Dysfunctional relationship beliefs of late adolescence in adjustment to university

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the association between dysfunctional relationship beliefs of late adolescence and adjustment to university. The sample was consisted of 228 Turkish university students. Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale and Adjustment to University Scale were administered to individuals. Result indicated that dysfunctional relationship beliefs were associated with adjustment to university. The beliefs, including beliefs concerning being very close to others in their relationships causes negative consequences had the highest correlation with social adjustment. Moreover, individuals with low dysfunctional beliefs had significantly more social adjustment to university than those with high dysfunctional beliefs.

Keywords: Dysfunctional relationship beliefs; adjustment to university; late adolescence.

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, the literature in this area has focused on beliefs about relationships (Eildeson & Epstein, 1982; Ellis, 1986; Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Eidelson, 1981). Relationships beliefs are considered health promoting if they facilitate individuals’ adjustment to relationship and their personal growth. Such cognitions reflect realities in relationship (Sullivan & Scwebel, 1995). In contrast, dysfunctional relationship beliefs are defined as highly exaggerated, rigid, illogical, absolutist beliefs about the nature of relationships, about themselves and others in relationship (DiGuiseppe & Zee, 1986; Ellis, 2003).

According to cognitive behavioral theory, irrational or dysfunctional relationship beliefs have a profound influence on distressed relations (Ellis, Sichel, Yeager, DiMatta & DiGuiseppe, 1989; Epstein, Baucom & Rankin, 1993). Many studies in this field found that dysfunctional relationship beliefs are negatively related to individuals’ experiences in ongoing romantic or marital relations (Addis & Bernard, 2002; Debdor, Romans, & Krieshok, 1996; Epstein, Pretzer & Fleming, 1987), parents and adolescents relations, family relations (Eryüksel & Akün, 2003; Robin & Foster, 1989; Vincent-Roehling & Robin, 1986). When individuals hold dysfunctional relationship beliefs, they are less satisfied, adjusted and had more conflict in their relations (Haferkamp, 1994; Möller & DeBeer, 1998; Möller, Rabe & Norije, 2001; Robin, Koepke & Moye 1990; Stackert & Bursik, 2003).

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University life is considered to be a stressful experience for students. The university students need to deal with a variety of challenges in university. One of the most important challenges that university students experience is adjustment to the social life of the university. Social adjustment is defined as participation in social activities at university, establishing supportive relationships, dealing with a new social environment effectively (Baker & Siryk, 1984). It can be assumed that strong adherences to dysfunctional beliefs about relations would lead to distress and conflict on social relationship in university life and induce low social adjustment. However, no research concerning the role of dysfunctional relationship beliefs on social adjustment of university students could be reported in the literature.

For this reason, the first aim of the current study is to investigate the association between dysfunctional relationship beliefs of late adolescence and their adjustment to university. The second aim of this study is to determine whether individuals with high dysfunctional beliefs would differentiate in adjustment to university than those of low dysfunctional beliefs.

2. Method

The sample of study was 228 (193 women and 35 men) university students. The mean age of the participants was 21.0 (SD=1.70) range from 18 to 28. Among these students, 155 (68 %) were studying in the first year and 73 (32 %) were studying in the fourth year of university.

1.1. Instruments

Interpersonal Cognitive Distortions Scale (ICDS). (Hamamcı & Büyüköztürk, 2004). ICDS was developed to measure dysfunctional beliefs related to interpersonal relationships. The scale consisted of three subscales with 19 items; Interpersonal Rejection, Unrealistic Relationship Expectation and Interpersonal Misperception. 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree) was used. Scores were ranged from 19 to 95. Higher score indicated greater adherence to dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was .67 for total scale, .66 for the second subscale and .43 for the third subscale. The correlation coefficients measured for randomly split sample were ranged from .56 to .73 for three subscales. Test-retest coefficient in 15 days was .74. Convergent validity was evident in the positive correlations among the ICDS subscales and the Turkish versions of Automatic Thoughts Scale (r=.54, p<.001) and Irrational Belief Scale (r=.54, p<.001). Construct validity was evident in the positive correlation with the Conflict Tendency Scale (r=.53, p<.001).

Adjustment to University Scale (AUS). (Akbalik,1997). AUS is a self-report measure, developed for assessing adjustment to university of students. There are 31 items under the five subscales including academic, social and total adjustment to university. The scale was used a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= completely untrue of me to 4= mostly true of me. The scale was a 31-item Likert type scale. The AUS total score were ranged from 31 to 124 with high scores indicating a better level of adjustment to university. Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency of the scale was .90. This values were .82 for the academic adjustment subscale, .91 for the social adjustment subscale, .90 for the total score.

1.2. Procedure

Questionnaires were administered to volunteer students in their class between January and May 2009 and they were completed in one session. Before administration, the nature of the study was explained, the questionnaires was described to participants and then consent of participation was obtained and finally they were informed about how they should answer the items on the questionnaires. The instructions were given both verbally and written.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the ICDS, and the AUS total and their subscales for group. The mean values of total groups for the ICDS (M=51.67, SD= 9.70) showed that participants endorsed moderate level of irrational relationship beliefs. The mean score for total AUS obtained from participants were
55.35 (SD = 8.44), 46.42 (SD = 6.31) for the social adjustment, and 8.92 (SD = 4.40) for academic adjustment. According to the AUS total score, participants had moderate level of adjustment to university.

Table 1. Means, Standart Deviations, and Pearson Correlation Coefficient of AUS and ICDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ICDS Total Score</td>
<td>51.67</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interpersonal Rejection</td>
<td>18.13</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unrealistic Relationships Expectation</td>
<td>23.53</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>.79*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interpersonal Misperception</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. AUS Total Score</td>
<td>55.35</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Adjustment</td>
<td>46.42</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.86*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Academic Adjustment</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.68*</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson correlations Coefficient was used to examine the relationship between adjustment to university and dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Result indicated that there was a positive correlation between two variables but dysfunctional relationship beliefs were not correlated strongly with adjustment to university ($r = .22, p < .001$). The correlations between the ICDS and the AUS were 0.26 ($p < .001$) for the dimension of social adjustment, and 0.05 ($p > .391$) for the dimension of academic adjustment. Generally, the correlations between adjustment to university and dysfunctional relationship beliefs were significantly correlated but this correlation is very low. Interpersonal Rejection subscale of the ICDS that include beliefs concerning being very close to others in their relationships causes negative consequences had the highest correlation with adjustment to university ($r = .25, p < .001$). The correlation between unrealistic relationships expectation and adjustment to university were very low than other two subscales of the ICDS.

In addition, the means of the AUS of high and low dysfunctional relationship groups were compared by an independent sample $t$ test (Table 2). The high and low dysfunctional relationship groups were defined by a median split on the ICDS score ($median = 51.00$). The individuals whose average score fell above the median were labeled as the high dysfunctional relationship beliefs group, and those with an average score below the median were labeled as the low dysfunctional relationship beliefs group.

Table 2. The comparison of high and low dysfunctional relationship beliefs groups in adjustment to university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Low Group (n=105)</th>
<th>Dysfunctional Relationship Beliefs</th>
<th>High Group (n=113)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUS Total Score</td>
<td>56.65</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>54.12</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Adjustment</td>
<td>47.61</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>45.29</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Adjustment</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis showed that although there was no significant differences between high and low dysfunctional relationship groups on academic adjustment to university ($t = .37, p > .729$), individuals with low dysfunctional beliefs had significantly more social adjustment to university than those with high dysfunctional beliefs ($t = 2.73, p < .007$). In addition, the significant difference was found between the high and low dysfunctional relationship beliefs groups on total university adjustment score ($t = -2.23, p < .027$).

4. Discussion

In this study, it was investigated the role of dysfunctional relationship beliefs of late adolescence on adjustment to university. The results indicated that there is low level of correlation between dysfunctional relationship beliefs and adjustment to university. And also the finding suggest that the more functional beliefs about relationships,
individuals have, more likely they have social adjustment to university. These result was consistent with previous research findings emphasizing the importance of individuals’ dysfunctional beliefs in relationships (Haferkamp, 1994; Möller and DeBeer, 1998; Möller, Rabe, and Nortje, 2001; Robin, Koepke, & Moye, 1990; Stackert & Bursik, 2003).

The study was limited number of participant and sample was recruited from only one university students. Therefore, the sample can not be represent all adolescent, and so generalization of the results obtained from these data should be made with caution. Future studies should be conducted with extensive and random sampling of participants.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the result of this study have generally demonstrated negative consequences of dysfunctional beliefs of late adolescence on social adjustment to university. From the result of this study, some suggestions can be given for the further practices. Generally most people have little or no awareness of their having dysfunctional relationship beliefs and negative effects on their relationships. Further psychological intervention based on cognitive behavior theory could be applied to adolescents and university students in order to be aware of their having dysfunctional relationship beliefs and its negative effects on their social adjustment and change their dysfunctional beliefs.

References


