

## Irrational Beliefs and Abuse in University Students' Romantic Relations

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### Suggested Citation:

Kaygusuz, C. (2013). Irrational beliefs and abuse in university students' romantic relations. *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 51, 141-156.

### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* The complex nature of romantic relationships, in general, makes the continuation of these relationships a challenge. This situation is even more problematic in traditional societies, as social norms for these relations are more strict and more disciplinarian. University students want to be in romantic relationships due to their current state of development. However, when they decide to be in a relationship, they meet a variety of social pressures; some even feel guilt as a result of the negative connotations attached to relationships. This situation affects satisfaction in romantic relationships, causes irrational beliefs and may lead to abuse in relationships. The purpose of this study is to determine whether university students' irrational beliefs are related to and a predictor of problem-solving behavior in their romantic relationships.

*Methods:* This study was conducted among 320 students from the Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Education. The Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) and Problem Solving Scale in Romantic Relationships for Adolescents (PSSRR-A) were employed during data collection. Data was analyzed using the SPSS 15 statistical package.

*Findings and Results:* Pearson correlation analysis results showed a positive correlation between beliefs of helplessness and physical ( $r = .148, p < .01$ ) and emotional abuse ( $r = .250, p < .05$ ), but showed a significant negative correlation between beliefs of helplessness and problem solving. Also, beliefs of being unlovable and physical ( $r = .198, p < .01$ ) and emotional abuse ( $r = .123, p < .05$ ) correlated positively, while there was a significant negative correlation between beliefs of being unlovable and problem solving ( $r = -.165, p < .01$ ). In addition, the results of the stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that beliefs of helplessness are a positively correlated predictor of emotional abuse ( $R^2 = 0.062, t = 4.603, p < 0.001$ ) and a

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negatively correlated predictor of problem solving ( $R^2= 0.057$ ,  $t= -4.384$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Likewise, beliefs of being unlovable are a positively correlated predictor ( $R^2= 0.39$ ,  $t=3.611$   $p< 0.01$ ) of physical abuse.

*Conclusions and Recommendations:* Irrational beliefs of university students in romantic relationship are associated with physical and emotional abuse and problem-solving behaviors in their relationships and can also be a predictor of abusive behavior. Because abuse in young people's romantic relationships has become more widespread, sometimes threatening the physical and mental health of partners, these findings may help provide more effective psychological help for those suffering such abuses. The findings show that professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, etc.), especially those dealing with university students' psychological health, need to focus on students' irrational beliefs when dealing with abuse.

*Keywords:* Irrational beliefs about romantic relationships, students, helplessness, unlovability, problem solving, abuse.

Romantic relationships during university years, which correspond to the late adolescent period, play an important role in individuals' development. The late adolescent period involves a transition to early adulthood, during which individuals experience cognitive, social and emotional changes that play an important role in developing fundamental behaviors to better adjust to adulthood (Sarı, 2008). Individuals learn how to improve relationships and how to interact with others through romantic relationships (Skipper & Nass, 1966; Feldman, Rosenthal, Brown & Canning, 1995). They also meet socio-psychological needs, like belonging, intimacy, sharing and social support, within these relationships, and they experience the positive effects of romantic relationships on their self-esteem and personal development (Pistole, 1989; Connolly & Konarsky, 1994; Feiring, 1996; Furman & Schaffer, 2003; La Greca & Harrison, 2005).

Important aspects of effective social relationships are shaped within each new relationship, including relations with the opposite sex. As adolescents move into adult, they need to redefine their relationship systems (Kirchler, Palmonari & Pombeni, 1993). Achieving this is a very difficult task for adolescents, so conflict and confusion can become the sources of important problems in their development. Some researchers (Elliott, Sheridan & Gresham, 1989; Silverman & DiGiuseppe, 2001; Altıntaş, 2006) suggest that social skills are very important in reinforcing and damaging adolescent relations with the opposite sex. They also claim that having good social skills makes social acknowledgement easier; therefore, those who have stronger social skills can be more successful in solving relationship problems.

Although romantic relationships usually start with liking, love, and attachment, it is not easy to maintain satisfaction and compatibility over time. The distinctive developmental nature of every romantic relationship affects relationship satisfaction. Dissatisfactory relationships can cause adolescents who struggle to cope with the

difficult nature of their own personal development to have even more profound conflicts, which they might not have enough knowledge and skills to solve, which thereby leads them to have more difficulty in their relationships. This vicious circle can lead to developing negative perceptions of relationships.

Because the perceptions and expectations that are produced by first romantic relationships provide perspectives for future relationships, these relations determine both the quality of intimate relationships that will be established during adulthood and an individual's partner choice throughout the marriage process (Furman, 2002). Adolescents' beliefs about romantic relationships are one of the most important elements that affect their relationship expectations. Beliefs about dysfunctional romantic relationship significantly affect relationship satisfaction, commitment, attachment and trust (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), and play an important role in shaping a more successful relationship. Some researchers (Markman, Floyd, Stanley & Storaasli, 1988; Baucom, Sayers & Sher, 1990; Sharp & Ganong, 2000) suggest that adolescents' irrational thoughts and beliefs about themselves, their partners and their relationships promote problems and disharmonies in their relationships. Irrational beliefs are related to cognitive distortions. These beliefs are thoughts that are fixed, hard to change and incompatible with reality. Due to irrational beliefs, people may show unhealthy emotions, dysfunctional behaviors and psychological disorders (Ellis & Dryden, 1997). It has claimed that the first childhood relationships are important in the development of these beliefs, that the children from families that base their problem-solving on abuse and violence have stronger tendencies toward violence when solving problems (Foshe, 1996; Malik, Sorenson & Aneshensel, 1997), and that these beliefs are transmitted through culture and the family (Can, 2009).

As previously stated, irrational thought can cause destructive behavior and disharmony in the relationship (Sari, 2008; Metts & Cupach, 1990), whereas rational and functional thought increases the harmony and satisfaction in the relationship (Sullivan & Schwebel, 1995). When individuals' beliefs about relationships are unrealistic and dysfunctional, the possibility of having problems in their relationships increases (Friedman & Whisman, 1998; Moller, Rabe & Nortse, 2001), due to their less constructive conflict-resolution behavior (Metts & Cupach, 1990). According to Bradbury and Fincham (1993) and Christian, O'Leary and Vivian (1994), individuals who have irrational beliefs often include negative problem-solving methods in their relationships. Therefore, determining individuals' romantic relationship beliefs will make it easier to understand the social behaviors and expectations they explicitly and consciously express about their romantic relationships (Miga, Hare, Allen & Manning, 2010).

This research aims to understand the modes of conflict resolution styles adolescents use in their romantic relationships and the relationship between these styles and irrational beliefs. Understanding of the unhealthy problem-solving modes, along with determining the predictive power of the variables that affect these problem-solving styles, could contribute to additional research on adolescent romantic relationships. In addition, the findings of this study could also increase

psychologists' and counselors' awareness when counseling adolescents, especially in regard to changing unhealthy problem-solving styles in romantic relationships.

The existence of conflicts and problems in romantic relationships affects the relationship's development. However, the strategies and behaviors that are used to resolve conflicts determines the course of the relationship (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Kurdek, 2002). The marriages of individuals who show destructive behaviors when they have negative emotions in their relationships tend to result in divorce more often (Gottman, 1993). Research has discovered that the methods used to solve problems predict relationship satisfaction better than the importance of the problem (Troy, 2000; Cramer, 2000; Metz & Epstein, 2002). It has been shown that abusive behaviors, such as psychological and heavy physical violence, weaken self-esteem by making the development of love difficult in the romantic relationships (Jezl, D.R., Molidor,, C.E., & Wright, L.T. 1996). Also, individuals who were rejected during childhood or exposed to or witnessed physical violence are more often involved in dating violence during adolescence (Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004). Other previously determined relationships include the link between irrational beliefs and anxiety (Çivitçi, 2006), hopelessness (Göller, 2010), communication skills (Altıntaş, 2006) and interpersonal problem-solving skills (Ağır, 2007; Yıkılmaz, 2009).

The good news is that training programs on prevention of cognitive distortions have been found to improve problem-solving skills. The findings of this research indicate that irrational beliefs deepen the problems of relationship and impede understanding the problem itself. This study focused on the problem as a form of problem solving in romantic relationships, and also the relationship between irrational beliefs and emotional and physical. Ultimately, it is hoped that educational programs on irrational beliefs will contribute to the problem-solving approaches individuals use in their relationships. It is assumed that problem-solving behaviors in marriage are a continuation of pre-marriage behaviors; therefore, when it is considered that the behaviors displayed in romantic relationships can be maintained in marriage, it is understood that teenagers and adolescents must be educated about acceptable and proper behavior. Some parts of this training must aim to change the perspective that causes conflicts and problems. Quite a number of studies have been done concerning the connection between irrational beliefs and conflicts in relationships. However, research that can determine how and which irrational beliefs and thoughts highlight problem-solving behaviors in romantic relationships has not been seen much in the literature. Therefore, this study tested the following hypotheses:

1. There is a significant correlation between irrational beliefs about relationships and problem solving and abuse in romantic relationships.
2. Irrational beliefs about relationships are significant predictors of problem-solving difficulties and abuse in romantic relationships.

## Method

### *Participants*

The study sample consisted of 320 students who have been studying in various faculties at 19 Mayıs University: 210 of the students were female and 110 were male. The mean age was 18.53 ( $S= 1.12$ ). Participants were randomly chosen amongst the volunteers who either had a relationship for a period of at least six months or who have been in their current relationship for at least six months.

### *Research Instruments*

*Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI).* The Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI), which was developed by Kalkan (2006) to measure individuals' irrational beliefs about romantic relationships, consists of 20 items. In the validity study of RBI, construct validity and similar validity scales were used. The results of the factor analysis that were used to determine the construct validity of the scale indicated the two factors "helplessness" and "unlovability", explaining 35.84 % of total variance. The Irrational Belief Scale (IBS) and Dysfunctional Attitude Scale (DAS) were used to calculate the similar validity scale of the inventory. The data showed that the correlation between the scores from RBI and IBS was .24 ( $p<.05$ ), and .32 ( $p<.01$ ) from RBI and DAS. While the internal consistency reliability of the whole scale was found to be .87, the test re-test reliability coefficient was calculated as .74. For the "Helplessness" subscale, the internal consistency coefficient was .78 and the test re-test reliability coefficient was .69; for the "Unlovability" subscale, the internal consistency coefficient was .80 and the test re-test reliability coefficient was calculated as .71. These values were at acceptable levels for the reliability of RBI.

*Problem Solving on Romantic Relationships Scale for Adolescents (PSRRS-A).* The scale, which was developed by Kalkan (2008) to determine adolescents' problem-solving behaviors in romantic relationships, consists of 38 items and is a 5-item Likert type instrument. Construct validity was used to test the validity of PSRRS-A. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin value and Barlett test were done during the first stage of the factor analysis. Accordingly, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin value was 0.84 and the result of the Barlett test was found significant as (4846.898,  $p<.000$ ).

Afterward, the varimax rotation technique was applied to determine the sub-scales and to examine the factor structure of the scale. According to the results of the principal component analysis, three factors accounted for 37.93 % of the total variance and their eigen value was over 26.19 %. This variance was derived from the first factor "Emotional Abuse", which contained 15 items. "Physical Abuse", the second factor, consisted of 13 items and accounted for 6.87 % of the total variance. "Problem Solving", the third factor, contained 10 items and accounted for 4.86 % of the total variance. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient calculated for the whole scale was found as .91. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient for the sub-scales of the inventory was calculated as follows: the "Emotional Abuse" sub-scale was  $\alpha=.86$ , the "Physical Abuse" sub-scale was  $\alpha=.80$ , and the "Problem Solving" sub-scale was  $\alpha=.76$  (Kalkan, 2008).

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Measurement instruments were applied to the volunteer student participants in around 20 minutes, and analysis of the obtained data was done using SPSS 15.0. Pearson's Product Moment correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were used as the statistical analysis technique.

**Results**

Results and analysis regarding the correlation between university students' irrational belief about relationships and problem-solving and abuse are provided below.

*Correlation between irrational beliefs about relationships and problem-solving and abuse in romantic relationships.* The correlation between irrational beliefs about relationships and problem solving and abuse in romantic relationships among university students was tested using Pearson's correlation analysis, and the results are shown in Table 1.

**Table1**

*The Correlation Between Irrational Beliefs about Romantic Relationships and Problem-Solving Behaviors*

	<i>Physical Abuse</i>	<i>Emotional Abuse</i>	<i>Problem Solving</i>
Helplessness	.148*	.250**	-.239*
Unlovability	.198*	.123**	-.165*

When the findings in Table 1 were analyzed, it was seen that there is a positive significant correlation between helplessness and physical abuse ( $r = .148, p < .01$ ) and emotional abuse ( $r = .250, p < .05$ ); also, there is a negative significant correlation between helplessness and problem solving ( $r = -.239, p < .01$ ). It was also found that there is a positive significant correlation between beliefs of unlovability and physical- ( $r = .198, p < .01$ ) and emotional abuse ( $r = .123, p < .05$ ), and a negative significant correlation between unlovability and problem solving ( $r = -.165, p < .01$ ).

*Regression analysis of irrational beliefs about relationships and problem-solving and abuse in romantic relationships.* Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the second hypothesis of the study. Before the multiple linear regression analysis was done, inter-correlations for predictor variables were examined to determine whether there was a multicollinearity problem among predictor variables. The results of the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis showed that there was not a multicollinearity problem and that the sub-scales were independent of each other. After it was determined that the Linear Multiple Regression analysis assumptions were met, the analysis was carried out. The result of this regression analysis -- in which helplessness and beliefs of unlovability predict physical abuse, emotional abuse and problem-solving -- are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Linear Regression Analysis of How Irrational Beliefs Predict Problem-Solving Behaviors in Romantic Relationships*

<i>Variable</i>		$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	$R^2$
Physical Abuse	Unlovability	.198	3.611	.000	.039
Emotional Abuse	Helplessness	.250	4.603	.000	.062
Problem Solving	Helplessness	-.239	-4.384	.000	.057

As seen in Table 2, irrational beliefs about relationships are significant predictors of problem-solving difficulties and abuse in romantic relationships. Beliefs of “unlovability” significantly predicted physical abuse ( $R^2=0.39$ ,  $t=3.611$   $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, beliefs of “Helplessness” in relationships significantly predicted emotional abuse ( $R^2= 0.062$ ,  $t=4.603$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and negatively predicted ( $R^2= 0.057$ ,  $t= -4.384$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) problem solving. In one stage, regression analysis of problem solving and abuse that was predicted by irrational beliefs was completed for each dependent variable. For physical abuse, the “unlovability” score that accounted for 3.9 % of variance was included in the equation. For emotional abuse, the “helplessness” score that accounted for 6.2 % of the variance of the dependent variable, was included in the equation. As for the problem-solving, “helplessness” was included in the regression equation, and it was seen that it accounted for 5.7 % of the dependent variable. When the regression coefficient signs were examined, a positive correlation was seen between beliefs of “helplessness” and “unlovability” in relationships and physical- and emotional abuse was positive; however, the correlation with problem solving was negative.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined the relationship between university students’ irrational beliefs about relationships and problem-solving and abuse in their romantic relationships. The study also investigated whether these beliefs predict problem-solving and abuse in romantic relationships. In this study, irrational beliefs relationships were examined in the dimensions of “helplessness” and “unlovability”. Both showed a positive correlation with physical and emotional abuse, and a negative correlation with problem solving. Moreover, it was seen that beliefs of “unlovability” and “helplessness” positively predicted physical abuse, but negatively predicted problem solving. This finding has revealed that believing helplessness and having the idea of being unloved in relationships block a positive approach to resolving conflicts. Furthermore, having these thoughts reinforces physical and emotional abuse.

When related field literature was examined, studies showed that cognitive biases and irrational beliefs about relationships cause problems in relationships and affect

relationship satisfaction. Irrational beliefs have also been found to have an adverse effect on some psychological characteristics (Çivitçi, 2006; Göller, 2010), on interpersonal problem-solving skills (Yıkılmaz, 2009) and on communication skills. The study of Metts & Cupach (1990) determined that there is a relationship between irrational relationship beliefs and abandonment and neglect. Bradbury and Fincham (1993) found a positive relationship between the incidence of problem-solving behaviors of couples and irrational beliefs. Christian, O'Leary and Vivian (1994) determined that there is a negative significant relationship between positive problem-solving behaviors and irrational beliefs.

This study has revealed that physical abuse is predominantly predicted by the belief of unlovability, and emotional abuse by helplessness. Once more, it was determined that the belief of helplessness predicted problem solving in a negative way. These findings draw attention to beliefs regarding romantic relationships as a source for abuse. The existence of these kinds of behaviors prevents people from seeing the world in a realistic way and being open to new input (Beştav, 2007). Therefore, in situations where individuals have problems with their partners, the existence of irrational relationship beliefs makes it difficult to practice positive problem-solving behaviors, such as trying to find the reason behind the problem, understanding partner's feelings, sharing one's own feelings, and giving opportunities for mutual expression of expectations. Some studies (Carich, Kassel & Stone, 2001) have shown that individuals who display abusive behaviors have difficulty in understanding feelings and lack empathy. While rational thoughts include ideas that make it easier to reach selected targets for happiness and survival, irrational thoughts consist of ideas that hinder, ruin and obstruct individual's ability to reach these targets, as irrational beliefs consist of consistent and generalized cognitive structures that carry problematic conditions into relationships.

Consequently, irrational beliefs about relationships are related to physical and emotional abuse, and have the predictive power for these abuses. These findings show that psychological counselors, especially those working with adolescents, have to focus their attention on irrational beliefs while examining abuse in relationships. Moreover, mental health practitioners who examine adolescents' relationship problems must develop appropriate treatments programs to reveal patients' irrational beliefs, as doing so may prevent abuse in adolescent romantic relationships. However, guided counseling programs should also facilitate adolescents' understanding of and ability to convey their love. In addition, organizing training programs and providing resources that deal with hopelessness may lead adolescents to try out more rational ways of solving both personal and relationship problems.



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#### **Examples of Problem Solving on Romantic Relationships Scale for Adolescents.**

- I say things that enrages him/her.
- I would not devote him/her time.
- I do not allow him/her to meet with others.
- I become obstinate with him/her and wait for him/her to feel sorry.
- I would show with my behaviour that I do not care about him/her.
- I would threaten to harm him/her or things that him/her cared about.
- I behave to make him/her jealous.
- I say humiliating things to him/her.
- I say that I do not love him/her.

### Examples of Items of Romantic Relationships Belief Inventory

I think that our relationship is unsuccessful when my partner and I do not agree.

When things go wrong in my relationship, I blame myself.

Even though I have difficulties in my relationship, I should look strong

I need my partner; I cannot live without him/her.

As long as my partner does not love me, I am nothing

## Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Romantik İlişkilerinde İrrasyonel İnançlar ve İstismar.

### Atıf:

Kaygusuz, C. (2013). Irrational beliefs and abuse in university students' romantic relations. *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 51, 141-156.

### (Özet)

*Problem Durumu:* İnsan ilişkileri her geçen gün daha fazla zorlanmayla yüz yüze kalmakta, bu zorlanmalar birçok ilişkide saldırgan davranışların ortaya çıkmasına yol açmaktadır. Ergenlik ve genç yetişkinlik döneminde ilişkilerin sürdürülmesi bu dönemlerin kendine özgü, kimlik arayışı, geleceğe yönelme, yetişkinlik toplumsal rollerine uyum için ön hazırlık yapabilme gibi güçlükleri nedeniyle daha da zorlanmaktadır. Ergenlik dönemi romantik ilişkilerinin kendine özgü doğası bu zorlanmaları derinleştirmekte; ilişkiler tahrip edici bir hal almakta, romantik ilişki sürdüren ergenler zaman zaman partnerinin yaşamını tehdit edecek düzeyde ilişki sorunları yaşayabilmektedirler. Bir çok geleneksel ya da yarı geleneksel toplumda olduğu gibi Türkiye'de romantik ilişki alanı oldukça sorunludur, çünkü, romantik ilişkileri düzenleyen toplumsal normlar daha katı ve daha baskılayıcıdır. Üniversite yıllarının başlangıcını da içine alan ergenlik dönemi içinde olan gençlerin romantik ilişkileri sürdürürken çoğu kez arzularıyla toplumsal normlar arasında kaldıkları; bu çatışmalı hal nedeniyle zaten zorlanarak sürdürdükleri ilişkilerde çoğu kez başarısız oldukları ve yıkıcı davranışlara yöneldikleri gözlemlenmektedir. Üniversite öğrencileri yaşları gereği romantik ilişki içinde olmak istemekte; bu ilişkiler aracılığı ile kendilerini gelecek ebeveyn rollerine hazırlamaktadır. Ancak, geleneksel değerler nedeniyle toplumsal olarak henüz onaylanmamış (sözlülük-nişanlılık-evlilik gibi) romantik ilişkiler sürdüren gençler, bu ilişkilerinde yeteri kadar rahat olamadıklarından romantik ilişkilerinde yeterli doyum sağlayamamakta, ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançlar geliştirebilmekte ve bu durum ilişkilerde oldukça yaygın istismara yol açabilmektedir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışmanın amacı, romantik ilişkilerde ortaya çıkan sorunların çözülmesindeki stratejilerle akılcı olmayan inançların ilişkili olup olmadığı irdelemek ve bu inançların romantik ilişkilerde fiziksel ve duygusal istismarı ve problem çözmeyle anlamlı biçimde yordayıp yordamadığı araştırmaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, iki soruya yanıt aranmıştır:

1. Romantik ilişkilerde istismar ve problem çözme ile akılcı olmayan inançlar arasında bir ilişki var mıdır?
2. Akılcı olmayan inançlar romantik ilişkilerde istismar ve problem çözmenin anlamlı yordayıcıları mıdır?

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Araştırmaya Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi'nin çeşitli fakültelerinde öğrenim gören, 210 kız, 110 erkek, toplam 320 öğrenci katılmıştır. Katılımcılar geçmişte en az altı ay ilişki sürdüren ya da halen en az altı aydır romantik ilişkisi olan kişilerden seçilmiştir. Araştırmada, Kalkan tarafından geliştirilen ve romantik ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançları ölçen 20 maddelik *İlişkilerde İnanç Envanteri (İİE)* ile yine Kalkan tarafından geliştirilen ve ilişkilerde sorun çözme davranışlarını ölçen *Ergenler İçin Romantik İlişkilerde Sorun Çözme Ölçeği (ERİŞÇÖ)* kullanılmıştır. Her iki ölçeğinde geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışmaları ilgili araştırmacı tarafından yapılmış ve ölçeklerin geçerli ve güvenilir olduğu saptanmıştır. *İlişkilerde İnanç Envanteri* "çaresizlik" ve "sevilmezlik" olmak üzere iki boyutludur. *Ergenler İçin Romantik İlişkilerde Sorun Çözme Ölçeği* ise, fiziksel istismar, duygusal istismar ve soruna yönelme olmak üzere üç boyutlu olup toplam 38 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Gönüllü öğrencilerden toplanan verilerin analizi SPSS 15.0 paket programı kullanılarak yapılmıştır. İstatistiksel analiz tekniği olarak Pearson momentler çarpımı korelasyonu ve bağımsız değişken üzerinde birden fazla bağımlı değişkenin etkisini ve değişkenler arası ilişkinin gücünü saptamak için kullanılan aşamalı çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Araştırmada yanıtlanması hedeflenen sorulardan biri olan, ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançlar ile romantik ilişkilerde fiziksel ve duygusal istismar ve problem çözme/soruna yönelme arasında ilişki olup olmadığını, test etmek amacıyla veriler Pearson korelasyon analizine tabi tutulmuş; sonuçlar, çaresizlik inancıyla fiziksel istismar ( $r = .148, p < .01$ ) ve duygusal istismar ( $r = .250, p < .05$ ) arasında olumlu anlamlı; çaresizlik inancının problem çözmeyle olumsuz anlamlı ( $r = -.239, p < .01$ ). korelasyonu olduğunu göstermiştir. Sevilmezlik inancı ile fiziksel istismar ( $r = .198, p < .01$ ) ve duygusal istismar ( $r = .123, p < .05$ ) arasında anlamlı olumlu korelasyon olduğu; yine, sevilmezlik inancı ile problem çözme davranışı arasında anlamlı ( $r = -.165, p < .01$ ) olumsuz korelasyon olduğu bulunmuştur.

Araştırmanın ikinci problemine, yani, ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançların ergen romantik ilişkilerinde fiziksel ve duygusal istismar ve problem çözme/soruna yönelmeyi anlamlı biçimde yordayıp yordamadığına ilişkin soruya yanıt bulmak için yapılan aşamalı çoklu regresyon analizi, ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançlardan çaresizlik inancının duygusal istismarın olumlu anlamlı ( $R^2 = 0.062, t = 4.603, p < 0.001$ ), problem çözme/soruna yönelmenin olumsuz anlamlı ( $R^2 = 0.057, t = -4.384, p < 0.001$ )

yordayıcısı olduğunu göstermiştir. Sevilmezlik inancı ise fiziksel istismarın olumlu anlamlı ( $R^2= 0.39$ ,  $t=3.611$   $p< 0.01$ ) yordayıcısıdır.

*Tartışma ve Yorum:* Üniversite öğrencilerinin romantik ilişkilerinde akılcı olmayan inançları, onların ilişkilerinde fiziksel istismar, duygusal istismar ve problem çözme/soruna yönelme davranışlarıyla ilişkilidir. Ayrıca ilişkilerde akılcı olmayan inançlardan çaresizlik inancı duygusal istismarın olumlu anlamlı, problem çözme/soruna yönelmenin olumsuz anlamlı yordayıcısıdır. Akılcı olmayan inançlar alt boyutlarından sevilmezlik inancı ise fiziksel istismarı olumlu anlamlı biçimde yordamıştır.

Son zamanlarda gençlerin romantik ilişkilerdeki istismarlarının bazen partnerlerinin fiziksel ve ruhsal sağlığını tehdit eden biçimlere ulaştığı göz önüne alındığında, bu bulgular öğrencilere götürülecek etkili psikolojik yardımda işlevsel olabilir. Örneğin, çaresizlik inancı duygusal istismara yol açmakta ve problem çözme/soruna yönelme davranışını engellemektedir. İlişkilerinde sorun yaşayan ve çaresiz hisseden kişilerin çaresizlik duygularına yapılacak psikolojik müdahaleler o kişilerin ilişkide istismarcı davranmalarını engelleyebilecektir. Yine, sevilmezlik inancının fiziksel istismarın tetikleyicisi olduğu anlaşıldığından sevilmezlik inancını pekiştiren olumsuz algılarla mücadele etmek, fiziksel istismarın azalmasına katkı sağlayabilecektir. Bulgular, özellikle üniversite öğrencilerinin psikolojik sağlığıyla ilgilenen profesyonellerin (psikiyatrist, psikolog, sosyal hizmet uzmanı ve psikolojik danışman gibi) istismarla çalışırken onların akılcı olmayan inançlarına odaklanması gerektiğini göstermektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Romantik ilişkilerde irrasyonel inançlar, öğrenci, çaresizlik, sevilmezlik, problem çözme, istismar.