

Examining the Role of Attachment Dimensions and Contact Disturbances in Predicting Irrational Romantic Relationship Beliefs of University Students

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to examine the predictive role of attachment dimensions and contact disturbances in irrational romantic relationship beliefs. The study group of the research consisted of 349 university students studying at a state university in Turkey. The data on the dependent variable in the research were obtained using the Irrational Romantic Relationship Beliefs Inventory. The data on the independent variables were obtained using the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory II and the Contact Disturbances Scale. The standard multiple regression analysis was used in the research to test the predictive role of attachment dimensions and contact disturbances of university students in their irrational romantic relationship beliefs. According to the research findings, it was found that the anxiety dimension of attachment and dependent contact predicted excessive expectations positively; full contact and the anxiety dimension of attachment predicted the social time use positively; the anxiety dimension of attachment predicted mind-reading positively; the avoidance dimension of attachment predicted physical intimacy positively; contact and full contact predicted gender differences positively, whereas dependent contact predicted gender differences negatively among irrational beliefs .

Keywords: *Irrational romantic relationship beliefs, attachment dimensions, contact disturbances, university students.*

1. Introduction

Close relationships make up a very significant aspect of human life. It is seen that the nature of romantic relationships has been examined and explained by many researchers in the literature (Buehler and Wells, 1981; Collins, 2003; Sternberg, 1986). For example, Sternberg (1986) conceptualizes the romantic relationships formed between lovers and married couples as an association described with passion, attachment, and intimacy freely chosen by individuals. Collins (2003) defined it in a more comprehensive way and emphasized five characteristic properties of romantic relationships as suppose choosing, relationship content, cognitive-emotional processes, commitment, and relationship quality.

It can be said that romantic relationships during late adolescence and early adulthood have a particular importance as young people are in the period of developing adult roles. The results of the studies carried out on romantic relationships in the late adolescence period which corresponds to university years (Connolly and Konarsky, 1994; Furjman and Schaffer, 2003) show that they have quite important effects in developing the necessary behaviors of young people for better adapting to adult life. Nevertheless, it is expressed that one of the most important reasons for university students to consult university psychological counseling centers is the hardships they encounter in their romantic relationships (Creasey, Kershaw, and Boston, 1999). According to the results of research carried out in Western countries, relations with the opposite sex are ranked fourth with the value of 11.22% among the reasons for university students to consult university psychological counseling centers (Aluede, Imhonde, and Eguvoen, 2006). In the studies examining the reasons for consulting university counseling centers in Turkey, it was also shown that romantic relationships are among the reasons for which university students

apply to university counseling centers (Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya and Terzi, 20010; Erkan Cihangir-Çankaya, Terzi, and Özbay, 2011). The first author of this study also observed that romantic relationships had a prominent place among the reasons for consulting the center and students frequently expressed their irrational beliefs during the years she worked in the counseling center of a university.

Romantic relations constitute a basis for young people to fulfill three development tasks that they have to cope with in their late adolescence period (Erikson, 1968; Feldman and Gowen, 1998). These development tasks are to develop a unique identity, to establish intimacy with the opposite sex by improving communication skills and to cope with sexual desires and impulses in a healthy way. Nevertheless, the actual development crisis that has to be coped with in this period according to Erikson is "intimacy vs. isolation". While intimacy is defined as the skill of establishing an open, supportive and emotional relationship without having the fear of losing one's self, isolation means individual's retreating in relationships and remaining lonely by not being able to establish healthy relationships. There are studies which show that healthy romantic relationships in this period have positive effects on the personality development of university students (Connolly and Konarsky, 1994; Furjman and Schaffer, 2003). Just as in all other close relationship types, romantic relationships have three main properties such as attachment, fulfilling of psychological needs and mutual attachment. However, not all of the romantic relationships may possess all of these properties, due to the low satisfaction taken from the relationship.

It was found that relationship satisfaction is related to variables such as empathic behaviors (Davis and Oathout, 1987), problem-solving skills (Metts and Cupach, 1990), communication styles (Olderbak and igueredo, 2009), and attachment styles (Towler and Stuhlmacher, 2013). One of the important indicators of relationship satisfaction is irrational romantic relationship beliefs (Mets and Cupach, 1990; Sullivan and Schwebel, 1995; Saraç, Hamamcı, and Güçray, 2015; Stackert and Bursik, 2003). There are many research results indicating that individuals who have problems in emotional relationships have wide unrealistic beliefs about themselves, spouses and their relationships (Eidelson and Epstein; 1982). The cognitive-behavioral approach shows that irrational beliefs which are also called as non-functional beliefs or cognitive distortions are important in the emergence and maintenance of non-functional behaviors and psychological disorders of individuals (Beck 2001; Ellis, 1986). The beliefs about relationships consist of the thoughts of individuals about how a relation should be, their expectations of relationships and the way they perceive their experiences regarding their relationships (Sullivan and Schwebel, 1995). As rational relationship beliefs reflect the realities about the relationship and increase an individual's adaptation to the relationship, relationship satisfaction, and personal development, they are considered as health developing (Sullivan and Scwebel, 1995). On the other hand, irrational relationship beliefs are defined as individual's beliefs about the nature of the relationship, the individual and others, which are exaggerated, strict, irrational and resistant to change (Ellis, 1986). According to the cognitive approach, irrational beliefs have an important effect on problematic relationships and of low relationship satisfaction (Epstein, Baucom, and Rankin, 1993; Ellis, Sichel Yeager, DiMattia and DiGuseppe, 1989).

One of the most discussed subjects of interpersonal relations is how these unrealistic and non-functional relationship beliefs develop and continue in the lives of individuals. Attachment theory attracts much attention from the researchers in recent years as it constitutes a very suitable basis for the studies in this field. Stackert and Bursik (2003) found that university students with insecure attachment style have more irrational relationship beliefs than the students who have secure attachment style. Attachment styles have been known to bear a vital importance regarding creating close relationships in the lives of individuals (Simpson, Rholes, & Philips, 1996). Bowlby (1980) defended that attachment relationships are very important during the whole life of an individual and attachment behavior defines person's relationships "from birth to death". As people need to establish close relationships throughout their lives, how they become attached to other people is very important.

According to Bowlby (1988), attachment and care are two systems that complete each other in the mutual relationships. The quality of the emotional bond and relationship formed with the child and those that

bring the child up affects life-long development and the relationships established with other attachment figures in future years. According to the attachment theory, depending on the reactions given by the mother/caregiver to the child in the first years of his life, the child creates mental models regarding himself and others, and these mental models guide emotions, behaviors and cognition in the relations formed in adulthood for the relationships between close people in future years. Consequently, attachment patterns bear a great importance in an individual's life regarding close relationships. Attachment patterns also determine the direction of the individuals' behaviors in their social relationships. It was found that individuals with insecure attachment style have more relationship problems in interpersonal relations and emotional relations (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Collins, Welsch, and Furman, 2009; Shaver, Collins, and Clark, 1996; Sroufe, 1983). It is seen that in recent years, the attachment has been measured in two dimensions; anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark ve Shaver, 1998). Brennan et al. stated that it is better to measure the attachment patterns as dimensions rather than styles. They indicated that styles were very resistant to change, whereas the level of anxiety and avoidance regarding attachment could be changed with different kind of experiences and interventions. Parallel with this explanations, in the present study we use the measure of Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) which measures the level of anxiety and avoidance felt regarding attachment.

The relationships established with individuals with whom people are attached are important. However, people are also in contact with their environment to fulfill their needs. The concept of contact is a concept that is frequently used in Gestalt therapy approach. In Gestalt therapy approach, the contact includes an individual's communication with oneself and others in the most basic way. Besides, the contact also includes an individual's bond with oneself and others, and it is aimed at fulfilling person's needs (Yontef and Jacop, 2008). In some cases, individual' boundaries with oneself and others are not clear, become vague, or disappear completely. This prevents awareness and contact and leads to contact disturbances (Bloom, 2006). The distortions and problems that an individual experiences regarding the contact with oneself and the environment are contact disturbances. There is a scale developed for contact disturbances (Tagay, 2010) in Turkey, and in this scale, contact disturbances were defined in four dimensions as contact, full contact, dependent contact, and post-contact. The contact disturbance is the stage at which the need is revealed, and externalization is used. Full contact is the stage at which an individual has problems at the point of fulfilling his/her needs and uses the introversion, deflection contact disturbance. Dependent contact is the stage at which an individual has problems with determining the boundaries with oneself and others and includes the contact disturbances of the lack of boundaries and helper syndrome. Post-contact is the stage that includes the retraction contact disturbance when the individual leaves the place without fulfilling his/her needs completely (Tagay and Voltan-Acar, 2012). As can also be understood from these explanations, contact disturbances prevent an individual from establishing healthy relationships with oneself and the environment. It may also be either in the form of distortions in relationships or completely ceasing the communication. In a study carried out by Tagay (2015), it is seen that the model based on the causal relation between contact disturbances, self-respect and life satisfaction is verified, and self-respect decreases as contact disturbances increase.

As is seen in those accounted for so far, it can be expected that anxiety and avoidance dimensions and contact disturbances that are claimed to underlie attachment styles may play a determining role in the irrational beliefs of young adults on romantic relationships as they determine beliefs and expectations in close relationships of individuals. Studies carried out in Western societies clearly show the negative effects of irrational relationship beliefs on relationships (Metts and Cupach, 1990; Moller and Van Zyl, 1991; Moller and Vander Merwe, 1997). It is seen that studies investigating irrational relationship beliefs of university students (Gizir, 2014; Küçükarslan and Gizir, 2014; Sarı, 2008) and the relation between relationship beliefs and relationship satisfaction (Beştav, 2007; Saraç, Hamamcı, and Güçray, 201; Sarı, 2008) have started to be carried out in Turkey. However, when the related literature is examined, it is seen that studies examining the relations between attachment dimensions and irrational romantic relationship beliefs (Sarı, 2008) are quite limited. Similarly, it is seen that the relationship between contact disturbances and irrational relationship beliefs has not been examined so far. Thus, the objective

of this research is to investigate the predictive role of the attachment dimensions and contact disturbances on irrational romantic relationships in university students.

2. Method

Research Design

The study is based on a quantitative research which aims to describe the relations between the independent (attachment dimensions and contact disturbances) and dependent variables (irrational romantic relationship beliefs). The cross-sectional method as used to group the participants.

Participants/Study Group

The study group consists of 349 students at the faculty of education in total, 233 (67%) females and 116 (33%) males. Although 356 students were reached at the beginning, seven students were not included in the analysis since they did not fill in the items completely. 192 of students in the study group are continuing their education in the 2nd grade, 93 of them are continuing their education in the 3rd grade, and 63 of them are continuing their studies in the 4th grade. Due to the possibility of experiencing consistency problems, students studying in the 1st grade were not included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

The Irrational Romantic Relationship Beliefs Inventory: The Irrational romantic relationship beliefs Scale (IRRBI) developed by Sari and Korkut-Owen (2015) measures irrational beliefs of university students regarding romantic relationships. This scale consists of 30 items and six sub-dimensions. These sub-dimensions are as follows: excessive expectations (EE), social time use (STU), mind-reading (MR), thinking differently (TD), physical intimacy (PI), and gender differences (GD). Excessive Expectations: This dimension consisting of eight items is a dimension in which there are statements explaining the unrealistic expectations expected from the relationship and the person with whom you are, such as "The person with whom I am should share with me everything, material and spiritual." The coefficient of the internal consistency of this sub-dimension was found to be .81. Social Time Use: This dimension consisting of six items is a dimension in which items expressing unrealistic expectations in regard to social and leisure activities, such as "If the person with whom I am wants to take part in leisure activities without me, it will show that he/she does not love me strong enough", emerge. The coefficient of the internal consistency of this sub-dimension was found to be .78. Mind-Reading: This dimension consisting of six items is a dimension in which items that express unrealistic expectations of mutual understanding the thoughts and feelings by a person with whom they have relationships without expressing them, as if they read mind, such as "If the person with whom I am does not understand my feelings by himself/herself, this will be disappointing for me", emerge. The coefficient of the internal consistency of this sub-dimension was found to be .78. Thinking Differently: In this dimension, there are four items. Unrealistic statements concerning the fact that having different opinions by the people who are together on events is devastating, such as "If the person with whom I am discusses an opposite idea with me on any subject, I cannot bear it", have emerged in this dimension. The coefficient of the internal consistency and reliability of this sub-dimension is .69. Physical Intimacy: This dimension consisting of three items is a dimension in which unrealistic statements concerning physical intimacy, such as "If I do not get excited when I see the person with whom I am, this means I do not harbor deep feelings towards him/her", emerge. The reliability coefficient of this sub-dimension was found to be .53. Gender Differences: This dimension consisting of three items is a dimension in which unrealistic statements regarding the effect of gender differences on the relationship, such as "Biological differences between females and males are the main reason for problems between couples", emerge. The coefficient of the internal consistency of this sub-dimension is .53. The value of Cronbach Alpha calculated to determine the reliability of the overall total score of the scale is .84, and the test-retest reliability coefficient is .85. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales range from .65 to .81.

The Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-II (YİYE-II): The Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-II (YİYE-II) developed by Fraley, Waller and Brennan (2000) to measure attachment dimensions has been used. Each item in this scale is assessed with Likert-type 7 grades (1=totally disagree, 7=totally agree). Anxiety and avoidance scores are calculated for each participant by summing up the items that measure the relevant dimensions separately and taking the means. The adaptation of YİYE-II into Turkish was performed by Selçuk et al. (2005), and the findings expected in terms of factor structure were obtained. It was found out that the analysis results consisted of two dimensions, anxiety and avoidance, as in the original scale, and two factors explained 38% of the total variance. The coefficients of the internal consistency of anxiety and avoidance sub-dimensions of the scale were found to be .90 and .86, respectively. It was determined that the anxiety dimension of the scale had the test-retest reliability at the rate of .82, and the avoidance dimension at the rate of .81. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.84 and 0.78 for the anxiety and avoidance sub-dimensions, respectively.

The Gestalt Contact Disturbances Scale: The Gestalt Contact Disturbances Scale (GCDS) developed by Tagay (2010) has been used to measure the contact disturbances of university students in the study. GCDS consists of 24 items and four subscales. These subscales are contact, full contact, dependent contact, and post-contact. The contact disturbance is the stage at which the need is revealed, and externalization is used. Full contact is the stage at which an individual has problems at the point of fulfilling his/her needs and uses the introversion, deflection contact disturbance. Dependent contact is the stage at which an individual has problems with determining the boundaries with oneself and others and includes the contact disturbances of the lack of boundaries and helper syndrome. Post-contact is the stage that includes the retraction contact disturbance when the individual leaves the place without fulfilling his/her needs completely. The coefficient of the internal consistency of GCDS Cronbach's alpha was found to be .61 for the contact subscale, .79 for the full contact subscale, .75 for the dependent contact subscale, and .60 for the post-contact subscale. The test-retest reliability coefficient appeared to be .74 for the contact subscale, .77 for the full contact subscale, .69 for the dependent contact subscale, and .65 for the post-contact subscale. In the confirmatory factor analysis conducted, the four-factor structure was tested, and it was detected that the tested model had quite good fit indices. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales range from .64 to .79.

Procedure

After obtaining the necessary permission for the study, applications were performed in the classroom settings with students who volunteered to participate in the ongoing research and who continued their education at education faculty of a state university in Turkey in academic year 2014-2015. Before the implementation, the aim of this study was explained to the students, and they were given information about assessment tools. Moreover, the students were told to respond to the assessment tools honestly, and it was said that their answers would be kept confidential and the students would be able to learn their results from the researcher, in case they would like to learn their own results. The application took approximately 20 minutes. All of the students who participated in the study finished fulfilling the inventories.

Data Analysis

Standard multiple regression analysis was used in the study to test the predictive power of irrational beliefs of university students' attachment levels and contact disturbances in romantic relationships. The upper limit of error margin was accepted as .05. SPSS 20 software was used for analysis.

3. Findings

Bilateral Correlation Results between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Bilateral relations between independent variables and dependent variable were primarily examined with the Standard Multiple Regression Analysis performed to determine meaningful predictors of irrational

romantic relationship beliefs. Accordingly, the relation between irrational beliefs and predictor variables in romantic relationships is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inter-correlations of the Variables and Descriptive Statistics

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| 1.Excessive Expectations | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.Social Time Use | .26** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Mind Reading | .53** | .23** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.Thinking Differently | .14* | .21** | .28** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 5.Physical Intimacy | .21** | .21** | .19* | .20** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 6.Gender Differences | .09 | .20** | .19* | .33** | .18* | 1 | | | | | | |
| 7. Avoidance | .11* | -.21** | -.05 | .04 | .26** | .10* | 1 | | | | | |
| 8. Anxiety | .45** | .21** | .26** | .16* | .02 | .12* | -.19* | 1 | | | | |
| 9. Contact | .09 | .09 | .03 | .12* | .08 | .24** | .02 | .12* | 1 | | | |
| 10. Full Contact | .12* | .21** | .09 | .17* | .11 | .21** | -.10* | .25** | .44** | 1 | | |
| 11.Dependent Contact | .31** | .10 | .15* | .05 | .08 | -.03 | -.03 | .30** | .28** | .25** | 1 | |
| 12. Post Contact | .05 | .04 | .02 | .03 | .04 | .13* | .02 | -.08 | .46** | .30** | .25** | 1 |
| Mean | 33.3 | 16.6 | 21.7 | 11.0 | 10.5 | 9.6 | 77.7 | 74.5 | 13.8 | 18.6 | 28.2 | 11.1 |
| Standard Deviation | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.4 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 12.7 | 10.9 | 4.8 | 6.2 | 5.0 | 3.3 |

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

As seen from Table 1, when the Pearson correlation coefficients that demonstrate bilateral relations between the variables discussed in the study are examined, it is observed that correlations vary between .02 and .52. When the score averages got by the students from the scales are looked at, it is determined that the avoidance attachment subscale has 74,5; the anxiety dimension of attachment has 77,7; the subscale of excessive expectations has 33,3; the mind-reading subscale has 21,7; the subscale of social time use has 16,6; the subscale of thinking differently has 11,0; the subscale of physical intimacy has 10,5; and the subscale of gender differences has 9,6 score averages, respectively. Regarding the contact disturbances, the contact subscale has 13,8; the dependent contact subscale has 28,2; the full contact subscale has 18,6; the post-contact subscale has 11,1.

Testing the Predictive Role of the Dimensions of Attachment and Contact Disturbances in Irrational Romantic Relationship Beliefs

In order to examine the predictive role of the dimensions of attachment (anxiety and avoidance) and contact disturbances (contact, full contact, dependent contact, post contact) on irrational romantic relationship beliefs six different multiple regression analysis were conducted for each of the irrational belief sub-scale separately. Prior to the analyses, the assumptions for hierarchical regression (linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, independence of errors of prediction, and no multicollinearity) were tested. It was found that the main assumptions were evidenced. Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses.

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Table 2. The Summary of the Regression Analyses

| Model | Dependent Variable | Independent Variable | <i>B</i> | <i>S.E</i> | β | <i>t</i> |
|---|------------------------|----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| 1 | Excessive Expectations | Avoidance | -.008 | .023 | -.017 | -.322 |
| | | Anxiety | .142 | .020 | .405 | 7.256** |
| | | Contact | -.004 | .058 | -.005 | -.073 |
| | | Full Contact | -.022 | .043 | -.31 | -.523 |
| | | Dependent Contact | .175 | .051 | .195 | 3.446* |
| | | Post Contact | .023 | .081 | .017 | .284 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .244$, $F_{Reg} = 15.406^{**}$ | | | | | | |
| 2 | Social Time Use | Avoidance | -.168 | .026 | -.168 | -2.944* |
| | | Anxiety | .125 | .022 | .125 | 2.051** |
| | | Contact | .014 | .065 | .014 | .209 |
| | | Full Contact | .158 | .048 | .158 | 2.427* |
| | | Dependent Contact | .015 | .057 | .015 | .242 |
| | | Post Contact | -.014 | .090 | -.014 | -.220 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .095$, $F_{Reg} = 5.005^{**}$ | | | | | | |
| 3 | Mind reading | Avoidance | -.003 | .026 | -.006 | -.101 |
| | | Anxiety | .066 | .022 | .188 | 3.025** |
| | | Contact | -.032 | .065 | -.034 | -.488 |
| | | Full Contact | .025 | .047 | .036 | .538 |
| | | Dependent Contact | .084 | .056 | .094 | 1.493 |
| | | Post Contact | .010 | .090 | .007 | .108 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .059$, $F_{Reg} = 2.978^{**}$ | | | | | | |
| 4 | Thinking Differently | Avoidance | .016 | .012 | .058 | .984 |
| | | Anxiety | .026 | .014 | .117 | 1.857 |
| | | Contact | .039 | .041 | .067 | .957 |
| | | Full Contact | .059 | .030 | .131 | 1.93 |
| | | Dependent Contact | -.017 | .036 | -.030 | -.481 |
| | | Post Contact | -.028 | .057 | -.032 | -.484 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .045$, $F_{Reg} = 2.255^*$ | | | | | | |
| 5 | Physical Intimacy | Avoidance | .077 | .016 | .270 | 4.692** |
| | | Anxiety | .006 | .014 | .025 | .414 |
| | | Contact | .007 | .041 | .012 | .181 |
| | | Full Contact | .053 | .030 | .116 | 1.773 |
| | | Dependent Contact | .031 | .036 | .053 | .857 |
| | | Post Contact | -.016 | .057 | -.018 | -.276 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .086$, $F_{Reg} = 4.500^{**}$ | | | | | | |
| 6 | Gender Differences | Avoidance | .026 | .015 | .096 | 1.683 |
| | | Anxiety | .018 | .013 | .087 | 1.420 |
| | | Contact | .106 | .038 | .188 | 2.756** |
| | | Full Contact | .061 | .028 | .141 | 2.167* |
| | | Dependent Contact | -.082 | .034 | -.150 | -2.431* |
| | | Post Contact | .028 | .053 | .034 | .528 |
| Model summary: $R^2 = .098$, $F_{Reg} = 5.196^{**}$ | | | | | | |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As seen from Table 2, in the first model, anxiety dimension ($\beta = .405$, $t = 7.2556$, $p < .01$) and dependent contact ($\beta = .195$, $t = 3.446$, $p < .01$) predicted excessive expectations. These variables explained % 24 of the variance in excessive expectations subscale of irrational romantic relationship beliefs. According to β value, anxiety is the most powerful predictor excessive expectations. In the second model, anxiety dimension ($\beta = .105$, $t = 2.051$, $p < .05$), avoidance dimension ($\beta = -.168$, $t = -2.944$, $p < .01$), and full contact ($\beta = .158$, $t = 2.427$, $p < .05$) predicted social time use. These variables explained % 095 of the variance in social time use subscale of irrational romantic relationship beliefs. According to β value, avoidance is the most powerful predictor of the irrational beliefs regarding social time use. In the third model, anxiety dimension ($\beta = .188$, $t = 3.025$, $p < .01$) predicted mind reading and explained % 059 of the variance mind reading subscale of irrational romantic relationship beliefs. In the fourth model, anxiety dimension ($\beta = .270$, $t = 4.692$, $p < .01$) predicted physical intimacy and explained % 086 of the variance physical intimacy subscale of irrational romantic relationship beliefs. In the fifth model, there is no significant predict found. Finally, in the sixth model, contact ($\beta = .105$, $t = 2.051$, $p < .05$), full contact ($\beta = -.168$, $t = -2.944$, $p < .01$), and dependent contact ($\beta = .158$, $t = 2.427$, $p < .05$) predicted gender differences. These variables explained % 098 of the variance in gender differences subscale of irrational romantic relationship beliefs.

According to β value, contact is the most powerful predictor of the irrational beliefs regarding gender differences.

4. Discussion

According to the research findings, it was found out that anxiety dimension of attachment predicted excessive expectations of the irrational beliefs, social time use, and mind-reading at a significant level in the positive direction; and avoidance dimension of attachment predicted physical intimacy in the positive direction, and social time use in the negative direction. Regarding contact disturbances, it is found out that dependent contact predicted excessive expectations and gender differences, full contact predicted social time use and gender differences, and post contact predicted gender differences at a significant level in the positive direction.

Accordingly, with the increase in the anxiety dimension of attachment, irrational beliefs related to excessive expectations, mind-reading and social time use tend to increase. This finding is a theoretically expected result. In fact, according to the attachment theory, as previously mentioned, internal working models formed through attachment relationships in the early period (cognitive-affective schemas) lead emotions, behaviors and cognition in the relationships established in adulthood. The anxiety dimension of attachment covers anxiety about the fact that the spouse will not be accessible and supportive when needed. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), self-models may be observed at both ends, positive (adorable) and negative (worthless self). Similarly, the models of others can also be positive (others are accessible or reliable) or negative (others are rejecting or remote). Since the anxiety dimension of attachment includes negative self-models, in other words, since people that get a high score from the anxiety dimension have a worthless sense of self, their developing of unrealistic beliefs, such as sharing everything, material and spiritual (excessive expectations), and expectation of being understood without expressing their desires (mind-reading), are an expected situation.

Although this finding is an expected finding in the framework of theoretical knowledge, the discussion of this finding with the findings of previous studies can be discussed in a limited way since the number of relevant studies is quite limited. The finding of this research is in line with the research findings of Stackert and Bursik (2002). Their study is one of a few studies available on this subject. Stackert and Bursik (2002) have investigated if the irrational beliefs concerning romantic relationships differ in terms of attachment styles in their research conducted with university students. According to the research findings, individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment style have irrational beliefs concerning romantic relationships at a significantly higher level compared to individuals with a secure attachment style. Similarly, Sari (2008) in Turkey has found in her study carried out with university students that the anxiety dimension of attachment predicted beliefs related to excessive expectations, mind-reading and social time use positively. Therefore, the results of the present study extend previous research findings providing new evidence regarding the connection between anxiety dimension of attachment and irrational romantic relationship beliefs.

Another result of the study is that the predictive effect of the avoidance dimension of attachment demonstrated difference resultson the sub-dimensions of irrational romantic relationship beliefs. Accordingly, with the increase in the avoidance dimension of attachment, irrational romantic relationship beliefs concerning physical intimacy increase as well. However, while the avoidance dimension of attachment increases, irrational beliefs concerning social time use decrease. The avoidance dimension of attachment refers to limiting intimacy with others, and the desire to protect both physical and emotional independence (Rholes, Simpson, Campell and Grich, 2001). In the studies conducted by Brennan et al. (1998), they determined that individuals getting high scores from the avoidance dimension were emotionally distant in romantic relationships. Such people have low confidence towards the other side in relationships. It is put forward that the avoidance dimension is associated with the “others” model of Bartholomew. The “others” model of individuals getting high scores from the avoidance dimension are

negative. They believe that others could be rejecting or remote. Therefore, it could be an expected situation that such people do not have excessive expectations of their spouses in order to protect themselves. In addition, it might not be so comfortable for them to spend all the time with their partners who represent their “others” model as rejecting and remote, and in connection with this they might not have high level of irrational beliefs concerning social time use. However, since they fear of rejection, they might need to fell high level of physical intimacy so that they could ensure that the relationship will be continuous, even if they do not have to spend high amount of time together. In a study conducted in Turkey on the effect of attachment dimensions on irrational romantic relationship beliefs, Sarı (2008) has found in a similar way that the avoidance dimension predicted the university students’ irrational romantic relationship beliefs concerning physical intimacy in the positive direction. However, in that study, it was found that avoidance dimension predicted social time use also in the opposite direction. Therefore, it could be concluded that future studies with different samples are needed to clarify the relationships between avoidance dimension and irrational romantic relationship beliefs.

Upon looking at contact disturbances, it was found out that dependent contact predicts excessive expectations and gender differences, full contact predicts social time use and gender differences, and contact predicts gender differences at a significant level in the positive direction. When the literature is examined, no research that examines the relation between contact disturbances and irrational romantic relationship beliefs was found. Therefore, the relevant findings were discussed in the light of the theoretical explanations in the literature. Dependent contact consists of the lack of boundaries and helper syndrome contact disturbances. According to Latner (2000), Harman (1982) and Voltan-Acar (2006), an individual has hardships in determining the boundaries between oneself and others in the contact disturbance of the lack of boundaries. In the helper syndrome, the individual has contradictions about one’s own expectations and the expectations of the others and tries to make other people do the things that are expected to do by others to oneself. When these explanations are examined, that individuals with a high dependent contact disturbance have unrealistic beliefs in the form of excessive expectations such as sharing everything in their relationships, both material and spiritual, is an expected finding that complies with the literature.

The full contact disturbance dimension among contact disturbances includes the contact disturbances of introversion and deflection. According to Brown (2004), in the introversion contact disturbance, the individual turns the negative messages and damaging thoughts received from the environment to oneself. These individuals tend to blame and harm themselves. In the deflection contact disturbance, the individual moves away from the target and turns one’s energy to a different direction. These people cannot express themselves comfortably and try indirect means. According to Sarı (2008), the social time use sub-dimension among the irrational romantic relationship beliefs includes one’s unrealistic expectations of social and leisure activities in one’s romantic relationship, and the gender differences sub-dimension includes unrealistic beliefs about gender differences. According to these explanations, that individuals with a high full contact disturbance have high unrealistic beliefs on social time use and gender differences is a finding complying with the literature. One of the most important reasons for this may be that individuals with a high full contact disturbance use their energy incorrectly and have unrealistic attitudes towards themselves.

According to the last finding of the research, the scores got by individuals with a high contact disturbance from the gender differences sub-dimension among irrational romantic relationship beliefs were found to be significantly high. The contact disturbance dimension includes externalization contact disturbance. According to Clarkson (1994), in externalization, an individual externalizes the properties he/she possesses but cannot accept. Prejudice is quite explicit at this stage, and an individual generally expresses oneself as he/she wants to see himself/herself. According to Kepner (1982), people who use this contact disturbance frequently have a high tendency to blame the opposite party. They are more tense and against being rejected. Furthermore, these people may also have exaggerated self-perception. Prejudice may also be in question in irrational beliefs about gender differences. Considering all these explanations, that

individuals with a high contact disturbance have irrational beliefs regarding gender differences is an expected finding that complies with the literature

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

There are limitations in this study. In future studies, similar research problems may be re-investigated in different study groups. In addition to this, the relation of irrational romantic relationship beliefs with different psychological variables, such as self-confidence, loneliness, problem-solving skills, conflict management styles, and love attitudes, may be investigated. Couples can be included in the study together. Therefore, consistency between the sides' irrational beliefs concerning romantic relationships and perceptions of these beliefs by another spouse may be examined. Since the findings of this study vary from the findings of the studies conducted in the western literature from some aspects, cross-cultural research can be carried out to reveal the meaning of irrational beliefs concerning romantic relationships in eastern cultures. This study is of a scan type. Experimental studies can be done on these subjects in the future.

Despite the limitations of this study, it makes a significant contribution to the related literature. In Western literature, there are many studies in which irrational romantic relationship beliefs and variables related to them are examined. That studies on this subject have recently started in Turkey causes the need for much more studies to be conducted in this area. It is considered that revealing the relation of irrational romantic relationship beliefs with the variables examined in this study will contribute to studies to be carried out in this area. If the importance of the findings in the area of psychological counseling and guidance is referred to, according to the research findings, for example, group studies with university students may be carried out on irrational beliefs concerning romantic relationships. In addition, group studies can be arranged on reducing irrational romantic relationship beliefs with individuals getting high scores from the anxiety and avoidance dimensions of attachment. Similarly, psycho-educational group studies can be performed on irrational relationship beliefs with individuals who use contact disturbances extensively. As a result, appropriate services can be provided in line with the findings of this research for counselees/students in the applications of psychological counselors practicing in the field of university psychological counseling.

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