The Prediction of Gender and Attachment Styles on Shame, Guilt, and Loneliness*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the predictive power of attachment styles and gender on negative social emotions such as shame, guilt, and loneliness. The sample consists of 360 (183 female, 177 male) students attending to different departments of Marmara University. The Relationships Questionnaire, Guilt-Shame Scale, and UCLA Loneliness Scale were used as instruments. Results obtained from hierarchical regression analysis showed that gender has a predictive power on shame, solely. When the predictivity of attachment styles on negative social emotions was examined, the results revealed that shame was predicted by secure and dismissing attachment style, whereas guilt was predicted by only dismissing attachment. Furthermore, all attachment styles played a determining role on loneliness.

Key Words

Attachment, Shame, Guilt, Loneliness, Negative Social Emotions.

Bowlby's (1969, 1980) attachment theory is based on the relations formed and developed between an infant and his/her primary care-giver. This theory also explains the reasons of the tendencies towards strong-emotional bond with a specific person. According to the interaction between infant and the primary care-giver, a child develops working models, including judgments and evaluations of the self and other people.

Based on the working models, attachment behaviors had been examined in different studies. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978), subsequently Egeland & Farber (1984), Main, Kaplan & Cassidy (1985), and Cassidy & Berlin (1994) investigated the infants' and children's attachment behaviors. According to the results, attachment styles were classified as secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. Bowlby (1977) asserted that attachment quality becomes stable over time. In light of this assertion, adulthood attachment styles were also investigated. Results indicate that childhood attachment is translated into a terminology suitable for adult functioning (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

While examining the adult attachment, Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) model is used commonly. According to this model, based on a combination of negative and positive models of the self and others, adult attachments are classified as secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. *Secure* individuals have both a positive self-view and a positive view of others. These individuals generally have high self-esteem and trust others. Their relationships are characterized by mutuality, closeness, and respect. *Preoccupied* individuals are characterized by a negative view of themselves and a positive view of others. They tend to have high dependence on others. *Fearful* individuals have both a negative image of themselves and others. They are viewed as shy and have a sense of mistrust in their relationships. Finally, *dismissing* individuals have a positive view of the self and a negative view of others. They may have high self-esteem but suppress their desire to engage in intimate relationships, so are generally seen as having low sociability (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994b). In this study, these four categories are used to examine the attachment styles.

Attachment Styles and Negative Social Emotions

Relations between attachment and emotion have been investigated by many researchers (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). Attachment theory assumes that the

attachment figure not only provides a secure base, but also encourages exploration of the self and the environment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1980). Researchers studying on the issue notified that different attachment styles are associated with distinct emotional profiles (Consedine & Magai, 2003). Generally, secure attachment is related to positive emotion, while insecure attachment is related to negative emotion. Individuals with a secure attachment style are less liable to depression, anger and hostility than insecure individuals (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995).

Like other negative social emotions, shame, guilt, and loneliness may arise from early relationships (Leary, Koch, & Hechenbleikner, 2007). In the literature, *shame* and *guilt* are often used interchangeably. Both shame and guilt are experienced in interpersonal relationships, and the negative events that generally cause them are similar. Tangney and Dearing (2002) reported that these emotions are very similar, but also differentiate from each other based on specific features. For example, shame involves the negative evaluations of the global self (*I* made a mistake), whereas guilt involves the negative evaluation of one's behavior (I *made* a *mistake*). In terms of the degree of stress, shame is more painful than guilt. People generally experience feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness with shame, but feel tension, remorse and regret with guilt. Another key difference is that people who feel shame are concerned with evaluation by others, whereas people who experience guilt are concerned with their effect upon others. Finally, a desire to hide and escape is a typical motivational feature of shame, while with guilt, people want to apologize and confess (Lewis, 1971; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

Shame is experienced in response to perceived (or inferred) devaluation by others (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Malatesta-Magai and Dorval (1992) claimed that shame is created in a child through the experience of defeat and parental attitudes. If parents' reactions against child's desire to explore are negative, the child internalizes these attitudes and may experience feelings of rejection and being weak. Some theorists argued that guilt also operates as a function of interpersonal dynamics rather than purely intra-psychic processes (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Parkinson, Fischer, & Manstead, 2005).

Another emotion stemming from early relationships is *loneliness*. Peplau and Perlman (1982, p. 2) defined loneliness as "the unpleasant experience that occurs when a person's network of social relations is significantly deficient in either quality or quantity." According to this definition, loneliness includes three characteristics. The first is related to social life, which means that loneliness results from a perceived lack of relationships. The second characteristic is that loneliness is a subjective experience, not equivalent with social isolation. And finally, loneliness is unpleasant and distressing (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). Weiss (1989) defined loneliness as an anxious situation that arises when the individual is separated from his/her attachment figure, and categorized as social and emotional loneliness.

At this point, attachment as a process of judgments of oneself and others may cause loneliness. Based on Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) types, it might be expected that only fearful individuals will report feeling lonely, whereas dismissing individuals, who dismiss the importance of close relationships in their lives, will not experience loneliness. Research on the secure–insecure dimension (Blain, Thompson, & Whiffen, 1993; DiTommaso, Brannen-McNulty, Ross, & Burgess, 2003; Kenny & Rice, 1995; Nurmi, Toivonen, Salmela-Aro, & Eronen, 1997) indicated that individuals who have a negative view of their attachment figures are more likely to experience loneliness. Wilbert & Rupert (1986) also found that lonely people often fear being rejected.

Gender Differences

The effect of gender on these emotions has also been studied. According to Tangney and Dearing (2002), females across all ages report a greater propensity to both shame and guilt than males. Loneliness can also be differentiated in terms of gender, explained by the differences in male and female characteristics and differences the values attached by both genders to their relationships (Burger, 2006; Fenster-Kuehl, 1993).

Because of the possible effects of gender on shame, guilt and loneliness, gender is taken into consideration as a control variable in the present study. As a consequence, the main purpose of the study is to examine the predictive power of attachment styles and gender upon negative social emotions such as shame, guilt and loneliness.

Method

Sample

The population of the study consisted of students attending different faculties at Marmara University in Istanbul. The sample consisted of 360 students drawn from different departments of faculties using random clustering method. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 30 years (M=21.35, SD=1.64); 183 students were females (50.8%), 177 males (49.2%).

Procedure

The participants were asked to complete three different questionnaires that included scales of attachment styles, shame, guilt and loneliness. The questionnaires were administered in group sessions including a maximum of 30 participants. Each group session lasted 45-60 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data from the study was analyzed using with SPSS for WINDOWS 10.0 statistical software package. In the beginning, means and standard deviations of the main variables such as attachment styles, shame, guilt, and loneliness were calculated. Gender was taken as a control variable in the study; the differences of the variables in terms of gender were investigated by using Independent Sample t-Test. Inter-correlation of the study variables were also analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. In accordance with the main purpose of the study, the predictive power of attachment styles and gender on shame, guilt, and loneliness were performed using hierarchical regression analysis.

Instruments

The Relationships Questionnaire (RQ): Developed by Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991), the RQ is a single-item measure made up of four short paragraphs, each describing how a prototypical attachment pattern applies to close adult peer relationships. Participants are asked to rate their degree of correspondence to each prototype on a seven-point scale. Based on these ratings (or "scores"), a *profile* of an individual's attachment feelings and behaviors is created. The test-retest value is

0.71 for secure, 0.69 for fearful, 0.59 for preoccupied, and 0.49 for dismissing. Sümer & Güngör (1999) conducted RQ reliability and validity studies on a Turkish sample and found a satisfactory level of reliability, stability and convergent validity. These researchers used another attachment scale called Relations Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) to test criterion validity of the RQ. They obtained significant correlation values ranging between .49 and .61. These finding were consistent with Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994a) study. RQ has been used in many researches (Çelik, 2004; Güroğlu, 2002; Kuşçu-Orhan, 1998; Pamir-Arıkoğlu, 2003; Sümer, 2006) in the Turkish culture to measure the attachment styles.

The UCLA Loneliness Scale: This scale was developed by Russell, Peplau & Ferguson (1978), revised by Russell, Peplau & Curton (1980), and adapted to Turkish participants by Demir (1990). The scale has 20 items with a four-point Likert scale. It consists of 10 positively worded statements reflecting satisfaction with social interactions, and 10 negatively worded statements reflecting dissatisfaction with social relationships. Higher scores indicate greater loneliness. The alpha coefficient of the Turkish version was .94, and test-retest reliability was .94. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was found to be .90.

The Shame and Guilt Scale: This scale was developed by Şahin & Şahin (1992) for the Turkish culture. It comprises 24 items rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. A high score on the shame and guilt scale indicates a high level of these emotions. Cronbach alpha reliability scores are .81 for the guilt subscale and .80 for the shame subscale. Based on results of criterion-oriented validity, the guilt scale correlated with the Beck Depression Inventory (r=-.10), Sociotropy Scale (r=.33), and Submissiveness Scale (r=.11). The shame scale also correlated with the Sociotropy Scale (r =.50) and Submissiveness Scale (r =.28) (cited in Savaşır & Şahin, 1997). In this study, internal consistencies are found to be acceptable (.77 for guilt scale, and. 79 for shame scale).

Results

First, correlations among the study variables were examined. As preliminary analysis, it was found that all attachment styles, except preoccupied, correlated with shame. A negative correlation was found between the dismissing attachment style and guilt. Loneliness was nega-

tively correlated with the secure style and positively correlated with the fearful, preoccupied and dismissing styles. Gender correlated with all attachment styles, except dismissing. In terms of negative social emotions, gender was only associated with shame. After then, based on the preliminary analysis, the predictive power of the attachment styles and gender was investigated using hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

The results showed that gender alone accounted for approximately 4% of the total variance in shame scores (F=15.57, p<.001). Attachment styles were taken into consideration in the second block, and it was found that attachment styles and gender together accounted for 9% of variance (F=7.19, p<.001). According to the value of β, secure and dismissing attachment were significantly predictive factors for shame (t=-2.08, p<.05; t=-2.45, p<.05, respectively).

It was seen that gender did not have any predictive power on guilt (F=.47, p>.05). Following the inclusion of attachment styles in the model as a second block variable, it was seen that both gender and attachment styles accounted for 3% of variance (F=2.13, p<.05). However, when β coefficients were examined, it was seen that only dismissing style had a contribution to the model significantly (t=-2.94, p<.01).

Finally, gender was not a significant predictive factor for loneliness (F=2.02, p<.05), whereas all attachment styles were significant. Attachment styles and gender together accounted for 23% of variance (F=21.29, p<.001). According to β coefficients, secure style contributed to the model negatively (t_{secure}=-2.96, p<.01), while insecure styles contributed positively ($t_{fearful}$=3.49, p<.001; $t_{preoccupied}$=4.62, p<.001; $t_{dismissing}$=4.98, p<.001).

Discussion

This study attempted to extend the existing literature by examining the predictive power of gender and attachment styles on negative social emotions such as shame, guilt, and loneliness in the Turkish culture. As preliminary analysis, correlations between study variables and the effect of gender on the variables were examined. Based on the results, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted (see Table 1 and 2).

Results showed that shame as a negative social emotion was predicted by gender. As expected, females were found to be more prone to ex-

periencing shame than males. This result is consistent with previous research (Gross, 1996; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Woien, Ernst, Patock-Peckham, & Nagoshi, 2003). Kochanska, Gross, Lin and Nichols (2002) found that girls are more affected by their wrongdoings than boys. These differences may stem from females being more interpersonally sensitive than males (Zahn-Waxler, Kochanska, Krupnick, & McKnew, 1990). As emphasized by Woien et al. (2003), there may be gender differences in shame experiences because of different parental attitudes towards girls and boys.

When attachment styles were included in the model for shame, it was found that the secure and dismissing styles predicted shame. The finding is consistent with the Bartholomew & Horowitz's (1991) attachment model. Lewis (1971) emphasized that shame arises from perceived inadequacies or deficits in the self; therefore, the findings of this study are consistent with the theoretical statement. However, there is no consensus about the links between shame and dismissing attachment style. In the literature, while in some studies (Consedine & Magai, 2003) the relationship between shame and dismissing attachment was displayed, in other studies (Deniz, 2006; Garnett, 1991; Gross & Hansen, 2000) the aforementioned relationship was usually disproved. Owing to positive self model, secure and dismissing individuals might experiences shame less than others. Although dismissing individuals have a positive self-model, to protect the self mechanism they might avoid engaging in intimate relationships. For this reason, the situation leading to experiencing shame may not occur.

As another result, gender does not have any impact on guilt. In the literature, the relationships between guilt and gender were usually disproved. For example, Kubany and Watson (2003) reported stronger guilt in women than men. Silfver's (2007) cross-cultural study indicated that Finnish girls were more prone to guilt, while among Peruvians there were no gender differences in guilt. Inconsistent results imply that not only cultural differences but also gender roles should be taken into consideration.

When guilt was investigated in terms of attachment style, it was found that the increasing dismissing style leads to decreasing guilt. Because of having a positive view of the self, dismissing individuals focus on their own needs, they are able to neglect others and their needs. Therefore, they feel less responsibility for others, they are less likely to feel guilty (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Even though these findings support the literature, origin of the issue should also be discussed in relation with cultural context. In Turkish culture, dismissing style may be considered to have a different content. In the Western cultures, dismissing style is considered to have high self-esteem (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) even though it is labeled as insecure. However, in the Turkish culture, still as a communitarian culture, dismissing style is considered to have a negative others model instead of positive self model. Therefore, the style is less acceptable in cultural terms and these individuals tend to experience guilt less because of limited relationships investment.

Another negative emotion, loneliness, was not predicted by gender. Some other study results support this finding (Wheeler, Reis, & Nezlek, 1983). However, there is no consensus about gender's effect on loneliness. Some studies (Borys & Perlman, 1985; Demir, 1990; Deniz, Hamarta, & Arı, 2005; Russell, 1996) revealed that boys' loneliness scores were higher than those of girls, whereas in other studies (Galanaki & Kalantzi-Azizi, 1999; McWhirter, 1997), girls were found to be lonelier than boys. These conflicting results emphasize that loneliness is a product of subjective experiences (Jones, Carpenter, & Quintana, 1985), so loneliness stems from an individual's personal life experiences rather than their gender.

It was also found that all attachment styles predicted loneliness. The results showed that loneliness was positively correlated with all insecure attachment styles, but negatively correlated with the secure attachment style. It indicates that securely attached people are less lonely. These findings are consistent with DiTommaso et al. (2003), Riggio, Throckmorton, and DePaola (1990), and Sümer and Güngör (1999). It can be concluded that owing to a positive view of the self and others, secure people easily develop close and intimate relationships with others, so are less lonely. However, those with fearful, dismissing and preoccupied attachment styles may have reduced interpersonal skills in establishing and maintaining relationships because of their negative view of others.

The most remarkable result of this study is that only loneliness was predicted by all attachment styles. This shows that early experiences have more effect upon loneliness than other negative emotions such as shame and guilt.

Shame and guilt are defined as moral affects, so parenting practices and discipline styles can shape the emotional and moral functioning of children (Baumrind, 1979; Hofman, 1998). The studies (Bradshaw, 1988; Fossum & Mason, 1986) examining the effect of family environment on emotional expression styles of children concluded that dysfunctional and shame based family environments are characterized with family conflicts and maladaptive communication. Tangney and Dearing (2002) also emphasized that throughout children's developmental process, family interactions do not directly model guilt and shame behaviors, but rather reflect "general interactions within the family system." This statement reflects that shame and guilt may be more intensely affected by the socialization process than attachment relationships. This area requires further investigation. The influence of early experiences, child-rearing practices, family systems and the emotional styles of parents on shame, guilt and attachment styles may be investigated in a multivariable research design in order to determine impacts of variables.

This study had some notable limitations. Shame and guilt were regarded as traits, and loneliness was not evaluated based on its different dimensions (social, emotional, situational). Further studies on these emotions should be carried out in different relationship settings, such as family relations, romantic relations, friendships, social networks and interpersonal relationships. The situational evaluation of these emotions may be more useful in explaining their antecedents, which may help to cope with the negative effects of these emotions and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships.

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