

THE TWO FACES OF THE FUTURE IN DEPRESSION: ANTICIPATORY PLEASURE MEDIATES THE PROTECTIVE EFFECT OF FUTURE-POSITIVE ORIENTATION**Ahmet Selim Başaran¹, Nur Nihal Türkel², Hande Gazey³, Behcet Coşar⁴**¹*Department of Psychiatry, Unye State Hospital, Ordu, Türkiye*²*Department of Psychiatry, Ministry of Health Eskişehir City Hospital, Eskişehir, Türkiye*³*Department of Psychiatry, Bakirkoy Prof Mazhar Osman Training and Research Hospital for Psychiatry, Neurology, and Neurosurgery, Istanbul, Türkiye*⁴*Department of Psychiatry, Gazi University Faculty of Medicine, Ankara, Türkiye*

BACKGROUND AND AIM: Major depressive disorder (MDD) is characterized by pervasive dysfunction in reward and motivation systems. Time Perspective theory provides a framework for understanding cognitive-emotional orientations along the past-present-future axis. A crucial distinction exists between Future-Positive (FP) and Future-Negative (FN) orientations. This study investigated how these orientations relate to MDD severity through distinct anticipatory and consummatory hedonic mechanisms.

METHODS: (Ethics Committee Approval must be obtained and the number should be specified). A total of 135 medication-naïve MDD outpatients (Mean age: 33.29±9.95 years) participated in this cross-sectional study. Participants completed the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), GAD-7, Temporal Experience of Pleasure Scale, and Short Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory. Mediation models were tested using structural equation modeling in R, specifically adjusting for anxiety as a covariate. The protocol was approved by the Gazi University Ethics Committee (No: 2025-1143).

RESULTS: The mean BDI score was 29.64±10.18. FP orientation significantly predicted higher anticipatory pleasure

($\beta=0.419, p<0.001$). Anticipatory pleasure partially mediated the relationship between FP and lower depression (indirect effect: $\beta=-0.089, p=0.024, 95\%CI[-0.165, -0.013]$). Conversely, FN orientation showed a direct positive association with depression severity ($\beta=0.179, p=0.017$). Consummatory pleasure demonstrated no significant mediation effects ($p>0.05$).

CONCLUSIONS: Our findings distinguish the “valence of the future” as two separate cognitive-emotional axes in depression. The protective role of FP orientation is driven by positive mental simulation, which channels motivational energy specifically into the “wanting” (anticipatory) component of reward processing. This enhances the capacity to imagine and emotionally invest in rewards, acting as a critical cognitive-motivational defense line. Conversely, FN orientation functions through threat-based avoidance pathways and rumination rather than primary motivational deficits. Clinically, future-oriented cognitive techniques specifically targeting positive prospection may restore anticipatory motivation and help disrupt the maintenance of depressive pathology.

Keywords: anhedonia, anxiety, depression, reward processing, time perspective