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THE EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF EARLY MALADAPTIVE SCHEMAS AND ADULT ATTACHMENT STYLES TO ALCOHOL USE IN INDIVIDUALS DIAGNOSED WITH ANXIETY DISORDER

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BACKGROUND AND AIM: This study aims to evaluate the differences between the groups with and without risky alcohol use (RAU) in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, anxiety level, Adult Attachment Styles (AAS), and Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS) in individuals diagnosed with anxiety disorder (AD). Furthermore, we aimed to investigate whether risky alcohol use in individuals with anxiety disorders can be explained by early maladaptive schemas or adult attachment styles.

METHODS: This is a prospective study that complies with the Declaration of Helsinki. It was approved by the Zonguldak University Clinical Studies Ethical Committee on 11/01/2023, with approval number 2020/23. Written informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews. A total of 128 individuals diagnosed with AD were divided into two groups based on the Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (MAST) cut-off score (≥5). The scores of the Adult Attachment Style Scale, Young Schema Questionnaire, and Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) along with sociodemographic and clinical features were compared between the two groups.

RESULTS: The group with RAU had higher ratios of having a child, smoking, suicide history, and higher scores on abandonment and unrelenting standards (US) schemas. Abandonment and US schema scores increased RAU while approval-seeking (AS) and self-sacrifice schema scores decreased RAU. MAST scores negatively correlated with the scores of pessimism, AS, and punitiveness schemas in the group without RAU and positively correlated with the scores of emotional deprivation, failure to achieve, pessimism, social isolation, AS, dependence, abandonment, vulnerability schemas, and BAI in those with RAU. Our study indicates that 42% of MAST scores can be explained by AAS and EMS scores. The scores of emotional inhibition, defectiveness, and vulnerability schemas and anxious attachment style significantly explained MAST scores.

CONCLUSIONS: Our data supports that RAU in individuals with AD is associated with AAS and EMS. Abandonment, US, defectiveness, vulnerability schemas, and anxious attachment styles should be emphasized specifically.

Keywords: Anxiety disorder, attachment, early maladaptive schemas, risky alcohol use