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The Relationships Between Emotion Regulation, Attachment Styles, and Interpersonal Relationship Styles in Adults

Duygu Düzenleme Bağlanma Stilleri ve Kişilerarası İlişkiler Arasındaki İlişki

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This study has been derived from the master's thesis titled "Duygu düzenlemenin bağlanma stilleri ve kişilerarası ilişki tarzları ile ilişkisi", which was accepted in 2021 at Sağlık Bilimleri University Institute of Health Sciences Department of Clinical Psychology and prepared by Halise ARSLAN ŞEKKELİ under the consultancy of Assoc. Prof. Aynur FEYZİOĞLU

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Abstract

Aim: This study explores the interaction between emotion regulation (ER) processes, adult attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles. The primary aim is to identify key determinants of interpersonal relationship styles by examining how ER strategies and difficulties shape social interactions in combination with attachment patterns.

Method: The sample consists of 420 adults between 18 and 65 recruited using a snowball sampling. Participants were given several self-report questionnaires, including the Demographic Information Form, ER Questionnaire (ERQ), Difficulties in ER Scale-Short Form (DERS-16), Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Revised (ECR-R), and Interpersonal Relationships Scale (IRS). The relationships between the continuous variables of the study were evaluated by Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient; the predictor variables were evaluated by Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Results: The findings indicate significant correlations between ER strategies, ER difficulties, attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles. Specifically, engagement in cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression and difficulties with impulse control and emotional clarity emerged as important predictors of interpersonal relationship styles. Individuals with higher scores on emotional clarity and adaptive regulation strategies tended to engage in more supportive and constructive interpersonal interactions. In contrast, difficulties in managing emotions were associated with higher levels of conflict-oriented inhibitory relational tendencies. Additionally, attachment styles played an important role; anxious and avoidant attachment scores were significantly correlated negative interpersonal tendencies.

Conclusion: By emphasizing the dynamic interaction between emotional processes and attachment experiences in shaping social dynamics, these findings offer valuable insights for psychological interventions to improve ER skills and build healthier relationships in adulthood.

Keywords

Emotion Regulation, Emotion Regulation Difficulties, Attachment Styles, Interpersonal Relationship Types

Öz

Amaç: Bu çalışma, duygu düzenleme (ER) süreçleri, yetişkin bağlanma stilleri ve kişilerarası ilişki stilleri arasındaki etkileşimi araştırmaktadır. Temel amaç, ER stratejilerinin ve zorluklarının bağlanma örüntüleri ile birlikte sosyal etkileşimleri nasıl şekillendirdiğini inceleyerek kişilerarası ilişki tarzlarının temel belirleyicilerini tanımlamaktır.

Yöntem: Örneklem, kartopu örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak işe alınan 18-65 yaş arası 420 yetişkinden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılara Demografik Bilgi Formu, ER Anketi (ERQ), ER Zorlukları Ölçeği-Kısa Formu (DERS-16), Yakın İlişkilerde Deneyimler Ölçeği-R (ECR-R) ve Kişilerarası İlişkiler Ölçeği (IRS) dahil olmak üzere çeşitli öz bildirim anketleri verilmiştir. Araştırmanın sürekli değişkenleri arasındaki ilişkiler Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon Katsayısı ile; yordayıcı değişkenler ise Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon Analizi ile değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Bulgular, duygu düzenleme stratejileri, duygu düzenlemede güçlükler, bağlanma stilleri ve kişilerarası ilişki tarzları arasında önemli korelasyonlar olduğunu göstermektedir. Özellikle, bilişsel yeniden değerlendirme ve dışavurumcu bastırmaya katılım ile dürtü kontrolü ve duygusal netlikle ilgili güçlükler kişilerarası ilişki tarzlarının önemli yordayıcıları olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Daha yüksek düzeyde duygusal netlik ve uyarlanabilir düzenleme stratejilerine sahip bireyler daha destekleyici ve yapıcı kişilerarası etkileşimlerde bulunma eğilimindeydi. Bunun aksine, duyguları yönetmedeki güçlükler daha yüksek düzeyde çatışma odaklı engelleyici ilişkisel eğilimlerle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Ek olarak, bağlanma stilleri önemli bir rol oynamıştır; kaygılı ve kaçınmacı bağlanma stilleri olumsuz kişilerarası eğilimleriyle güçlü bir şekilde ilişkilendirilmiştir.

Sonuç: Bu bulgular, sosyal dinamikleri şekillendirmede duygusal süreçler ve bağlanma deneyimleri arasındaki dinamik etkileşimi vurgulayarak, ER becerilerini geliştirmeye ve yetişkinlikte daha sağlıklı ilişkiler kurmaya yönelik psikolojik müdahaleler için değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Duygu Düzenleme, Duygu Düzenleme Güçlükleri, Bağlanma Stilleri, Kişilerarası İlişki Tarzları

Introduction

Emotions, which are inherent in human life, serve a fundamental function in directing both the internal experiences and social interactions of individuals (Gross, 1998). However, not only the way emotions are experienced but also the way they are regulated is critical for an individual's psychological health. In this context, the concept of ER has been addressed with increasing interest in the psychology literature in recent years, and how individuals manage their emotions, which strategies they use, and the difficulties they face in this process are explained through multidimensional models.

ER, in general terms, encompasses all the processes by which an individual manages his/her emotions in ways such as initiating, monitoring, maintaining, changing, or suppressing them (Thompson, 1994). This process involves controlling emotional reactions and recognizing, accepting, appropriately expressing, and organizing emotions, aligning with the individual's goals (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The literature addresses this process in four basic dimensions: subjective experiences, physiological reactions, behavioral reactions, and outcomes that emerge through emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007). This multi-layered structure shows that ER is not only an individual skill, but is also influenced by the individual's context, developmental background, and interpersonal relationships.

The most widely accepted theoretical framework for ER processes is Gross's ER process model. Gross (1998) explained how ER occurs through five basic frameworks: situation selection, situation change, attentional orienting, cognitive reappraisal, and response modulation. In particular, cognitive reappraisal and suppression strategies have been closely associated with individuals' psychological functioning, and their differential effects on the the subjective experience and outward display of emotions have been extensively investigated (Gross, 2002; Werner & Gross, 2010). In studies on ER, not only the strategies used but also ER difficulties are important research topics. Gratz and Roemer (2004) proposed a comprehensive framework for understanding difficulties in ER, which includes five fundamental components: emotional awareness and acceptance, impulse control, goal-directed behaviors, and appropriate strategy use. Inadequacy in any of these dimensions leads to impairment in the individual's emotional functioning and is associated with various behavioral and cognitive problems (Gross & Munoz, 1995; Bjureberg, 2016; Cole et al., 1994).

ER strategies are central to directing both internal experiences and social interactions of individuals (Gross, 1998). Early childhood experiences, especially attachment styles, are decisive in shaping these strategies. According to attachment theory, early attachment experiences are encoded as mental representations in the form of "internal

working models” (Bowlby, 1982). These internal working models effectively create a template that affects how people see themselves, others, and their relationships (Bretherton, 1992). In addition, the relationships that individuals establish with their caregivers form the basis of their emotional regulation capacity in their future lives (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2014). While individuals who develop secure attachment regulate their emotions more flexibly and functionally, anxious or avoidant attachment styles may resort to more repressive, avoidant, or exaggerated approaches (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Attachment styles are known to affect not only internal processes but also behavioral patterns in interpersonal relationships. In particular, regulating emotions shapes an individual’s ability to empathize, resolve conflicts and experience relational satisfaction. Research shows dysfunctional ER strategies are associated with attachment insecurity and relational problems (Mosannenzadeh et al., 2024; Clear & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015; Sbarra & Hazan, 2008). In this context, the interaction between individuals’ attachment patterns and their ER strategies is expected to influence the quality of interpersonal relationships. For example, characterized by secure attachment styles typically demonstrate high emotional awareness, empathy, and balanced communication patterns. In contrast, those with insecure attachment styles often exhibit difficulties in ER, manifesting as either hyperdependent or excessively distant interpersonal behaviors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Interpersonal relationships provide a critical environment for expressing and regulating emotions (Greenwald, 1999). In this context, expressing and regulating emotions can significantly shape interpersonal relationship styles. Şahin et al. (1996) proposed a dichotomous framework for interpersonal styles, contrasting nurturing (supportive) patterns with inhibitory or toxic relational tendencies. While healthy and functional interpersonal relationships are characterized by nurturing relationship styles that include empathy, open communication and mutual respect, the inhibitory relationship style is described as a relationship style that includes pressure and coercion, condescending and egocentric characteristics that can cause interpersonal problems (Şahin et al. 1994). How individuals manage their emotions directly affects how they behave in relationships and connect with others (Hasta & Güler, 2013; Batıgün-Durak, 2004; Wei et al., 2005). In particular, an individual’s attachment styles, and ER strategies are thought to play a decisive role in developing nurturing or inhibiting relationship attitudes.

Consequently, attachment, emotion regulation, and interpersonal relationships constitute an interdependent psychosocial system. Within this system, each component dynamically influences the others. This study examines the relationships between ER strategies, ER difficulties, attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles. Although the associations between these variables have been studied separately, the combined predictive role of ER strategies and attachment styles on nurturing versus inhibiting relationship styles has not been adequately addressed empirically, particularly within the Turkish adult population. Furthermore, limited research has examined how specific ER difficulties (e.g., impulse control vs. clarity) and ER strategies differentially predict these interpersonal styles in a collective culture context. Investigating the interactions of these three components can provide important implications for clinical interventions and preventive mental health practices aimed at improving individuals’ social and emotional skills. In addition, earlier detection of problems in interpersonal relationships and increasing the number of studies conducted in this direction will significantly improve individuals’ quality of life.

The present study focuses on investigating how ER strategies, ER difficulties, attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles interact. While prior research has examined these constructs separately, limited attention has been given to how they function together in shaping interpersonal dynamics. In this context, the study focuses on two main research questions:

1. What is the relationship between ER strategies and difficulties, attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles?
2. To what extent do ER strategies, ER difficulties, and attachment styles predict interpersonal relationship styles? Through the examination of these questions, the study seeks to contribute to a more integrated understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying interpersonal functioning, with potential implications for both clinical practice and relational well-being.

Method

Participants

The study sample consisted of community sample aged 18 to 65. recruited through the snowball sampling method. In line with sampling recommendations based on population size and scale item count (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2014; Hair et al., 2010), 474 participants were initially included. Data were collected between November 2020 and February

2021. Participants with a history of psychiatric diagnosis, recent psychiatric medication use, or extreme scores on measurement scales were excluded. The final sample comprised 420 individuals, meeting statistical requirements for validity and reliability.

Procedure

Participants were recruited according to determined inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in a total sample of 420 individuals. They completed an online questionnaire that included a demographic information form and four standardized measurement tools assessing the study variables. Prior to participation, all individuals were informed about the aim of the study, and voluntary participation was emphasized. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Hamidiye Non-Interventional Research Ethics Committee (Approval No: 20/432).

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used to perform the statistical analyses. To assess the normality of the data distribution, descriptive statistics, graphical methods (e.g., histograms), skewness and kurtosis values, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were used. The arithmetic mean, mode, and median were found to be similar, and skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range of -1 to +1 (Morgan et al., 2004). In addition, histogram plots showed a distribution close to normal; therefore, parametric statistical tests were applied (Büyüköztürk, 2020).

Descriptive statistics were calculated for both socio-demographic characteristics and scores from the measurement instruments. The relationships between study variables were examined using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, and predictive relationships were assessed using multiple linear regression analysis. Throughout the analyses, statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

Scales

Participants were administered the Informed Voluntary Consent Form, Demographic Information Form, ER Questionnaire (ERQ) and Difficulties in ER Scale Short Form (DERS-16), Experiences in Close Relationships Revised (ECR-R) and Interpersonal Relationships Scale (IRS).

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The ERQ developed by Gross and John (2003) consists of 10 items with 2 sub-dimensions aiming to measure the level of reappraisal and suppression of emotions as personal ER methods. Responses are given on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). The scale was tested on a sample of American college students from four different ethnic minorities. For the reappraisal dimension, the scale’s internal consistency coefficient was measured between .75 and .82 while for the suppression dimension, it was measured between .68 and .76.

Ulaşan-Özgüle and Sümer (2017) adapted the ER Scale into Turkish. The scale was translated into Turkish using the standard translation-retranslation method and applied in Likert type. As a result of the analyses, results close to the original study were obtained and the internal consistency coefficient for the reappraisal dimension was found to be .78 and the internal consistency coefficient for the suppression dimension was found to be .65. In the current study, 2’s alpha internal consistency coefficient for the reappraisal subscale was .82 and for the suppression subscale was .77.

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale Short Form (DERS-16)

It was used to measure the participants’ difficulties with ER. by Bjureberg and colleagues (2016) created the DERS-16, a 16-item self-report measure that is a condensed version of the DERS (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). It consists of five subscales: openness, goals, impulse, strategies, and nonacceptance to assess various aspects of ER difficulties. Responses are evaluated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “almost never” (1) to “almost always” (5). The internal consistency coefficient was found to be .92. The total scores obtained from the DERS-16 ranged from 16 to 80, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of ER difficulties.

The Turkish version of the scale was conducted by Yiğit and Güzey-Yiğit (2017). The Cronbach alpha values for the overall score and each subscale of the DERS-16 are as follows: .92 for the total scale, .84 for Openness, .84 for Goals, .84 for Impulse, .87 for Strategies, and .78 for Denial. These results show that the scale yielded largely the same results as the original form. DERS-16 provides a valid and brief method for the assessment of general ER difficulties. In the current study, the Cronbach’s alpha value of the DERS-16 was found to be .91, .79 for the openness, .82 for goals, .81 for impulse, .83 for strategies and .76 for acceptance.

Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R)

Participants' attachment styles were evaluated using the ECR-R (Fraley et al., 2000). This 36-item instrument features of two subscales-anxiety and avoidance- each comprising 18 items. 14 items requiring reverse coding.

Each of the scale items is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Odd numbered items belong to anxiety and even numbered items belong to avoidance dimensions. High scores on these items indicate that the individual is anxious or avoidant due to attachment. Low scores in both dimensions indicate that the individual has a secure attachment tendency.

The Turkish version of the scale was carried out by Selçuk et al. (2005). Reliability analyses revealed strong internal consistency, with $\alpha = .90$ for avoidance and $\alpha = .86$ for anxiety. The scale also demonstrated good temporal stability, with test-retest reliability coefficients of .82 (anxiety) and .81 (avoidance) over time. In our current sample, these reliability estimates remained consistently high, yielding Cronbach's alpha values of .89 for anxiety and .90 for avoidance.

Interpersonal Relationships Scale (IRS)

The scale created by Şahin et. al., (1994) aims to measure interpersonal relationship styles. The scale items were prepared by utilizing the behaviors listed in the manual of a video package program called "Stress Management: A Positive Strategy". In the 31-item scale, each item is assessed on a four-point Likert-type scale, with a range of 0 to 3. It consists of two subdimensions measuring nurturing and inhibiting/poisoning relationship styles. Based on the psychometric evaluation of the scale, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .80 for the nurturing relationship style subdimension and .81 for the inhibiting/poisoning relationship style subdimension. While high scores in nurturing relationship style are considered as an indicator of a positive style in interpersonal relationships, high scores in inhibiting relationship style are considered as an indicator of a negative style in interpersonal relationships (Şahin et al., 1994). In the present study, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient for the subdimension of nurturing relationship style was .81 and the Cronbach alpha value for inhibiting relationship style was .78.

Results

The frequency and percentage distributions of the sociodemographic features of the participants in the research sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants

		f	%
Age	18-24	67	16
	25-34	195	46.4
	35-44	69	16.4
	45-54	65	15.5
	55-65	24	5.7
Gender	Female	258	61.4
	Male	162	38.6
Education level	Primary/Middle School	14	3.3
	High School	22	5.2
	University	202	48.1
	Postgraduate	182	43.3
Marital Status	Married	270	64.3
	Single	141	33.6
	Other (Divorced/Widowed)	9	2.1
Income Level	Lowest Income	92	21.9
	Low Income	78	18.6
	Moderate Income	115	27.4
	Upper-Middle Income	71	16.9
	Highest Income	64	15.2

The study sample consisted of 420 participants from a healthy community sample, with a mean age of 34.12 years ($SD = 10.95$). Among the participants, 258 (61.4%) were female, and 162 (38.6%) were male. Regarding educational attainment, 14 participants (3.3%) had completed primary or middle school, 22 participants (5.2%) had completed

high school, 202 participants (48.1%) had a university degree, and 182 participants (43.3%) had a postgraduate degree. Marital status distribution indicated that 270 participants (64.3%) were married, 141 participants (33.6%) were single, and 9 participants (2.1%) were divorced or widowed.

In terms of income levels, 21.9% of the participants were in the lowest-income category, 18.6% were in the low-income category, 27.4% were in the moderate-income category 16.9% were in the upper-middle income category, and 15.2% were in the highest-income category.

Descriptive Statistics Related to the Scores Obtained from Data Collection Tools

Descriptive statistics of the participants' scores on the ERQ, DERS-16, ECR-R and IRS the research sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Instruments

Measurement Instruments	Subscales	M	SD	Min.-Max.	Score Range
ERQ	Reappraisal	24.55	5.88	11-36	1-7
	Suppression	13.95	4.69	4-24	
DERS-16	Clarity	4.35	1.81	2-10	1-5
	Goals	9.98	30.2	3-15	
	Impulse	6.50	2.76	3-15	
	Strategies	11.29	4.56	5-25	
	Acceptance	7.5	2.97	3-15	
	Total	39.17	12.14	16-73	
ECR-R	Anxiety	59.22	18.88	20-110	1-7
	Avoidance	51.62	18.91	18-104	
IRS	Nurturing	35.27	60.9	18-48	0-3
	Inhibiting	12.01	5.73	0-27	

The relationship between the scales and their subdimensions was analyzed by Pearson Correlation Analysis and the results are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation analysis results of ER, attachment styles and interpersonal relationship styles

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
ERQ-Reappraisal	1	.23**	-.06	-.01	-.09	.01	-.12**	.03	-.06	-.08	.31**	-.06
ERQ-Suppression	.23**	1	.10*	.11*	.01	.05	.12*	.12**	.13**	.23**	-.07	.10*
DERS-16-Total	-.06	.10*	1	.60**	.80**	.79**	.91**	.75**	.51**	.26**	-.16**	.22**
DERS-16-Clarity	-.01	.11*	.60**	1	.38**	.39**	.49**	.34**	.35**	.25**	-.17**	.17**
DERS-16-Goals	-.09	.01	.80**	.38**	1	.55**	.68**	.46**	.40**	.15**	-.10*	.13**
DERS-16-Impulse	.01	.05	.79**	.39**	.55**	1	.64**	.51**	.36**	.19**	-.17**	.29**
DERS-16-Strategies	-.12**	.12*	.91**	.49**	.68**	.64**	1	.60**	.49**	.28**	-.15**	.15**
DERS-16-Acceptance	.03	.12**	.75**	.34**	.46**	.51**	.60**	1	.36**	.14**	-.05	.14**
ECR-R-Anxiety	-.06	.13**	.51**	.35**	.40**	.36**	.49**	.36**	1	.43**	-.24**	.32**
ECR-R Avoidance	-.08	.23**	.26**	.25**	.15**	.19**	.28**	.14**	.43**	1	-.40**	.23**
IRS-Nurturing	.31**	-.07	-.16**	-.17**	-.10*	-.17**	-.15**	-.05	-.24**	-.40**	1	-.25**
IRS-Inhibiting	-.06	.10*	.22**	.17**	.13**	.29**	.15**	.14**	.32**	.23**	-.25**	1

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

The total score of DERS-16 was noted to have a significantly positive correlation with the subscales of anxiety attachment (ECR-R-Anxiety) ($r = .51$, $p < .01$) and avoidance attachment (ECR-R-Avoidance) ($r = .26$, $p < .01$). Additionally, a significant positive correlation was observed between the total score of DERS-16 and the interpersonal inhibitory relationship style (IRS-Inhibitory) ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), whereas a significant negative correlation was found with the interpersonal nurturing relationship style (IRS-Nurturing) ($r = -.16$, $p < .01$).

Regression Models on the Predictive Effects of ER Strategies, Emotion Dysregulation, and Attachment Styles on Interpersonal Relationship Styles

Stepwise multiple linear regression analyses were performed to determine the effects of ER strategies, ER difficulties, and attachment styles on interpersonal relationship styles.

The regression analysis for the nurturing relationship subdimension was completed in three stages, and three variables were found to be predictors of variance in nurturing relationship style scores. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Models on the Predictive Effects of ER Strategies, Emotion Dysregulation, and Attachment Styles on Nurturing Relationship Style

Model	Predictor Variables	B	SE	β	t	F	Adjusted R ²
1	ECR-R Avoidance	-.129	.014	-.401	-8.960***	80.275	.159
2	ECR-R Avoidance	-.122	.014	-.380	-8.879***	66.604	.238
	ERQ Reappraisal	.296	.044	0.285	6.676***		
3	ECR-R Avoidance	-.116	.014	-.359	-8.273***	46.924	.247
	ERQ Reappraisal	.298	.044	0.288	6.765***		
	DERS-Impulse	-.233	.095	-.106	-2.444*		

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

According to the analysis results, the ECR-R Avoidance subdimension (β = -.401; t= -8.960; p< .001), the ERO-Reappraisal subdimension (β = .285; t= 6.676; p< .001), and the DERS-Impulse subdimension (β = -.106; t= -2.444; p< .05) were identified as predictive variables. The ECR-R Avoidance subdimension explained 16% of the variance, the ERQ-Reappraisal subdimension explained 8% of the variance, and the DERS-Impulse subdimension explained 1% of the variance. All variables together explained 25% of the variance.

The regression analysis for the inhibitive relationship subdimension was completed in four stages, and four variables were found to be predictors of variance in the inhibitive relationship style scores. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression Models on the Predictive Effects of ER Strategies, ER Difficulties, and Attachment Styles on Inhibitive Relationship Style

Model	Predictor Variables	B	SE	β	t	F	Adjusted R ²
1	ECR-R Anxiety	.098	.014	.323	6.974***	48.639	.102
2	ECR-R Anxiety	.075	.015	.248	5.078***	34.013	.136
	DERS-16 Impulse	.422	.101	.204	4.180***		
3	ECR-R Anxiety	.092	.016	.304	5.868***	26.153	.153
	DERS-16 Impulse	.633	.122	.306	5.188***		
	DERS-16 Strategies	-.239	.079	-.19	-3.018**		
4	ECR-R Anxiety	.078	.017	.256	4.644***	21.318	.162
	DERS-16 Impulse	.635	.121	.307	5.237***		
	DERS-16 Strategies	-.253	.079	-.201	-3.209**		
	ECR-R Avoidance	.037	.015	.121	2.428*		

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

According to the results of the multiple linear regression analysis, the ECR-R Anxiety subdimension ($\beta = .323$; $t = 6.974$; $p < .001$), the DERS-Impulse subdimension ($\beta = .204$; $t = 4.180$; $p < .001$), the DERS-Strategies subdimension ($\beta = -.190$; $t = -3.018$; $p < .01$), and the ECR-R Avoidance subdimension ($\beta = .121$; $t = 2.428$; $p < .05$) were identified as predictive variables. The ECR-R Anxiety subdimension explained 10% of the variance, the DERS-Impulse subdimension explained 3.6% of the variance, the DERS-Strategies subdimension explained 2% of the variance, and the ECR-R Avoidance subdimension explained 1% of the variance. All variables together explained 16.6% of the variance.

Discussion

In the present study, the associations between ER strategies, ER difficulties, attachment styles, and interpersonal relationship styles were examined, along with their predictive roles. In this section, the findings are interpreted in relation to the research hypotheses and discussed in the context of existing literature, highlighting their theoretical and clinical implications.

Evaluation of the Relationships Between ER and Attachment Styles

Significant positive correlations were found between expressive suppression and both anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions. Furthermore, anxious and avoidant attachment were positively associated with overall difficulties in ER, as well as with all of its sub-dimensions: emotional awareness, goal-directed behavior, impulse control, access to ER strategies, and emotional acceptance.

Theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the literature suggest a close connection between ER and attachment styles (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2014; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019). Within this framework, attachment patterns formed in early relationships are considered to shape ER strategies and social behaviors in later close relationships. Individuals characterized by flexibility in accepting and integrating both positive and negative emotions tend to develop secure attachment, whereas those characterized by limited or intense negative affect are more likely to exhibit insecure attachment (Cassidy, 1994).

Previous research has consistently shown that insecure attachment styles are associated with various ER difficulties. Studies indicate that individuals with anxious or avoidant attachment generally struggle with unclear emotional awareness, impulse regulation, and the management of negative affect (Ferraro & Taylor, 2021; Owens et al., 2018). More specifically, Henschel et al. (2020) noted that while insecure-anxious individuals often exhibit higher levels of rumination, insecure-avoidant individuals struggle primarily with identifying emotions. Examining the interpersonal aspect of these mechanisms, Gökdağ (2021) similarly observed significant positive relationships between ER dimensions and attachment anxiety, while noting a negative association for avoidance. The current study's findings align with and support these established patterns in the literature.

Evaluation of the Relationships Between ER Strategies and Interpersonal Relationship Styles

Based on the results, a moderate positive association was identified between cognitive reappraisal, an adaptive ER strategy, and the nurturing relationship style, suggesting that individuals who actively reframe emotional experiences may foster more supportive interpersonal dynamics. In contrast, a weak positive correlation was found between the use of suppression, a more avoidant regulation strategy, and the inhibiting relationship style, indicating a tendency to suppress emotions in less emotionally expressive or distant relational patterns. Furthermore, the total score of ER difficulties and all its subdimensions showed weak positive links with the inhibiting relationship style, implying that individuals who struggle in regulating emotions may coincide with less adaptive relational tendencies.

Considering that a significant portion of emotional experiences emerge within the context of interpersonal relationships, it can be concluded that ER processes play an important role in interpersonal interactions (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000). Low levels of emotional empathy indicate a non-nurturing relationship style and are associated with difficulties in assessing one's own and others' emotions (Schipper & Petermann, 2013). On the other hand, destructive aggression, which is thought to be related to difficulties in ER concerning behavioral control, has been found to be significantly associated with the inhibiting relationship style (Koç & Büyükgöze-Kavas, 2015; Oktay & Durak-Batigün, 2014). This aligns with findings indicating that dysfunctional ER strategies significantly predict physical and verbal aggression, anger, and hostility (Cenkseven-Önder & Canoğulları, 2020). Given that interpersonal relationship styles are based on behavioral patterns, these findings confirm that maladaptive strategies or pervasive regulation difficulties may disrupt relational functioning.

Evaluation of the Relationships Between Attachment Styles and Interpersonal Relationship Styles

In present study, both anxious and avoidant attachment dimensions were positively associated with the inhibiting relationship style and negatively associated with the nurturing relationship style. Extensive theoretical and empirical

research exists on attachment differences in close and interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1983; Fraley & Shaver, 2000). The need for attachment provides individuals with a secure base through interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These individual differences largely stem from internal working models formed through early interactions (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Individuals with a history of positive interactions—i.e., securely attached individuals—tend to develop positive interpersonal relationships that help maintain closeness, whereas insecurely attached individuals tend to exhibit the opposite pattern (Mikulincer 2001).

A review of the literature indicates a strong connection between attachment patterns and prosocial motivations and behaviors (Cassidy et. al., 2013). Mikulincer et al. (2005) suggested that secure attachment tendencies support prosocial behaviors, while anxious and avoidant attachment negatively impact compassion, personal distress, and altruistic behavior in a manner consistent with theoretical expectations. According to a different study, those with secure or avoidant attachment scored higher on empathic dimensions than people with anxious attachment (Henschel et al., 2020). Additionally, low levels of empathic care in avoidant individuals have been linked with poor social skills and social isolation (DiTommaso et. al., 2003).

Numerous studies have linked secure attachment patterns to psychological well-being, whereas insecure attachment patterns have been associated with psychopathology, particularly depression and anxiety disorders (Sümer et. al., 2009; Marganska et. al., 2013).

It is well established that the inhibiting relationship style is also linked to anxiety. Individuals with anxiety disorders have been found to experience and express higher levels of anger in their relationships, exhibiting vengeful, passive-aggressive, and inward-directed anger responses (Hisli-Şahin et al., 2016). Consistent with this, Oktay and Batıgün-Durak (2014) highlighted that anxious and avoidant attachment tendencies are closely linked to interpersonal difficulties and consequent inward-directed aggressive behaviors. Based on these findings, it is confirmed that attachment styles influence interpersonal relationship styles. While secure attachment helps strengthen satisfaction and commitment in relationships, anxious and avoidant attachment may lead to disruptions in interpersonal interactions.

Evaluation of the Predictive Effects of ER Strategies, ER Difficulties, and Attachment Styles on Interpersonal Relationship Styles

Regression analyses identified distinct predictive patterns. For the nurturing relationship style, avoidant attachment emerged as the primary negative predictor, consistent with the tendency of avoidant individuals to distance themselves from supportive interactions. This was followed by reappraisal, which positively predicted this style, suggesting that the ability to reframe emotional experiences facilitates constructive behaviors. Lastly, impulsivity negatively predicted this style, indicating that difficulties in impulse control hinder the maintenance of supportive bonds. Conversely, the inhibiting relationship style was predicted by anxious attachment, impulsivity, limited access to ER strategies, and avoidant attachment, in that order. The prominence of anxious attachment suggests that characteristics such as worry, defensiveness, and a constant need for reassurance drive inhibiting relational patterns. Furthermore, the significant predictive roles of impulsivity and limited access to strategies highlight how emotional dysregulation—specifically the inability to control impulses or utilize adaptive strategies—contributes to coercive or conflict-oriented interpersonal dynamics.

These findings align with prior research. For instance, Güngör et al. (2020) similarly found that cognitive reappraisal correlates with adaptive and constructive expression. Regarding attachment, DiTommaso et al. (2003) and Erözkan (2009) emphasized that attachment styles and social skills are significant predictors of psychosocial adjustment and interpersonal styles. Mikulincer et al. (2002) emphasized the crucial role of attachment in the formation and maintenance of relationships. Recent study by Temel and Dawd (2023) a more recent study by Temel and Dawd (2023) highlighted that emotion regulation and attachment styles are key predictors of relationship quality.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study highlights the critical interplay between attachment profiles, emotion regulation (ER) competencies, and interpersonal relationship styles in adulthood. The findings confirm that insecure attachment (anxious and avoidant) exacerbates ER difficulties, which subsequently predicts inhibiting interpersonal styles. Conversely, adaptive strategies like cognitive reappraisal and effective impulse control are key determinants of nurturing relationships.

These results offer valuable implications for clinical practice. Interventions targeting ER skills—specifically enhancing reappraisal and reducing impulse control difficulties—may be effective in fostering healthier relationships, particularly for individuals with insecure attachment histories. Early identification of these deficits is crucial for preventive mental health.

Several limitations should be noted. The reliance on self-report measures may introduce subjective bias, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences. Additionally, unbalanced demographic distributions (e.g., gender and age) may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs and multi-method assessments (e.g., observational or experimental) to validate these pathways across diverse populations. Furthermore, examining the interpersonal dimensions of ER alongside internal processes would provide a broader understanding of these complex dynamics.

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Özet

Bu araştırma, yetişkin bireylerde duygu düzenleme süreçleri, bağlanma stilleri ve kişilerarası ilişki tarzları arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada özellikle duygu düzenleme stratejileri ve zorluklarının, bağlanma kalıplarıyla birlikte sosyal ilişkileri nasıl etkilediği araştırılmıştır.

Araştırmanın örneklemini, kartopu örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen, yaşları 18 ile 65 arasında değişen toplam 420 sağlıklı birey oluşturmuştur. Katılımcılara Demografik Bilgi Formu, Duygu Düzenleme Ölçeği (ERQ), Duygu Düzenleme Güçlükleri Ölçeği-Kısa Form (DERS-16), Yakın İlişkilerde Yaşantılar Ölçeği-II (ECR-R) ve Kişilerarası İlişkiler Ölçeği (IRS) uygulanmıştır. İstatistiksel analizlerde SPSS 26 programı kullanılmış, korelasyon ve aşamalı çoklu regresyon analizleri gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Çalışmada, duygu düzenleme stratejileri, duygu düzenleme güçlükleri, bağlanma stilleri ve kişilerarası ilişki tarzları arasında anlamlı ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Özellikle bilişsel yeniden değerlendirme ve dışavurumcu bastırma gibi duygu düzenleme stratejileri ile dürtü kontrolü ve duygusal netlik güçlükleri, kişilerarası ilişki tarzlarının önemli yordayıcıları olarak öne çıkmıştır.

Yüksek düzeyde duygusal netlik ve etkili düzenleme stratejileri kullanan bireylerin daha destekleyici ve yapıcı ilişkiler geliştirdiği bulunmuştur. Buna karşılık, duyguları yönetmekte zorlanan bireylerde daha fazla çatışma odaklı ve engelleyici ilişki eğilimleri gözlemlenmiştir. Ayrıca, kaygılı ve kaçınmacı bağlanma stillerinin olumsuz kişilerarası yaklaşımlarla yakından ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır.

Duygu düzenleme ve bağlanma stillerinin kişilerarası ilişkiler üzerindeki etkisi detaylı olarak incelendiğinde; bilişsel yeniden değerlendirme stratejisinin pozitif, bastırma stratejisinin ise negatif etkileri olduğu görülmüştür. Duygu düzenleme güçlükleri arttıkça, özellikle dürtü kontrolü ve strateji yetersizliği alanlarında yaşanan problemler, olumsuz ve engelleyici ilişki tarzlarını artırmaktadır. Regresyon analizlerine göre, besleyici ilişki tarzını en güçlü şekilde kaçınmacı bağlanma olumsuz yönde, bilişsel yeniden değerlendirme ise olumlu yönde yordarken dürtü kontrolü zorlukları da besleyici ilişki tarzını olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. ECR-R Kaçınma alt boyutu varyansın %16'sını, ERQ-Yeniden Değerlendirme alt boyutu %8'ini ve DERS- Dürtü alt boyutu %1'ini açıklamış; tüm değişkenler birlikte toplam varyansın %25'ini açıklamıştır. Engelleyici ilişki tarzı ise sırasıyla kaygılı bağlanma, dürtü kontrolü güçlüğü, etkisiz strateji kullanımı ve kaçınmacı bağlanma tarafından yordanmaktadır. ECR-R Anksiyete alt boyutu varyansın %10'unu, DERS-İmpuls alt boyutu %3.6'sını, DERS-Stratejiler alt boyutu %2'sini ve ECR-R Kaçınma alt boyutu %1'ini açıklamış; tüm değişkenler birlikte toplam varyansın %16,6'sını açıklamıştır.

Literatürdeki diğer araştırmalarla uyumlu olarak, kaygılı ve kaçınmacı bağlanma stillerinin, duygu düzenleme güçlükleri ve olumsuz kişilerarası ilişki tarzları ile ilişkili olduğu belirlenmiştir. Güvenli bağlanma geliştiren bireyler, genellikle daha işlevsel duygu düzenleme becerilerine ve daha sağlıklı sosyal ilişkilere sahip olmaktadır. Buna karşılık, kaygılı veya kaçınmacı bağlanmaya sahip bireylerde duygu düzenleme yetersizlikleri ve kişilerarası sorunlar daha sık görülmektedir.

Duygu düzenleme becerilerinin kişilerarası ilişki tarzlarını şekillendirmedeki etkisi, sosyal ilişkilerde empati, açık iletişim ve çatışma çözme gibi unsurları da kapsamaktadır. Araştırmada, düşük empati ve duygu farkındalığı düzeylerinin, engelleyici ilişki tarzlarıyla ilişkili olduğu; bunun da bireylerin sosyal uyumunu ve ilişkisel doyumunu olumsuz etkilediği vurgulanmaktadır.

Araştırmanın bulguları, duygu düzenleme süreçlerinin ve bağlanma stillerinin, yetişkinlik dönemindeki sosyal etkileşimleri ve kişilerarası ilişki kalıplarını belirlemede önemli rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, duygusal süreçleri ve bağlanma deneyimlerini hedef alan psikolojik müdahalelerin, bireylerin sağlıklı ve doyurucu ilişkiler kurmasına katkı sağlayabileceği belirtilmiştir.

Çalışmanın sınırlılıkları arasında, örneklemin genç yetişkinler ağırlıklı olması ve verilerin öz-bildirim formları aracılığıyla toplanması yer almaktadır. Gelecek araştırmaların, daha çeşitli örneklem grupları ve farklı veri toplama yöntemleri kullanarak konuya daha geniş bir bakış açısı kazandırabileceği önerilmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma; duygu düzenleme becerileri, bağlanma örüntüleri ve kişilerarası ilişkiler arasındaki ilişkilerin anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamakta ve sosyal becerilerin geliştirilmesi için uygulanabilecek müdahalelere ışık tutmaktadır.