious coping negatively correlated with fear of happiness and separation anxiety but predicted life satisfaction. Surprisingly, the investigation produced no association between separation anxiety and life satisfaction respectively. Such findings, in this way, need to be considered carefully in the cultural context. These results indicate that psychologists, educators and counselors who wish to evaluate and improve the happiness of adolescents, should consider cultural values and being away from a secure base.

Keywords: Separation anxiety, adolescents, religious coping, fear of happiness, life satisfaction

TÜRKİYE'DE ERGENLER ÜZERİNDE MUTLULUK KORKUSU, AYRILIK KAYGISI VE DİNİ BAŞA ÇIKMA ARASINDAKİ BAĞLANTININ İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Bu çalışma öncelikle ayrılık kaygısı, dini başa çıkma, mutluluk korkusu ve yaşam doyumunun incelenmesini içermektedir. Ayrılık kaygısı, okul fobisi, aile bireylerinin başına gelebilecek zararlardan korkma, güvenli alandan uzak olma ve genel kaygıdan oluşmaktadır ve bu diğer psikolojik değişkenlerle psikolojik uyumu analizi olarak genişletilmiştir. Veriler Türkiye'deki ergenlerden toplanmıştır (N=187). İlk önce bağımsız değişkenlerin demografik değişkenleri etkileyip etkilemediğini değerlendiren istatistiksel prosedürleri uyguladık ve ayrılık kaygısını açıklığa kavuşturmak için kullanılan dini ve psikolojik yapılar arasındaki kısmi korelasyonları özetledik. Ayrılık kaygısı alt faktörlerinden en tutarlı olanı güvenli alandan uzak olma, mutluluk korkusu ile pozitif, dini başa çıkma ve yaşam doyumunu ile negatif ilişkilidir. Genel olarak, ayrılık kaygısı, okul öğrencilerinin olası psikolojik zorluklarını değerlendirir ve mutluluk korkusu ile ilişkini gösterir. Dini başa çıkma, mutluluk korkusu ve ayrılık kaygısı ile negatif ilişkiliyken, yaşam doyumunu yordamıştır. Şaşırtıcı bir şekilde, araştırma, ayrılık kaygısı ve yaşam doyumunu arasında bir ilişki ortaya koymamıştır. Bu tür bulgular, kültürel bağlamda dikkatlice düşünülmesi gerekmektedir. Bu sonuçların ergenlerin mutluluğunu değerlendirmek ve artırarak isteyen psikologların, eğitimcilerin ve psikolojik danışmanların kültürel değerleri ve güvenli alandan uzak olmayı göz önünde bulundurmalarını faydalı bulmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ayrılık kaygısı, ergenler, dini başa çıkma, mutluluk korkusu, yaşam doyumunu

INTRODUCTION

Separation anxiety fundamentally covers a variety of meanings so called “negative emotion” (Ghobary Bonab et al., 2013), “anxious attachment” (Bowlby, 1973) and “excessive anxiety” (Roszak, 1995). Bowlby (1973) described separation anxiety as firstly objects frightening individual and secondly the fear of someone or something hurtful. According to Roszak (1995), separation anxiety appears in two situations; separation from home and separation from attachment figure. Individual typically experiences different levels of separation that cause life to suffer. This can be separation from home, separation from an attachment figure or threatening objects. To some extent, it occurs in the way of physical and psychological separation.

Having considered that school students generally suffer three types of separation anxiety; “school phobia, distress at being away from a secure base and fear of harm befalling family members” (Silove et al., 1993). This might possibly cause students drop out from school or having difficulties at school. More particularly, poor environmental conditions such as overcrowding families, low income families or authoritative families are ones of driven reasons (Tekke et al., 2014). Malcolm and colleagues (2003) reported that secondary school students, interchangeably used with adolescents, have truanting due to more likely school related issues than family related issues. This is accounted for emotional dimension (Brandibas et al., 2004). In addition, study has shown that adolescents perception on family as a secure base is related to lower adolescent internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Dykas & Sisking, 2020; Woodhouse et al., 2009).

Some psychological variables can be a supportive role to handle with this anxiety. For example; religion or religious behavior can be helpful to cope with this anxiety (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi, 1997; Exline, 2013; Watts, 2006). Given that an individual seeks for security, as reported by Silvine and colleagues (1993), higher level of separation anxiety leads greater insecurity and lower independence, attachment to God is to make a person feel safe haven (Ghobary Bonab et al., 2013), although Kirkpatrick (2006) discussed this relationship can be challenging due to determining the degree of relationship with God. Religious values become an imperative area to research in understanding prevalence and significance of well-being, especially by involving as social engagement and commitment (Dunbar, 2020)

James (1902/2002) initiated the effect of religious experiences with psychological function. Since many studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2013; Hood et al., 2009; Koenig et al., 1993) generally indicate religious behavior positively is one of beneficial to reduce the level of anxiety at the university level, this is highly expected to show similar effect with separation anxiety for adolescents as well. Studies of positive association between religious coping and anxiety (e.g., Achour et al., 2017; Blaine et al., 1998) may aid the psychological adjustment of adolescents. Those who involved in anxiety attempt to search for protection from the attachment figure in a way of “proximity-seeking behaviors” (Ghobary Bonab et al., 2013) so religious coping can be adaptive for adolescents in engaging to feel secure.

In addition to this, fear of happiness is interestingly a new study to figure out the association with separation anxiety. It has been basically initiated by Joshanloo (2013) to illuminate further happiness in the context of

religious values and culture. It is empirically assessed over conservative religious community such as Iran and Arab countries to figure out the fear of happiness. Joshanloo later studied over 14 countries to validate Fear Happiness Scale in which eastern countries (e.g., Turkey, China and Japan) particularly has prejudice to understand happiness or live happily. On the contrary, Tekke and Özer (2019) recently found no association between religious values and fear of happiness, but there is negative correlation between life satisfaction and fear of happiness. In this study, we are, therefore, investigating the further relationship among variables of separation anxiety, life satisfaction of happiness, and religious coping in Turkey integrated with both western life and Islamic values.

PRESENT PROJECT

This research evaluated the religious coping by addressing on the separation anxiety and fear of happiness scale as a measure of Muslim anxiety difficulties to feel safe from insecurity. Procedures tested four sets of hypotheses. First, separation anxiety should correlate positively with the fear of happiness. Second, separation anxiety should associate negatively with higher scores on religious coping. Third, separation anxiety should display negative linkages with satisfaction with life. Fourth, and finally, religious coping should present scores on satisfaction with life, and lower scores on fear of happiness and correlate negatively with separation anxiety.

METHOD

This study applied the partial correlational analysis in line with proposed hypotheses in order to figure out the relationship between various variables and fear of happiness by controlling variable. According to Tabachnick and Fidell, "the correlations are between only two variables and do not reflect underlying processes that are simultaneously affecting several variables. For this reason, it is helpful to examine matrices of partial correlations where pairwise correlations are adjusted for effects of all other variables" (2007, p.642) In this specific clarificaton, partial correlation is relatively exploited.

Participants

The study's sample was recruited 187 students from secondary science school in the province of Şanlıurfa city in Turkey. In fact, it is highly expected that considering science students as successful students with more career adaptability development experience life satisfaction (Hirschi, 2009). The average age of these 83 males and 104 females was 16.20 ($SD = 3.32$). With regard to their parents' marital status, ninety-two percent was together, six percent was separated, almost one percent was divorced. Their mother education was thirty-nine percent studied primary school, thirty-six percent studied secondary school and twenty- four percent studied university. Their father education was ten percent studied primary school, thirty-six percent studied secondary school, fifty-two percent studied university respectively.

Measures

All scales combined in a single questionnaire booklet including demographics questions such as age, gender, family marital status, father education and mother education. Response to all items occurred along a 1 to 5 Likert scale. Statistical procedures computed the response to each measure in terms of the average response per item. All of the scales were adapted, except for only Islamic Positive Religious Coping Scale was translated to Turkish using the method of back translation.

Separation Anxiety Symptom Inventory. Within the Separation Anxiety Symptom Inventory (SASI; Manicavasagar et al., 1997; Silove et al., 1993) are 15 statements that record three separation anxiety factors: school phobia (e.g., "I did not want to go to school"), distress at being away from a secure base (e.g., "I was afraid of getting lost when I was in strange places"), and fear of harm befalling family members (e.g., "I was very unhappy if I was separated from my family"). Six statements of general anxiety (e.g., Experiences difficulty in staying away from home for several hours) refers to general anxiety symptoms. The responses of separation anxiety were reverse-coded. The three factors essentially displayed the same relationships with other measures; so, for the sake a brevity, statistical analysis procedures used only the full scale ($\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.48$). This scale was adapted into Turkish by Diriöz et al. (2012).

Satisfaction with Life. Satisfaction with life was assessed by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). It includes five statements expressing subjective well-being ($\alpha = 0.69$, $M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.60$). One item says, for instance, "So far I have gotten the important things I want in life." Higher scores on this scale mean a greater sense of life satisfaction. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Koker (1991).

Fear of happiness. Fear of Happiness Scale (FHS; Joshanloo, 2013) was used to evaluate the fear of happiness. It includes 5 statements ($\alpha = .74$, $M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.47$). An illustrative item says, "I believe the more cheerful and happy I am, the more I should expect bad things to occur in my life". The responses of fear of happiness were reverse-coded accordingly. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Demirci et al. (2016).

Religious coping. Islamic Positive Religious Coping (PMIR; Abu Raiya et al., 2008) operationalizes an explicitly Muslim form of spirituality in terms of submission to God ($\alpha = .95$, $M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.53$). One of its 7 items says, for example, "When I face a problem in life, I consider that a test from Allah to deepen my belief".

PROCEDURE

All procedures conformed with institutional guidelines for the conduct of ethical research. Ethical approval from the educational board was fulfilled accordingly. Student participation in the study was voluntary. Researchers administered the questionnaire booklet to groups of varying sizes in a classroom setting. Completion of all measures by the participants took less than an hour.

Ethics Committee Approval

In the research, permission was obtained from the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Düzce University, dated 01/06/2020 and numbered 78187535/604.02.

RESULTS

Statistical procedures first assessed whether gender influenced responding. A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was tested to investigate gender differences in variables. Statistically significant differences found between males and females on the combined dependent variables, $F(4, 182) = 3.45$, $p = .010$; Wilks' Lambda = .92; partial eta squared = .07. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and the F-test values. Reference to this table, it indicates that females also obtained significantly higher mean scores than did males for scales of fear of happiness and religious coping. Further analyses, thus, controlled for gender.

Table 1. Multivariate Analysis of Gender for The Relationship between Dependent Variables

Variables	Gender	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Separation anxiety	Male	104	44.36	8.58	11.60	.00
	Female	83	48.90	9.64		
Life satisfaction	Male	104	14.70	4.46	.56	.45
	Female	83	14.21	4.38		
Fear of happiness	Male	104	15.20	5.48	4.35	.03
	Female	83	16.89	5.53		
Religious coping	Male	104	25.20	5.09	4.34	.03
	Female	83	27.42	7.63		

Note: *M* mean score; *SD* standard deviation.

Table 2 summarizes partial correlations among the religious and psychological constructs used to clarify the separation anxiety. The religious coping correlated positively with life satisfaction. It additionally displayed negative association with fear of happiness and separation anxiety. Its linkage with them was all negative, but no correlation found between fear of happiness and life satisfaction.

Table 2. Partial Correlations of Separation Anxiety, Fear of Happiness and Religious Coping controlling for Gender

Variables	1	2	3	4
Separation anxiety	-	-.10*	.26**	-.30**
Life satisfaction		-	-.05	.29**
Fear of happiness			-	-.19**
Religious coping				-

Note: * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Partial correlations of separation anxiety subscales appear in Table 3. Linkages for school phobia, fear of harm befalling family members, being away from a secure base, except for general anxiety were all positive. Being away from the secure base displayed direct associations with psychological measures and religious orientation.

Additionally, it correlated negatively with satisfaction with life. School phobia and fear of harm befalling family members had a positive relation with fear of happiness and negative relation with religious coping. General anxiety has no association with psychological measures and religious coping. With regard to the separation anxiety, being away from a secure base was the most consistent factor in psychological disturbance.

Table 3. Partial Correlations of Separation Anxiety controlling for Gender

Variables	Separation Anxiety (SA)				
	School phobia	Fear of harm befalling family members	Being away from secure base	from	General anxiety
Separation Anxiety Measures					
School phobia	-	.28**	.43**		.23**
Fear of harm befalling family members		-	.49**		.17*
Being away from secure base			-		-.12*
General anxiety					-
Psychological Measures and Religious Coping					
Fear of happiness	.27**	.16*	.17*		.10*
Life satisfaction	.09	-.10*	-.21**		-.05
Religious coping	-.26**	-.17*	-.38**		-.01

Note: *p < .01; **p < .001.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study became a pioneer to explore the relationship between separation anxiety, fear of happiness, and religious coping for adolescents level. The relationship between separation anxiety and its subfactors are considerably positive. According to Table 3, the findings imply that being away from a secure base for adolescents is the most disturbing in terms of separation anxiety. Roszak (1995) called this disturbing as excessive anxiety. Additionally, school phobia sounds concerned for adolescents as well. Considering adolescents studying science school, they might have school related anxiety concerns. As stated in the literature, this could be separation from home and separation from threatening object or attachment figure.

Participants for this study were selected from science school in which is indirectly and partially controlling poor environment conditions, having to say that adolescents' families were educated and living together. This result displays separate anxiety negatively impact on their life satisfaction. As supporting mechanism of family, no relation found between school phobia and life satisfaction, but there is negative relationship between fear of harm befalling members, being away from secure base and life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the result that adolescents perception on family as a secure base is related to lower adolescent internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Woodhouse et al., 2009). Kaya (2017) evidently emphasized that adolescents who strongly attached to family revealed the less feeling of loneliness. Contrarily, Malcom et al. (2003) highlighted students are concerned with more school related issues than family related issues.

School phobia, fear of happiness and being away from a secure base positively affect on fear of happiness. This is also negatively related to their life satisfaction. It might be both cultural or natural implication that when

they they suffer from separation anxiety, it will lead their fear of happiness in a positive direction. As to coping mechanism, this finding presents that religiosity is helpful to overcome disturbing fear of happiness and separation anxiety. However, Tekke and Özer (2019) recently found no association between religious values and fear of happiness. In this study, differently no relationship seen between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. Religiosity seems positive initiative to enhance life satisfaction in individual level and could be positively impact on fear of happiness and separation anxiety in which most of studies (e.g., Türk et al., 2017; Yildirim & Belen, 2018) found different result that there is positive and significant correlation between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. There is a distinguishing difference that a great deal of studies conducted over university participants or young adults, but this are only one of few studies in literature studying fear of happiness association with psychological variables in adolescents level.

Achour et al. (2016) highlighted religious coping as coping source and behavior are to seek “to reduce stress and minimize or control resultant negative emotions” (p.679). In this investigation, gender differences showed that female obtained higher than did male counterparts based on multivariate analysis. This is similar findings with those studying female more tendency to separation anxiety (Silove et al., 1993) and positive association with perception on family as a secure base (Bayraktar et al., 2009). Rather than revealing the differences among fear of happiness and religious coping, their higher level of religious coping could have reflected tendencies of individuals to self-report greater life satisfaction in general (Abdel-Khalek, 2007); additionally supporting the argument for this explanation was the positive association between fear of happiness and separation anxiety. Therefore, this negative association among separation anxiety, fear of happiness and religious coping represents different cultural values in the nation. It is of course strongly suggested to continue further research for investigating this relationship with other Muslim nations. This observation implies the life satisfaction impact on religious coping is a function of the degree to which religiosity stands for a coping strategy in Muslim adolescents level. Ghorbani et al. (2016) highlighted Muslim anxiety involvement in their attachment to God and religious coping is a greater strategy to alleviate distress and fear.

The result presents that there is a positive link between separation anxiety and fear of happiness due to the fact that conceptualization of these two constructs is relatively identical. This is a clear indication of the influence of cultural values in, especially Asian societies. Joshanloo et al. (2015) stated that “someone who believes that happiness can be easily replaced with negative states is more likely to believe that happiness leads to negative consequences” (p. 1213). In this view, separation anxiety construct consisting of fearing causes presumably individual to involve sadness. In addition to this, being away from secure bases only negatively associated with life satisfaction while school phobia, fear of harm befalling family members and general anxiety don’t affect life satisfaction. However, it is surprising that there is no relation between fear of happiness and life satisfaction. This unexpected finding differs from the claim that fear of happiness should reduce an individual’s level of happiness (Joshanloo, 2013). It is obviously presenting cultural varieties in different shapes of happiness including adolescents’ developmental process. In this light of theoretical

interpretation, this finding should be interpreted with caution considering cultural differences and adolescents level outlined, despite their positive association of separation anxiety with fear of happiness.

Additionally, the relationship between life satisfaction and religious coping is positively associated in this study as similar to other studies (e.g., Khan et al., 2015). This study indicated that this motivation can have adaptive implications. More generally, research with Muslim samples such as Pakistan (Khan et al., 2015), Malaysia (Tekke et al., 2017) and Iran (Ghorbani et al., 2016) has indicated that psychological implication occasionally predicts religious adjustment. The present findings suggest that religious coping of Muslim spirituality is part of life satisfaction. According to Abu-Raiya and Pargament (2015), religious coping is greater for Muslim communities across the countries in recent research findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Perhaps, supporting this argument in applied psychological practice that might be helpful for counselling efforts to deal with Muslims. Any individual tendencies toward religious coping should be motivated as compatible with Muslim religious adaptations. As to suggestion of this findings, psychologists, educators and counselors who wish to evaluate and improve the happiness of school students, should consider cultural values and avoidance from a secure base. This study limited to only adolescents studying at secondary science school, a province where conservative communities live respectively in Turkey. The findings should be cautiously generalized to other students and the adult population. It is strongly suggested to replicate such studies in different lifestyle groups to figure out further connection and also will make sense to consider other societies in the region.

ETHICAL TEXT

In the study, permission was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Düzce University, dated 01/06/2020 and numbered 78187535/604.02/. In this article, the journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics, and journal ethical rules were followed. The responsibility belongs to the author (s) for any violations that may arise regarding the article.

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