

Perceived Parental Styles and Adult Separation Anxiety: The Mediating Role of Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions



Sezin BAŞBUĞ¹, Gizem CESUR², Ayşegül DURAK BATIGÜN³

SUMMARY

Objective: This study primarily aimed to determine whether perceived parental styles and interpersonal cognitive distortions are predictors of adult separation anxiety. Further, this study aimed to examine the mediating role of interpersonal cognitive distortions in the relationship between perceived over-permissive/boundless parental styles and adult separation anxiety in university students.

Method: This study included 444 university students (281 female (63.3%) and 163 male (36.7%) with a mean age of sample 21.02 years (SS = 1.70). The Demographic Information Form, Young Parenting Inventory, Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale, and Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire were used.

Results: The regression analyses revealed that the age of the participants and their perceived controlling/shaping father parenting style negatively predicted adult separation anxiety, while perceived overpermissive/boundless mother parenting style, exploitative/abusive and overprotective/anxious father parenting styles and the subscales of the interpersonal cognitive distortions scale positively predicted adult separation anxiety. As hypothesized, data from this study reveal that subscales of the interpersonal cognitive distortions scale play a full mediating role in the relationship between over-permissive/boundless parenting styles and adult separation anxiety.

Conclusion: Results indicate that the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style positively predicts adult separation anxiety symptoms by distorting interpersonal cognitions. Furthermore, the over-permissive parenting style and lack of boundaries and/or discipline lead to similar adverse effects as do authoritarian and normative parenting. To our knowledge, there are very few studies investigating adult separation anxiety symptoms in Turkey. Therefore, our current study provides practical information to mental health professionals regarding adult separation anxiety symptoms, which are likely to be accompanied by other psychological symptoms.

Keywords: Parenting, interpersonal relations, separation anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive mechanisms thought to trigger interpersonal problems in relationships and psychological symptoms have attempted to be explained by approaches such as Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), Cognitive Theory (Beck, 1976), and Schema Theory (Young et al 2003). Bowlby (1969) describes attachment as a feeling of being close to people important to one's life, especially in hard times, and as an emotional bond that develops to maintain this intimacy. This emotional bond is established in infancy and continues until the end of

life. This bond is established by eye and skin contact between mother and child, and creates a feeling of belonging in both mother and child. It has been reported that this emotional bond helps the child to feel safe, and in turn, helps the mother understand the child's messages (Miller 2013). Establishing sufficient and satisfactory emotional attachment with the caregiver in the early years increases the individual's possibility of adaptation and decreases his/her possibility of being alone, facing problems in social relationships, or developing psychological problems (Bartholomew 1990, Sable 2008).

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¹Psychologist, ³Prof., Ankara University, Psychology, Ankara, ²Psychologist, İstanbul Commerce University, Psychology, İstanbul, Turkey.

e-mail: sezinbasbug@gmail.com

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Attachment Theory is significant for understanding and explaining interpersonal relationships extending over a wide range, from parent-child relations, social relations, peer relations, and romantic relations (Kalehzan 1993). The first relationship, which is formed by caregiver(s), creates mental representations regarding the self and others, and these representations lead to future close relationships (Ditommasso et al 2003). Likewise, cognitive theory argues that interactions with the caregiver in the early years play an important role in the development of cognitive schemas that are key to the individual's understanding of the self, others, and the world (Beck 1976). On the other hand, according to schema theory, perceived parenting styles in adulthood are also related to cognitive schemas (Soygüt and Çakır 2009, Young et al 2003). In other words, some negative parenting styles (such as criticizing, rejecting, over-protective, or neglectful parenting) fail to meet the needs of the child during the early years, and lead to the development of several negative basic beliefs, such as feeling unlovable and worthless. As a result, individuals may have distorted interpretations of life events or relationships (Beck 1976, Köroğlu 2005, Mobini et al 2005, Özer 2011), which are seen as risk factors for many psychological problems both in childhood and adulthood (Gerlsma et al 1990, Milevsky et al 2007, Wolfradt et al 2003, Yiğit and Erden 2015).

Interpersonal cognitive distortions can be conceptualized as over-strict, illogical, exaggerated, or perfectionist thoughts that develop as a result of interactions with the caregiver; these distortions can determine how an individual behaves in close relationships (DiGiuseppe and Zee 1986, Kayser and Himle 1994). These cognitive distortions (Leung and Poon 2001) may prevent an individual from establishing healthy relationships with others (Akin 2010, Whisman and Friedman, 1998). Consistent with this view, early life experiences and effects of parenting styles can be the origin of cognitive distortions. Several researchers emphasize that parenting styles perceived in adulthood (Safran and Segal, 1996) are related with problems in interpersonal relationships (Bowlby 1969, Boyce and Parker 1989, Frank et al 1997). A number of studies (Çoban 2013, Yiğit and Çelik 2016) have shown that interpersonal cognitive distortions could be one of the causes of relationship problems. In parallel with this line of argument, Hamamcı and Büyüköztürk (2004) reported that individuals with interpersonal cognitive distortions are likely to experience conflicts in their close relationships.

Another concept arising from attachment theory is separation anxiety, which is listed as a childhood disorder in the DSM-IV (APA 2000). This disorder is defined as feeling over-anxious in cases where the individual is separated from the attachment figure or in cases where there are expectations of separation. Several researchers have shown that separation anxiety can also appear in adulthood (Manicavasagar et al 2000, Shear et al 2006). Manicavasagar and Silove (1997) are

the first researchers to address adult separation anxiety. They argued that it could be an extension of childhood separation anxiety disorder, or, it may appear for the first time in adulthood (Cyranowski et al 2002, Manicavasagar et al 2000). Accordingly, separation anxiety disorder is categorized under Anxiety Disorders in the DSM-5, and it shares the same diagnosis criteria with other such disorders; however, the age range has been changed. The criterion stating that the disorder should be seen before the age of 18 has been removed, and the diagnosis criteria have been rewritten for adults (APA 2013). According to a study conducted in the USA in 2006, the lifetime prevalence of adult separation anxiety was 6.6%; in that study, it was pointed out that the vast majority of participants were diagnosed with separation anxiety for the first time in adulthood (Shear et al 2006), indicating that separation anxiety is an important psychopathology in clinical research and evaluations.

Several studies have shown a positive correlation between interpersonal cognitive distortions and negative appraisals, interpersonal rejection, unrealistic relationship expectations, interpersonal misunderstanding, shyness, fear (e.g. Koydemir and Demir 2008), anxiety, depression, and anger (e.g. Leung and Poon 2001). According to Cognitive theory, thinking errors and misinterpretations underlie emotional disorders and anxiety (Wells and Carter 2002). Thus, it can be said that separation anxiety results from biased appraisal of one's own coping skills and separation from the attachment figure, which is perceived as a threat (Batum Panayırıcı 2012, Wells 2013). Therefore, several interpersonal cognitive distortions are thought to affect separation anxiety. Adult separation anxiety is mostly comorbid with depression, anxiety, and adjustment disorder (Pini et al 2010), and therefore, clinical assessments stress the importance of taking this information into consideration (Manicavasagar et al 1997). Because of these important comorbidities, it can be argued that research in adult separation anxiety is gaining importance.

Much of the research (Silove et al 1995) conducted thus far shows that over-protective parenting (particularly from the mother) is associated with childhood separation anxiety. Similarly, Wood (2006) describes that there is a significant relationship between the intrusive parenting style and separation anxiety in children with anxiety disorder. On the other hand, there is only one study (Manicavasagar et al 1997) investigating the relationship between adult separation anxiety and perceived parenting styles in adulthood. That study reports that an over-protective mother parenting style is related with adult separation anxiety. However, to our knowledge, no research has examined the relationship between the over-permissive/boundless parenting style perceived in adulthood and adult separation anxiety. There is, however, a correlation between perceived over-protective and intrusive parenting styles and anxiety disorder (Manicavasagar et al 1999, Silove et al 1995, Wood 2006). Further research shows that

particularly normative and intrusive parents and negligent and uninvolved parents play an important role in the psychological problems observed in young individuals (Ulusoy et al 2005). Today, there is a tendency to move from conditional, protecting, intrusive, and dominant parenting styles to permissive and friendly parenting styles, which are thought to support the autonomy of the individual (Kağıtçıbaşı 1996, Fişek n.d.). Sümer and Güngör (1999) reported that two incompatible parenting styles, authoritarian and permissive, are the most prevalent.

Parents who do not set any boundaries in childhood and puberty are thought to be laying the ground for some psychological symptoms. Therefore, the current study aims to examine the mediator role of interpersonal cognitive distortions between the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style and adult separation anxiety.

In conclusion, an individual's cognitive distortions can be filled with negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that can prevent the individual from initiating, maintaining, and ending healthy interpersonal relationships. In terms of interpersonal relationships, "breaking-up" with the attachment figure or the emergence of anxiety (in cases of separation expectancy) are possible psychological symptoms defined as separation anxiety (Diriöz et al 2012). Individuals that cannot form close relationships face problems in maintaining such relationships, and these relationships are often ended prematurely (Duran and Hamamcı 2010, Sunal et al 2013); therefore, there is a need for further research on adult separation anxiety. On the other hand, negative parenting styles (as perceived by an adult) may not cause psychological disorders in every individual. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that interpersonal cognitive distortions based on cognitive theory play a significant role in the relationship between parenting styles perceived by the adult and adult separation anxiety. This study aimed to determine the extent which parenting styles perceived by the adult and interpersonal cognitive distortions predict adult separation anxiety, and to identify whether interpersonal cognitive distortions play a mediating role in the relationship between over-permissive/boundless parenting and adult separation anxiety symptoms.

METHOD

Participants

This study included 444 volunteer university students over 18 years of age studying in Istanbul and Ankara. Of the students, 281 were female (63.3%) and 163 (36.7%) were male. The age of the participants ranged between 18 and 25 years, and the average age was 21.02 years (SD = 1.70). Of the participants, 215 (48.4%) were living with their families whereas 229 (51.6) of them were living separately.

Measurement Tools

Demographic Information Form: This form was designed by researchers to obtain socio-demographic information about the participants (such as age, gender, socio-economic level).

Young Parenting Inventory (YPI): YPI was developed by Young (1994) to assess various parenting styles underlying early maladaptive schemas. Sheffield et al. (2005) studied the validity and reliability of the scale with a sample of college students. The scale contains 72 items on a six-point Likert Scale, which is used by the participants to describe their parents. Soygüt, Çakır, and Karaosmanoğlu (2008) adapted the YPI for Turkish with a sample of college students. As a result of factor analysis, the 72 item scales were reduced to 64, and the parenting styles were identified as follows: controlling/shaping, belittling/criticizing, emotionally depriving, exploitative/abusive, over-protective/anxious, conditional/achievement focused, over-permissive/boundless, pessimistic/worried, punitive, and restricted/emotionally inhibited (Soygüt et al 2008). The convergent validity of the YPI was determined with the Symptom Checklist GSI index (SCL-90-R). The Symptom Checklist GSI index (SCL-90-R) and SCL-90-R were significantly correlated with the YPI mother and father subscales. Soygüt et al. (2008) calculated the reliability of the parenting subscales of the mother form (α was between .53 and .86), the father form (α was between .61 and .89), and the total scores (α = .90) for both parents. We recalculated the reliability of the scale of based on our data. Accordingly, the Cronbach Alpha value for the parenting subscales of the mother form were between .48 and .88, and the father form were between .55 and .90, and the total scores were .91 for the mother form and .92 for the father form. On the other hand, we found lower reliability for the Punitive subscale (α = .30 for mother form and α = .20 for father form).

Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire (ASA-27): This questionnaire was developed by Manicavasgar et al. (2003) to measure the symptoms of separation anxiety. The sample had 3 groups (anxiety patients, community groups at high risk for adult separation anxiety disorder, and healthy control group). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Diriöz (2010), and the sample consisted of psychiatric patients and healthy controls aged between 18 and 65 years. Like the original study, according to the construct validity, a single factor structure explains 40% of the variance. To test the convergent validity of the scale, its correlation with Separation anxiety symptom inventory, the separation sensitivity subscale of the Panic and Agoraphobic Spectrum Scale, the anxiety sensitivity scale, and Panic disorder sensitivity scale were examined, and a positive correlation was identified for each. The internal consistency coefficient of the scale was .93, and retest reliability results showed high correlation between two measurements (r = .93). In the current study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was .92.

Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale: This scale was developed by Hamamcı and Büyüköztürk (2004) to identify cognitive distortions rooted in dysfunctional attitudes. There are three subscales: “interpersonal rejection”, “unrealistic relationship expectation,” and “mind reading”. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale was .67, and was .70, .76, and .74, respectively, for interpersonal rejection, unrealistic relationship expectation, and mind reading. Test-retest reliability was .74 for the entire scale (Hamamcı and Büyüköztürk 2004). In the current study, the total Cronbach’s Alpha reliability value was .82, and that of the subscales ranged between .72-.79.

Procedure

The scales were distributed to the participants through face-to-face interviews or through online forms via the internet. The face-to-face part of the study was conducted in a classroom environment within the control of the researcher. In total, 444 people participated in the study; 271 of these completed the forms in a classroom and 173 completed the forms online. Data obtained through these two different methods were analyzed by t-test, which revealed no difference between the groups. The scales were administered after receiving consent from the participants. Data cleaning was done after entering the data in the computer. Seven participants were excluded from the study as they either left the questions blank or they were outliers.

RESULT

Means, standard deviations, and minimum-maximum values are presented in Table 1.

Correlation Analyses were conducted to identify the correlations between all variables in the research, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Hierarchical regression (stepwise regression) analyses were conducted to identify the variables predicting adult separation anxiety symptoms. We only included significant correlations in these analyses. In addition, the Young Parenting Inventory mother and father forms (“Punitive sub-scale”) were excluded from the analysis due to low Cronbach alpha coefficients ($\alpha = .30$ and $\alpha = .20$).

Multiple hierarchical regression analyses were performed based on theoretical knowledge. Entered in to the equation were the following: the demographic variable of age, the second phase subscales of the YPI mother form, the third phase subscales of the YPI father form, and the interpersonal cognitive distortions subscales. Results are presented in Table 3.

As seen in Table 2, the variables account for 23% of the variance ($R^2 = .23$, $F(20,423) = 6.35$, $p < .01$). First, it was

Table 1. Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, Minimum and Maximum Values of the Scales

Variables	Mean	sd	Min.	Max.
YPI Mother Form				
Controlling/shaping	29.85	10.96	12	62
Belittling/criticizing	12.27	4.51	9	33
Emotionally depriving	16.52	6.96	8	39
Exploitative/abusive	7.41	1.29	7	15
Over-protective/anxious	21.49	7.01	7	38
Conditional/achievement focused	16.56	6.04	5	30
Over-permissive/boundless	9.78	4.33	6	26
Pessimistic/worried	6.96	3.56	3	18
Restricted/emotionally inhibited	8.17	3.16	3	18
YPI Father Form				
Controlling/shaping	31.99	13.61	12	71
Belittling/criticizing	13.14	6.14	9	43
Emotionally depriving	19.92	8.58	8	46
Exploitative/abusive	7.75	1.85	7	21
Over-protective/anxious	19.64	6.63	7	39
Conditional/achievement focused	16.62	6.19	5	30
Over-permissive/boundless	9.79	4.25	6	28
Pessimistic/worried	6.67	3.33	3	18
Restricted/emotionally inhibited	9.72	3.96	3	18
Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Subscales				
Interpersonal rejection	18.17	5.37	8	38
Unrealistic relationship expectation	23.44	5.97	8	40
Mind reading	9.40	2.54	3	15
Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale Total	51.02	9.98	19	78
ASA-27	55.51	13.05	27	98

YPI: Young Parenting Inventory, ASA-27: Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire

found that age ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$) and the controlling/shaping father parenting style ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$) negatively predict the symptoms of adult separation anxiety (ASA), while the over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style ($\beta = .21$, $p < .05$), the exploitative/abusive father style ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$), and the over-protective/anxious father style ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$) positively predict the symptoms of ASA.

Interpersonal Rejection ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$) and unrealistic relationship expectations ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) are also positive predictors of the symptoms of ASA.

Analysis of Model Tests

The criteria of Baron and Kenny (1986) were taken into consideration when examining the role of mediating variables. The mediating role of interpersonal cognitive distortions between the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style and adult separation anxiety was examined by the bootstrap method. The bootstrap method was proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008), and it uses random sampling with replacement, and is a non-parametric method that relies on resampling (for instance 1000 times, 5000 times). For

Table 2. Correlation Coefficients between variables

Demographic variables																									
1	Age																								
2	Socio-economic level	.07	-																						
3	Years lives apart from family	.28**	-.11*	-																					
YPI Mother form																									
4	Controlling/shaping	-.01	.01	-.08	-																				
5	Belittling/criticizing	.08	-.05	-.03	.52**	-																			
6	Emotionally depriving	.08	-.12*	.01	.23**	.51**	-																		
7	Exploitative/abusive	.13**	-.05	.04	.23**	.41**	.22**	-																	
8	Over-protective/anxious	-.01	-.07	-.06	.47**	.36**	-.01	.11*	-																
9	Conditional/achievement focused	-.02	.02	-.02	.56**	.24**	.01	.12*	.31**	-															
10	Over-permissive/boundless	.03	-.02	.04	.08	.29**	.19**	.12**	.18**	.06	-														
11	Pessimistic/worried	.03	-.17**	.01	.51**	.46**	.24**	.30**	.39**	.33**	.17**	-													
12	Restricted/emotionally inhibited	.09*	-.02	.08	.39**	.18**	.14**	.06	.13**	.28**	.07	.33**	-												
YPI Father Form																									
13	Controlling/shaping	.08	.01	.05	.62**	.32**	.12*	.13**	.40**	.40**	.14**	.33**	.31**	-											
14	Belittling/criticizing	.12**	-.09	.04	.31**	.66**	.32**	.25**	.28**	.17**	.27**	.34**	.14*	.55**	-										
15	Emotionally depriving	.05	-.14**	.01	.15*	.39**	.61**	.17**	.12**	-.01	.14**	.20**	.05	.28**	.56**	-									
16	Exploitative/abusive	.09	-.14**	.03	.14**	.29**	.13**	.59**	.11*	.10*	.10*	.30**	.06	.23**	.40**	.30**	-								
17	Over-protective/anxious	.02	-.08	-.02	.42**	.30**	-.01	.10*	.80**	.28**	.13**	.28**	.14**	.46**	.30**	.02	.10*	-							
18	Conditional/achievement focused	.02	.04	.02	.42**	.17**	.01	.12*	.28**	.80**	.08	.22**	.25**	.58**	.25**	.03	.13**	.31**	-						
19	Over-permissive/boundless	-.01	-.08	.02	.11*	.28**	.18**	.13**	.17**	.05	.89**	.18**	.07	.14**	.29**	.19**	.19**	.17**	.06	-					
20	Pessimistic/worried	.02	-.17**	.05	.31**	.33**	.12*	.20**	.33**	.22**	.16**	.56**	.19**	.48**	.51**	.30**	.28**	.38**	.28**	.21**	-				
21	Restricted/emotionally inhibited	.13**	-.04	.03	.33**	.18**	.09	.08	.28**	.26**	.15**	.31**	.49**	.51**	.34**	.28**	.11*	.23**	.30**	.15**	.43**	-			
Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Subscales																									
22	Interpersonal rejection	-.02	-.15**	.07	.27**	.24**	.12*	.10*	.17**	.28**	.16**	.30**	.20**	.30**	.25**	.16**	.07	.18**	.27**	.20**	.23**	.26**	-		
23	Unrealistic relationship expectation	-.13*	-.04	-.04	.18**	.02	-.06	.04	.17**	.32**	.09*	.17**	.17**	.19**	.03	-.07	.02	.19**	.34**	.11*	.16**	.17**	.26**	-	
24	Mind reading	-.03	.00	-.12*	.14**	-.08	-.09*	.07	.08	.18**	-.07	.12*	.04	.10*	.04	-.11*	.07	.12*	.19**	.01	.15**	.04	.15**	.25**	-
25	Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale Total	-.10*	-.10*	-.02	.28*	.16**	.01	.10*	.22**	.39**	.13**	.29**	.22**	.30**	.16**	.02	.07	.24**	.39**	.17**	.23**	.25**	.73**	.81**	.48**
26	ASA-27	-.10*	-.06	-.01	.22*	.16**	-.01	.12*	.20**	.28**	.11*	.20**	.17**	.14**	.13**	.06	.20**	.23**	.23**	.11*	.12**	.12*	.29**	.28**	.17**

*p < .05, ** p < .01 YPI: Young Parenting Inventory, ASA-27: Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire

2,14*

2,04*

2,44*

3,90**

2,54*

4,07**

2,80*

Table 3. Predictive variables of Adult Separation Anxiety symptoms

Variables	R	R ²	Beta	F	t
Demographic variables	.10	.01	-.10	4.59*	-2.14*
Age					
YPI / Mother Form	.36	.13	.21	6.96**	2.04*
Over-permissive/ Boundless					
YPI / Father Form	.41	.17	-.22	5.05**	-2.44*
Controlling/shaping					
Exploitative/abusive			.23		3.90**
Over-protective/anxious			.20		2.54*
Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale	.48	.23	.20	6.35**	4.07**
Interpersonal rejection					
Unrealistic relationship expectation			.14		2.80*

*p < .05, **p < .01

every new sampling, an indirect mediating effect is calculated. The significance of the mediator effect is determined according to the calculation of a confidence interval. If the confidence interval did not include “0” (zero), then it is statistically significant (Preacher and Hayes 2004, 2008).

As seen in Figure 1, the perceived over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style has a direct significant effect on the predicted variable of adult separation anxiety ($\beta = .33$, $t =$

2.32, $p = .021$) (Step 1). In addition, the over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style is a significant and direct predictor of the mediating variables of interpersonal rejection ($\beta = .20$, $t = 3.50$, $p = .000$) and unrealistic-relationship expectation ($\beta = .13$, $t = 1.99$, $p = .047$) (Step 2). When the effect of the mediating variable on adult separation anxiety was determined, it was identified that interpersonal rejection ($\beta = .56$, $t = 4.93$, $p = .000$) and unrealistic-relationship expectation (β

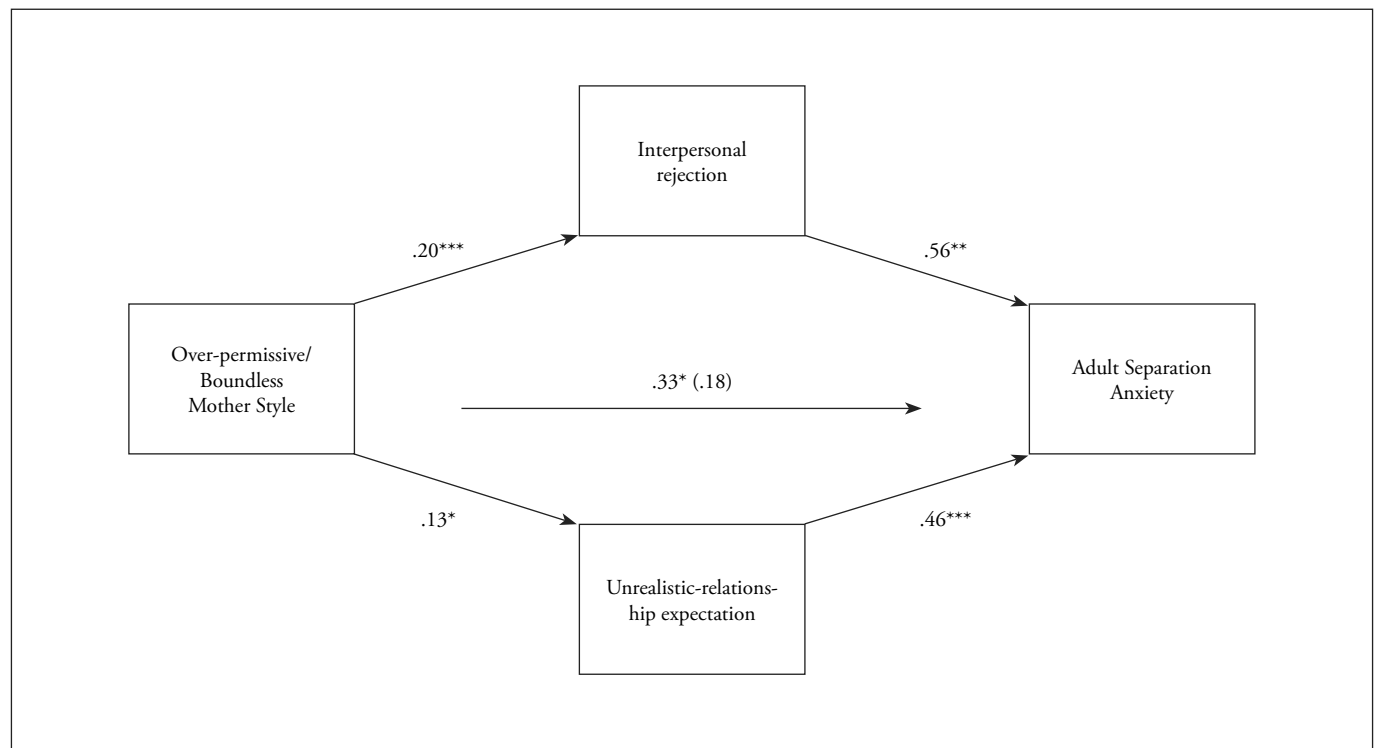


Figure 1. Mediating Role of Subscales of Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale between Perceived Over-Permissive/Boundless Mother Parenting Style and Adult Separation Anxiety

Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 4. Point Estimation for total and specific indirect effect on adult separation anxiety, 95% of Bias-corrected Confidence Interval

Variables	Indirect effects				95% Bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) Confidence intervals	
	Indirect effects	Standard error	Z	P	Lower limit	Upper limit
Total	.17	.057	3.17	.002	.0741	.3043
Interpersonal rejection	.14	.040	2.86	.004	.0516	.2174
Unrealistic relationship expectation	.06	.034	1.82	.068	.0065	.1451

= .46, $t = 4.53$, $p = .000$) have significant and direct effects (Step 3). When the over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style and all mediating variables are included in the equation simultaneously (step 4), the significant relationship between the over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style and adult separation anxiety is lost ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.15$, $p = .249$). Thus, it is concluded that mediator variables play a full mediating role in the relationship between over-permissive/boundless mother parenting and adult separation anxiety. In conclusion, the entire model is significant ($F(3, 440) = 22.08$, $p = .000$) and explains 13% of the variance.

For the first model, which was used to identify whether the mediating variables have significant full-mediating effects, 1000 bootstrap samples were used. As seen in Table 4, the total indirect effect of two variables are significant (point estimation = .10 and 95% BCa GA [.1720, .0013]).

As seen in Figure 2, the over-permissive/boundless father parenting style has a significant direct effect on the predicted variable of adult separation anxiety ($\beta = .35$, $t = 2.40$, $p = .017$) (Step 1). In addition, the mediating variables of interpersonal rejection ($\beta = .25$, $t = 4.19$, $p = .000$) and unrealistic relationship expectation ($\beta = .15$, $t = 2.31$, $p = .021$) have significant and direct effects on the permissive/boundless father parenting style at the level of $p < .001$ and $p < .05$, respectively. When the effect of mediating variables on adult separation anxiety was examined, it was identified that interpersonal rejection ($\beta = .56$, $t = 4.90$, $p = .000$) and unrealistic relationship expectation ($\beta = .46$, $t = 4.53$, $p = .000$) have significant and direct effects (Step 3). When the over-permissive/boundless father parenting style and all mediating variables were included in the equation at the same time (Step 4), the relationship between the over-permissive/boundless father parenting style and adult separation anxiety decreased, and the level of

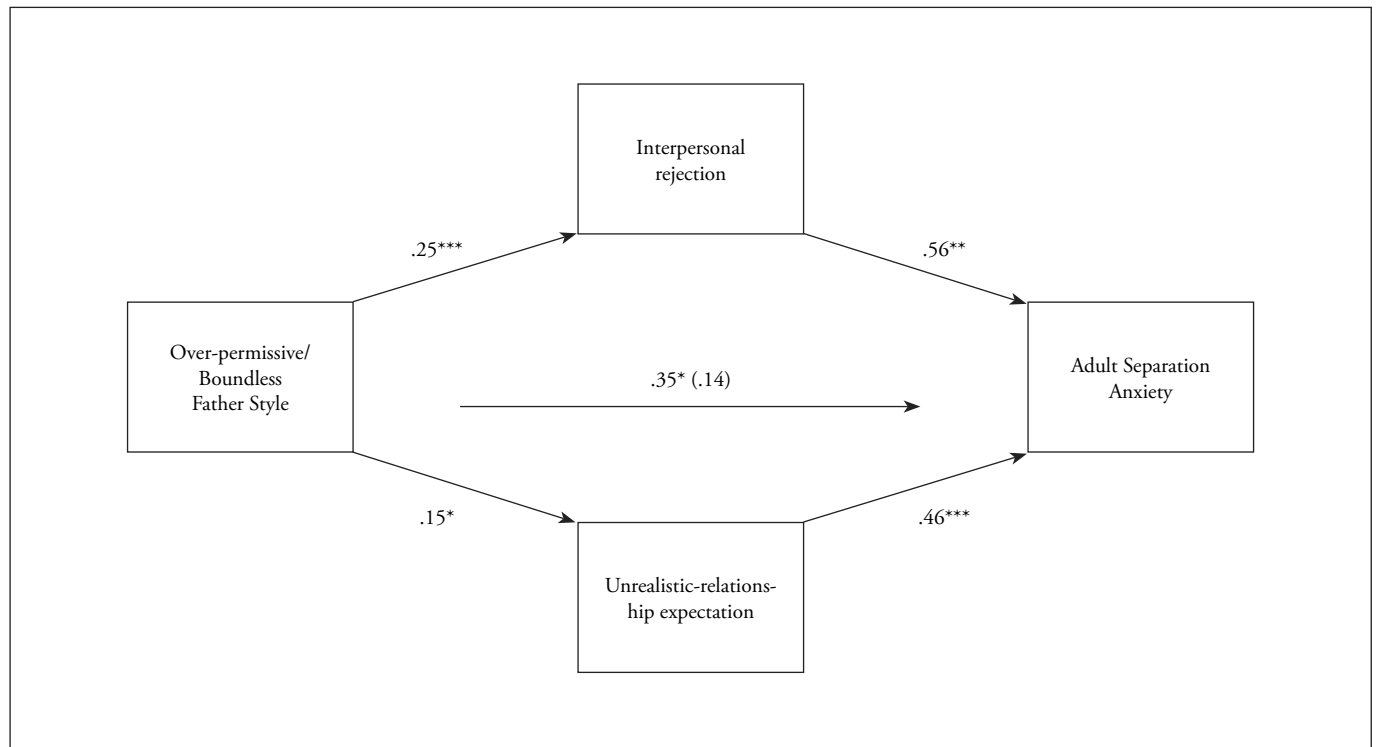


Figure 2. Mediating Role of Subscales of Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale between Perceived Over-permissive/Boundless Father Parenting Style and Adult Separation Anxiety

Unstandardized beta coefficients are reported.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5. Point Estimation for total and specific indirect effect on adult separation anxiety, 95% of Bias-corrected Confidence Interval

Variables	Indirect effects				95% Bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) Confidence intervals	
	Indirect effects	Standard error	Z	P	Lower limit	Upper limit
Total	.21	.059	3.62	.000	.1019	.3416
Interpersonal rejection	.14	.044	3.19	.001	.0653	.2399
Unrealistic relationship expectation	.07	.034	2.06	.039	.0156	.1609

significance compared to the former also decreased ($\beta = .14$, $t = 1.01$, $p = .313$). Thus, we conclude that mediating variables play a full-mediating role in the relationship between the over-permissive/boundless father parenting style and adult separation anxiety. The entire model is significant ($F(3, 440) = 21.96$, $p = .000$) and explains 13% of the variance.

For the second model, which was used to identify whether the mediating variables have significant full-mediating effects, 1000 bootstrap samples were used. As seen in Table 5, the total indirect effect of two mediating variables is significant (point estimation = .10 and %95 BCa GA [.2080, -.0002]).

DISCUSSION

The relationships established between those in the close environment, primarily with the mother and father, in the early years affect perceptions, emotions, thoughts, and schemas about the world and others within the context of the interpersonal relationship (Ainsworth and Bowlby 1991, Beck and Emery 2006, Young et al 2003). Followed by attachment and separation, the second separation individuation process is an important developmental task (Blos 1967) and is substantially influential in close relationships in young adulthood (Göral 2002). This developmental stage is described as a period in which the individual develops several relationships and regulates them (Tamar 1997). During this process, attachment styles and perceived parenting styles have significant relationships with established close relationship styles (Milne and Lancaster 2001). When all of these processes are considered together, the individual becomes vulnerable for several psychological symptoms during emerging adulthood (Cicchetti and Rogosch 2002).

The relationships between adulthood attachment and a number of psychological symptoms have been widely studied in Turkey (Sümer and Güngör 1999, Oktay and Batıgün 2014). Currently, there has been an increase in attention to studying adult separation anxiety (Diriöz 2010, Yeşilyurt 2014), which is the main variable of this study. Results show that age, some perceived parenting styles, and interpersonal cognitive distortions predict the symptoms of separation anxiety. Likewise, the study of Gürlek-Yüksel (2006) pointed out that the symptoms of separation anxiety decrease with increasing age. Individuals may better cope with separation anxiety as

they develop. While the relevant literature argues that children of families with normative or authoritative parenting styles can display high levels of anxiety (Erkan 2002), literature also shows that as positive parent perceptions increase, anxiety levels decrease (Başbuğ 2013, Varlık 2015). Similarly, several studies reveal the relationships between the attachment styles of individuals, perceived parenting styles, and the levels of psychological symptoms (Milevsky et al 2007, Soygüt and Çakır 2009, Wolfradt et al 2003). However, to our knowledge, there is only one study reporting on the relationship between parenting styles and adult separation anxiety disorder. Manicavasagar et al. (1999) argue that the over-protective parenting style is related with separation anxiety. Likewise, the findings of our current study showed that the over-protective father parenting style predicts adult separation anxiety symptoms, and therefore, supports the result of the aforementioned research. It is considered that over-protective parenting styles, which are taken in relationship to the intergeneration transfer of anxiety from parent to child, are more correlated with adult separation anxiety symptoms than with other anxiety disorders (Van der Bruggen et al 2008). The over-protecting parenting attitude prevents the child from being an autonomous individual and affects his/her social functioning (Boykin et al 2001), therefore causing the individual to be a dependent person in relationships (Yavuzer 2011). In addition, according to the scheme theory, individuals who grew up with over-protecting or neglectful parents can have impaired autonomy schema characterized by the undeveloped self, and difficulties with being independently mobile and separating from parents. (Young et al 2003). So, the features of aforementioned schema are similar with separation anxiety symptoms. Thus, perceived over-protecting father parenting in adulthood can lay the ground for several psychological symptoms (Shah and Waller 2000, Yoshida et al 2005); and one of them is separation anxiety.

However, in our findings current research, the perceived over-protecting mother parenting style did not have a predicting role in adult separation anxiety. The relationship dynamics established with the mother, as an attachment figure of the early years, are different than those established with the father. The attitude of the mother, as a first object of attachment and caregiver, in the early years is important in shaping an individual's future relationships. At this point, the

anxious attachment style (characterized by the situation of being scared of breaking up and being over-sensitive towards rejection) is thought to be related with an over-protecting or intrusive parenting style, which is inconsistent in their love and interest (Ainsworth et al 1978). In our current study, the perceived over-protecting/anxious mother parenting style is considered to be closely associated with culturally adopted mother roles. Likewise, Soygüt and Çakır (2009) argue that the over-protecting/anxious parenting style can be perceived as “support” and suggested that this should be studied in further research. In our current study, the perceived over-protecting/anxious parenting style can be considered as a functional feature culturally corresponding to the mother role (Sümer and Kağıtçıbaşı 2010), and in the existence of over-protecting/anxious perception, the early adulthood stage is no longer seen as a triggering factor in terms of psychological symptoms. It is stressed that the different roles adopted by the father and mother in traditional child-rearing in our country affect the level of attachment to the mother and father and the perceptions regarding the parents; the father's role is also very important in terms of negative self-assessment and psychological symptoms (Varlık 2015). Therefore, our current results show that the perceived over-protective/anxious father parenting style (instead of that of the mother) may be related with gender roles attributed to parents (Silverstein et al 2002).

Another finding of our current research is that the perceived exploitative/abusive father subscale positively predicted adult anxiety separation symptoms. Some studies (e.g., Biller 1993, Soysal et al 2005) point out the importance of the father figure in attachment and separation issues. Likewise, Varlık (2015) reported that the perceived negative father subscale is related with psychological symptoms. According to Young and Kloska (1994), negative parenting styles trigger the anxiety of being abandoned, which can cause symptoms of adult separation anxiety. Exploitative and abusive parenting styles are risk factors for psychopathology (Chaffin et al., 2004); therefore, the findings of our current research are in accordance with the literature.

The findings of the current study show that the perceived over-permissive/boundless mother subscale also predicts adult separation anxiety symptoms. Culturally, the over-permissive/boundless mother parenting style may be perceived as negligence. Previous research (Gotlib et al 1988, Sheeber and Sorensen 1998, Pavlidis and McCauley 2001, Enns et al 2002, Avagianou and Zafropoulou 2008, Başbuğ 2013, Ergin and Dağ 2013) shows that psychological symptoms are related with parenting styles that lack support and attention. In addition, the over-permissive/ boundless parenting style is thought to be related with negative self-perception (McClun and Merrell 1998) and impaired boundaries schema (Young et al 2003). Therefore, the individual may have

some boundary problems, may seek more attention and expectation in relationships, and thus, experience difficulties in individuation (Yavuzer, 2003). All of these are thought to be related with adult separation anxiety, and again, the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style can be a risk factor for symptoms of adult separation anxiety. Similarly, in a study by Göral Alkan (2010), it was revealed that the permissive parenting style, which is an early maladaptive mother behavior, is related with individuation pathology.

Another finding of our current research is that the controlling/shaping father subscale is a negative predictor of adult separation anxiety symptoms. These findings conflict with published data (Gürlek Yüksel 2006, Özbaran 2004). When considering that the controlling/shaping attitude does not allow for separation, what is congruent with the literature is that a controlling attitude is a positive predictor of adult separation anxiety symptoms. However, in our society, the father is perceived as a controlling and shaping figure, and therefore, controlling/shaping father parenting can be perceived as a functional parenting style in a collectivist society. The controlling/shaping father parenting style can be perceived as a father who pays attention to and who values the child in our culture. Due to such expectations from the father role, the aforementioned parenting style can be a protective factor in the emergence of adult separation anxiety symptoms. The alternate view argues that, due to the controlling and shaping interventions and dominance of the father, the young adult may want to be the one who decides, and when there is no chance of choice, anger and conflict may arise (Soygüt and Çakır 2009). Anger and conflict may ease separation, and this situation may decrease the possibility of the emergence of adult separation anxiety symptoms

As expected, in our current study, the interpersonal rejection and unrealistic relationship expectations subscales of the interpersonal cognitive distortions scale are other predictors of symptoms of adult separation anxiety. Interpersonal rejection shows that a negative, anxious, and insecure approach to others and negative consequences are derived from close relations. Therefore, it consists of some cognitive distortions that require the individual to shy away from close relations (Hamamcı 2002, Güven and Sevim 2007). The study by Manicavasgar et al (2009) shows that a group diagnosed with separation anxiety had higher scores in discomfort with closeness compared to control groups. Likewise, our current results indicate that individuals with a tendency to avoid closeness are more likely to show separation anxiety symptoms. Individuals with Interpersonal rejection and unrealistic expectation may make some wrong inferences about others and relationships (Bornstein 1993). Thus, it could be argued that individuals with cognitive distorted beliefs about relationships may have separation anxiety symptoms, which is consistent with our current results.

The results of the current study reveal insight into the mediator role of interpersonal cognitive distortions between the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style and adult separation anxiety symptoms. Ulusoy et al. (2005) concluded that particularly over-controlling and authoritarian parenting and uninvolved and negligent parenting are underlying factors for many psychological problems, including youth suicide. Over-permissive/boundless parenting could be culturally related with negligence and lack of attention. Accordingly, this parenting style is related to some negative cognitive schemas (Poznanski and Zrull 1970, Segal 1988, Ingram et al 1998). Gürlek-Yüksel (2006) showed that university students who think that their mothers are distant and uninvolved have higher separation anxiety scores. In addition, lack of authority, along with use of authority, causes some psychological and behavioral problems for young people (Ulusoy et al 2005). Young et al. (2003) suggested that perceived negative parenting styles can trigger cognitive distortions about the self, others, and the world. There is a strong positive relationship between perceived negative self and father's parenting style, which also predicts psychological symptoms (Başbuğ 2013, Varlık 2015). On the other hand, the perceived parenting style in the early years affects the quality of relationships with others (Pini et al 2014). Frank et al. (1997) found that interpersonal issues are predicted by close relationships with parents. So, an increase in separation anxiety symptoms is related with an individual's core schemas regarding relationships, which are affected by the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style (Mongrain 1998). In other words, the perceived over-permissive/boundless parenting style, which is related with perceived negative self and insufficient self-control schemas, can cause the development of negative appraisals about others and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, this may increase adult separation anxiety symptoms.

Within this context, attachment problems between mother and child, several parenting styles, and interpersonal conflicts are significant factors for symptoms of separation anxiety. However, when the literature is reviewed, we found that no other research looked into the relationship between parenting styles, interpersonal cognitive distortions, and separation anxiety.

Blos (1967) considers the puberty and young adulthood process as a second separation individuation. Separation anxiety symptoms seen in adulthood can negatively affect a young adult's functionality and ability to transition to the next developmental stage. Parents play an important role in completing this development period in a healthy way. Over-permissive (boundless) parenting can cause negative consequences, just as authoritarian and strict parenting styles do. In addition to dysfunctional parenting styles (such as over-permissive or boundless parenting perceived by the adult), cognitive distortions at the level of relationships are seen as extremely

important in causing separation anxiety in adulthood. Within this context, the current study is expected to contribute to the separation individuation process literature by studying perceived parenting styles, interpersonal cognitive distortions, and separation anxiety symptoms. Adult separation anxiety is regarded as a diagnosis in the DSM-5, and it has been a newly arising topic of research. Given that adult separation anxiety has a high possibility of being comorbid with other psychological symptoms (Manicavasagar et al 1997, Shear et al 2006), studying the topic by taking the role of interpersonal cognitive distortions into consideration, particularly during the treatment process, provides a new perspective, and may provide important information to clinicians working with these types of patients.

The current study has some limitations. First, the sample group is composed only of university students, and no comparison was conducted with a clinical sample. Second, the data collection tools are "self-report" scales, and the data is based on recollections of early life experiences. Adult separation anxiety is regarded as a diagnosis in the DSM-5 and recently has begun to be studied in Turkey. If clinical samples are included in comparative studies, potentially useful information may be revealed. In the discussion of this paper, we discuss the collectivist culture of Turkey, and therefore, studies comparing individualist and collectivist cultures in adult separation anxiety are also needed. In addition, measurements regarding perceived parenting styles in are retrospectively evaluated. Therefore, the measurement of perceived parenting styles by adults is considered to have limitations, both in terms of self-report and the retrospective method. Herein, in assessing parenting styles, the possibility that the adult may have made a positive or negative evaluation with a distorted perception can be listed as another limitation of this study.

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