Abstract
The present study aims to determine the relationships between separation anxiety, learned resourcefulness, state and trait anxiety, and psychological symptoms among college students. The sample of the study consisted of 315 university students [243 female (%77.10) and 72 male (%22.90), mean age = 20.59] who were attending to Anadolu University in the 2003-2004 academic year. The Separation Anxiety Symptom Scale (Ceyhan, 2000), the Rosenbaum’s Self Control Schedule (Dağ, 1991), the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Öner & Le Compte, 1983), and the Derogatis Brief Symptom Inventory (Şahin & Durak, 1994) were used to collect the data. Pearson-product moment correlation and regression analyses were used in the analysis of the data. Findings showed that separation anxiety was a significant predictor of learned resourcefulness. Moreover, the findings indicated that separation anxiety was a significant predictor of state, trait anxiety, and psychological symptom levels. These findings have pointed out that the intensity of the separation anxiety symptoms may be an important factor for behaviors in adulthood.

Key Words
Separation Anxiety, State-Trait Anxiety, Learned Resourcefulness, Psychological Symptom.

*Correspondence: Assist. Prof. Dr. A. Aykut CEYHAN, Anadolu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, 26470 Eskişehir-Turkey. E-mail: aeyhan@anadolu.edu.tr

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The quality of the relationship between parents and a child during infancy is very important. Bowlby’s attachment theory (1969, 1973) proposed that an individual’s first attachment relationship with his/her parents/or caregivers has a great significance in determining his/her interpersonal relationships and future psychological adjustment. It has been accepted that there is a relationship between traumatic life events in childhood and anxiety disorders in adulthood (Ağargün & Kara, 1995). However, some researchers have been skeptic about this relationship (Manicavasagar et al., 1999). One of the various negative behaviors experienced in childhood is separation anxiety described as a discrete anxiety disorder (Scott & Cully, 1995; Silove et al., 1993).

Separation anxiety can be experienced at any time in childhood, but the intensity of the anxiety experienced differs from child to child. Some children might experience more intense separation anxiety than others. Sometimes, this intense anxiety may continue for years (DSM-IV, 1994). Numerous psychiatric studies have indicated that early separation anxiety in childhood was a serious risk factor for adult anxiety disorder (Silove et al., 1993, Silove et al., 1995). DSM-IV (1994) points out that the threat of separation in children and adolescents with separation anxiety disorder can lead to excessive anxiety and even panic attack. Some recent studies indicate that early separation anxiety is linked to not only panic disorders and agoraphobia but also other types of anxiety disorders (Manicavasagar et al., 1998; Ağargün & Kara, 1995) and depression (Ağargün & Kara, 1995) in adulthood. However, it has been indicated that some studies was still suspicious about whether early separation anxiety was a risk factor for a wide range of adult anxiety disorders (Silove et al., 1995).

It can be expressed that perceptions related with the quality of the bonding experiences with parents in early years of life are very important for the existence of childhood separation anxiety. Childhood separation anxiety can become an important base for the anxiety experienced in adulthood. It may also cause a disposition to psychological problems or disorders in adulthood and separation anxiety symptoms may last in adulthood as well. This situation reminds that intensive separation anxiety symptoms experienced in childhood and adolescent years have potential negative effects on some
behaviors and personality characteristics in later years. The present study aims to determine the relationships between separation anxiety experienced in the past and learned resourcefulness, state and trait anxiety, and psychological symptoms among university students. For this purpose, the present research investigated whether separation anxiety experienced by college students in the past was a significant predictor of their learned resourcefulness, state anxiety, trait anxiety, and psychological symptom levels.

Method

315 university students attending to various teacher training programs at Anadolu University in the 2003-2004 academic year participated in the study. Of all the participants, 243 were females (%77.10) and 72 were males (%22.90). The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 26 years with a mean of 20.59 years. The Separation Anxiety Symptoms Scale (Ceyhan, 2000) was used to assess the separation anxiety levels experienced in the past; the Rosenbaum’s Self Control Schedule (Dağ, 1991) for the learned resourcefulness levels; Spielberger’s State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Öner and Le Compte, 1983) for the state and trait anxiety levels; and the Brief Symptom Inventory developed by Derogatis (Şahin & Durak, 1994) for the psychological symptoms; and the Information Questionnaire for collecting various personal information. The data were collected by the researcher in May 2004. The data were analyzed by using Pearson’s correlation coefficient and simple regression analysis.

Results

The research investigated whether the adults’ separation anxiety levels were significant predictors of learned resourcefulness, state anxiety, trait anxiety, and psychological symptoms. Results showed that the correlation coefficients between the separation anxiety levels experienced in the past and learned resourcefulness, state anxiety, trait anxiety, and psychological symptom levels were -.56, .62, .42, and .54 (p < .01, n = 315), respectively. Thus, relationships between the separation anxiety levels and four variables were found to be moderately significant. In the light of these relationships, how the separation anxiety levels predict the other variables was examined by using simple regression analysis.
Results showed that the level of the separation anxiety experienced in the past was a significant predictor of learned resourcefulness ($p < .01$). The separation anxiety experienced in the past alone accounted for 31% of the variance on learned resourcefulness. The level of the separation anxiety experienced in the past was also a significant predictor of both state anxiety and trait anxiety ($p < .01$). Separation anxiety alone accounted for 17% of the variance on state anxiety and 39% of the variance on trait anxiety. The level of the separation anxiety experienced in the past was also a significant predictor of psychological symptoms levels ($p < .01$) and accounted for 29% of the variance on psychological symptoms levels.

**Discussion**

The first finding of present study indicates that the adults’ levels of separation anxiety experienced in the past significantly predicted their learned resourcefulness levels and there was a negative relationship between these two variables. This finding is consistent with the previous research. For example, Rosenbaum (1989 as cited in Boyraz & Aydın, 2003) has reported that the individuals’ learned resourcefulness skills were cognitive skills learned as a result of their repeated encounters with their environment. Boyraz and Aydın (2003) also found that the learned resourcefulness levels of male adolescents living together with their families were higher than those who were living in orphanages. Therefore, these explanations give some clues that intensive experiences of separation in the past may become a negative factor for the development of their learned resourcefulness skills.

The findings of the previous research also indicate that the adults’ levels of separation anxiety experienced in the past significantly predicted their state and trait anxiety levels. There were also positive relationships between separation anxiety and state and trait anxiety levels. This finding is also consistent with the previous anxiety research. The literature clearly shows that there is a strong relationship between sensitivity to anxiety and some anxiety disorders (Rabian, Embry & MacIntyre, 1999). Various studies have reported that there was a relationship between early separation anxiety experiences and anxiety disorders in adulthood (Ağargün & Kara,
1995; Lutz & Hock, 1995; Manicavasagar et al., 1999; Otto et al., 2001; Silove et al., 1993). Early separation anxiety was directly related with the continuation of the separation symptoms in adulthood (Manicavasagar et al., 1999). By taking these findings into account, it can be said that the findings of the present research supported that the early separation anxiety experiences would be an important factor for the anxiety levels in adulthood.

The findings also revealed that the adults’ levels of separation anxiety experienced in the past significantly predicted their psychological symptoms levels and there was a positive relationship between these variables. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of previous research. Since the literature points out that early separation anxiety experiences are important risk factors for psychological disorders experienced in adulthood (Ağargün & Kara, 1995; Brown & Wright, 2003; DSM-IV, 1994; Lutz & Hock, 1995; Manicavasagar et al., 1998; Manicavasagar et al., 1999; Onur et al., 2004; Otto et al., 2001; Silove et al., 1993; Silove et al., 1995). Thereby, it can be stated that all the findings yielded evidence about the role of the intense early separation anxiety experienced in the past on psychological disorder symptoms displayed by young adults.

This study has some limitations. The most important limitation was to collect the data about the early separation anxiety experienced in the past retrospectively. Therefore, the findings are limited by the imprecision inherent in a retrospective assessment of childhood anxiety symptoms. The data could have been influenced by the individuals’ retrospective reports. This model has some methodological limitations and the findings wait for the confirmation by other studies. Because of these limitations, this study may be assessed as a preliminary study. As a result, it may provide important evidence about the role of the separation anxiety symptoms in childhood and adolescence on psychological health qualities of young adults.
Kaynakça/References


