

Borderline Personality Features and Jealousy Traits in University Students*

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Abstract

Borderline personality disorder is a disorder in the functioning of the personality. It is stated that borderline people who are known to have difficulties in emotional, behavioral, cognitive areas and especially in interpersonal relationships may have higher levels of jealousy compared to healthy others. This study was conducted to investigate the existence and direction of the relationship between borderline personality features and jealousy traits in healthy individuals. The sample consists of 435 university students, 195 (44.8%) women and 240 (55.2%) men, who are studying in the Faculty of economics, administrative and Social Sciences of Istanbul Gelisim University, in the 2018-2019 academic year and participated voluntarily to our study. The sociodemographic data form, Borderline Personality Questionary (BPQ) and Multidimensional Jealous

* I. Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimlerde Davranış Temelli Araştırmalar Sempozyumunda sunulan "Borderline Personality Disorder Features and Jealousy Traits in University Students" isimli bildiriden oluşturulmuştur.

Received / Geliş Tarihi: 20.05.2021 - Accepted / Kabul Tarihi: 20.10.2021

DOI: 10.17932/IAU.AIT.2015.012/ait_v07i2002

Scale (MDJS) were applied to the students and the data obtained in the study were analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS 25.0). According to the findings of the study, there is a relationship between borderline personality disorder and jealousy. In this relationship, it was observed that the dimension of emotional jealousy came to the forefront. Since traumas in childhood may cause psychopathologies in later life, studies aiming to prevent traumas in childhood are important. For this reason, it is important to raise the awareness of the families on this issue and to raise social awareness.

Keywords: *Borderline personality disorder, Jealousy, Cognitive jealousy, Emotional jealousy, Behavioral jealousy*

Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Borderline Kişilik Özellikleri ve Kıskançlık

Öz

Borderline kişilik bozukluğu, kişiliğin işleyişindeki bir bozukluktur. Duygusal, davranışsal, bilişsel alanlarda ve özellikle kişilerarası ilişkilerde zorluk yaşadığı bilinen borderline kişilerin sağlıklı olanlara göre daha yüksek düzeyde kıskançlığa sahip olabileceği belirtilmektedir. Bu çalışma, sağlıklı bireylerde borderline kişilik özellikleri ile kıskançlık özellikleri arasındaki ilişkinin varlığını ve yönünü araştırmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Çalışmanın örneklemini 2018-2019 eğitim öğretim yılında İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi İktisadi, İdari ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesinde öğrenim görmekte olup çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılan, 195 (%44,8) kadın ve 240 (%55,2) erkek olmak üzere 435 üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcılara sosyodemografik veri formu, Borderline Kişilik Anketi (BPQ) ve Çok Boyutlu Kıskançlık Ölçeği (MDJS) uygulanmış ve çalışmada elde edilen veriler Sosyal Bilimler İstatistik Programı (SPSS 25.0) kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre, borderline kişilik özellikleri ile kıskançlık arasında bir ilişki vardır. Borderline kişilik özellikleri ve kıskançlık ilişkisinde duygusal kıskançlık boyutunun ön plana çıktığı görülmüştür. Çocukluk dönemindeki travmalar yaşamın ilerleyen dönemlerinde psikopatolojilere neden olabileceğinden, çocukluk dönemindeki travmaları önlemeye yönelik çalışmalar önemlidir. Bu nedenle ailelerin bu konuda bilinçlendirilmesi ve toplumsal farkındalığın artırılması gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Borderline kişilik bozukluğu, Kıskançlık, Bilişsel kıskançlık, Duygusal kıskançlık, Davranışsal kıskançlık*

Introduction

1.1. Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderline Personality Disorder is a mental disorder with 1% to 3% incidence in the general population and has serious effects on the individual's quality of life (Tomko et al., 2014). Borderline personality shares the common features with borderline personality disorder but their levels will be fever so people with borderline personality features experience less dysfunction than those with borderline personality disorder. People with borderline personality organization have a very low tolerance capacity to face anxious situations and suffer from a general ego weakness (Rockland, 2016). Ego weakness includes limitation of frustration, inability to control impulse, and the use of primitive ego defences and personality disorganization (Volkan, 2015). DSM-5 characterizes borderline personality disorder, so borderline organization, as a picture of significant disturbances in important personality functioning, such as inconsistent self-image, excessive self-criticism, excessive engagement with real or fantasy abandonment.

The effect of disorders related to borderline personality organization on personality functioning; It increases with the addition of pathological personal characteristics such as engaging in negative activities, impulsive behavior, risk taking, self-harm, suicide and hostility. Borderline personality disorder usually becomes visible during late adolescence and early adulthood, where close relationships with others, especially romantic relationships, gain importance (APA, 2013). According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, in the stage of isolation against intimacy, between 18 and 25 years of age, the individual can love and work if everything is normal. The goal in this phase is to establish partnerships with others with similar qualities and develop skills that can establish strong social ties with others without losing their own self (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). If this does not happen, the individual can become selfish and self-indulgent (Sadock et al., 2015). Interpersonal relationships of borderline individuals suffering from severe problems during intimacy vs isolation period are characterized by patterns of instability and idealization

of others, which lead to small social networks and a small number of long-term relationships (APA, 2013; Liebke et al., 2017). Inconsistency prevails in the emotional, behavioral, cognitive domains and interpersonal relationships of these individuals (Ntshingila et al., 2016).

The behavior of individuals with borderline characteristics towards their immediate surroundings is in fact a way of coping with the unpredictable and dangerous world, reflections of their inner world, a microcosm. (Ntshingila, 2016). They struggle with intense and fast-changing emotions and experience serious difficulties in impulse control and interpersonal relationships (APA, 2013; Hepp ve ark., 2018).

1.2. Jealousy

A violent attempt to protect the object, entity or position of the individual in the face of the perception of loss as threatening is defined as jealousy (Spielman, 1971). Jealousy occurs especially in interpersonal relationships, where the fear of losing an individual due to a potential opponent occurs. Jealousy can be accompanied by emotional experiences such as anxiety, doubt, sadness, insecurity, hostility, and anger, in addition to fear (Zandbergen & Brown, 2015). Jealousy is associated with chronic depression, romantic relationship and marriage problems, aggression, suicide, homicide causes negative consequences (Pines & Aronson, 1983).

Jealousy, which has emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, is seen as natural human emotion at one end, and it can be seen at different levels up to pathological jealousy where jealousy level is high but the person has a low insight. Cognitive jealousy includes irrational ideas and doubts about partner infidelity, behavioral jealousy includes superior effort to seek clues about infidelity; emotional jealousy includes intense anger, fear, sadness and guilt (Stravogiannis, 2018).

Romantic relationships are an important part of our lives. While a healthy relationship can protect us from the damaging effects of stress and increase our life satisfaction and psychological well-being, the relationship that has become unhealthy due to extreme jealousy can turn into a source of great sadness and pain (Kawamichi et al., 2016; Love and Holder, 2016; Kiecolt-Glaser and Wilson, 2017). While jealousy is a natural human emotion shared by all humanity, the fact that this feeling is experienced in extreme levels without insight is accepted as an indication that it has become pathological (Stravogiannis, 2018).

In studies, borderline personality organization was found to be associated with high levels of aggression in romantic relationships. The characteristics of borderline personality organization, such as anger and aggression, often appear in the form of jealousy in close interpersonal relationships (Stockdale et al., 2015). It is also noted that these people have higher levels of jealousy in interpersonal relationships, especially romantic relationships, compared to healthy others (Stepp et al., 2010; de Montigny-Malenfant et al., 2013)

The public costs of borderline features which needs more treatment due to the difficulties and impulsivity they experience in interpersonal relationships are also quite high (Quek et al., 2018). Both the difficulties experienced by individuals in interpersonal relationships and the negative repercussions of the disease to the public increase the importance of understanding borderline personality organization. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between borderline personality trait levels and types of jealousy (emotional, cognitive and behavioral) and levels of jealousy in college students between the ages of 18 and 25.

2. Materials and Methods

The universe of the study consists of university students. The sample consists of 435 university students, 195 (44.8%) women and 240 (55.2%) men who could adapt to the psychological interviews and evaluations, participated voluntarily in the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences of Istanbul Gelisim University, in the 2018-2019 academic year.

The sociodemographic data form prepared by us and the Turkish versions of the Borderline Personality Questionnaire (BPQ) and Multidimensional Jealousy Scale (MDJS) scales were administered to the participants through face-to-face interviews.

2.1. Scales

2.1.1. Sociodemographic Data Form

The sociodemographic data form includes gender, age, education level, economic level, marital status, etc.

2.1.2. Borderline Personality Questionary (BPQ)

While the Borderline personality scale was created, it was aimed to develop a self-assessment scale with separate subscales for the Borderline

personality disorder criteria defined by DSM- IV. Development studies were conducted on a healthy sample at a school in the United States. Psychometric properties of the scale were determined by sample groups from Australia, America and England (Poreh et al., 2006). Validity and reliability studies were conducted with 763 university students and the internal consistency coefficient was 0.65 to 0.84 and the Cronbach α value was 0.94. The scale consists of 80 questions. It consists of 9 sub-dimensions: impulsivity, ambivalence in emotion, abandonment, relationships, self-image, suicide/self-mutilation behavior, sense of emptiness, intense anger and psychosis-like situations (Ceylan, 2017).

2.1.3. Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale (MDJS)

The multidimensional jealousy scale, developed by Pfeiffer and Wong (1987), consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral sub-dimensions. The multidimensional jealousy scale, a self-assessment scale, consists of 23 items. It was designated that reliability in development is between .80 and .90. In the pilot study conducted in the Turkish sample: for cognitive jealousy, it is .91; for behavioral jealousy, it is .86 and for emotional jealousy, it is 86 (Karakurt, 2001).

2.2. Statistical Evaluation

Statistical evaluations were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 25.0 package program. Independent Samples t-tests were used to compare the quantitative data of the study and Pearson Correlation, Regression analysis was performed. When interpreting the results, the p value is less than 0.05.

3. RESULTS

%17.2 of participants was psychologically treated, %82.8 of participants was not psychologically treated, %88.7 of participants' parents are married, %11.0 of participants' parents are divorced.

As shown in the table, Participants were on average 21.24 years old ($SD = 2.66$), and minimum age is 16, maximum age is 48.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale, Borderline Personality Questionary Scores*

	n	Min	Max	M	SD
Borderline Total	414	19	77	54.18	11.94
Jealousy Total	418	25	161	81.06	23.79
Emotional Jealousy	419	8	56	19.02	12.36
Behavioral Jealousy	425	8	56	23.23	10.90
Cognitive Jealousy	427	7	49	38.80	10.36

As shown in the table, Borderline Total scores were on mean 51.18 (SD=11.94), Jealousy Total scores were on mean 81.06 (SD=23.79), Emotional Jealousy scores were on mean

19.02 (SD=12.36), Behavioral Jealousy scores were on mean 23.23 (SD=10.90), Cognitive Jealousy scores were on mean 38.80 (SD=10.36).

Table 2. *Findings on Examining the Relationship between Age and Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale, Borderline Personality Questionary*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1-Age	1					
2-Jealousy Total	-.115*	1				
3-Emotional Jealousy	-0.073	.753**	1			
4-Behavioral Jealousy	-0.073	.773**	.412**	1		
5-Cognitive Jealousy	-0.093	.593**	.103*	.216**	1	
6-Borderline Total	.122*	-.289**	-.353**	-.221**	-0.014	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. T-test Results Comparing Married and Divorced on Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale Scores and Borderline Personality Questionnaire Scores

		n	M	SD	t	df	p
Borderline Total	Married	369	53.98	12.00	-0.95	412	0.342
	Divorced	45	55.78	11.43			
Jealousy Total	Married	372	82.03	24.03	2.40	416	0.017*
	Divorced	46	73.17	20.34			
Emotional Jealousy	Married	373	19.45	12.60	2.51	65.53	0.015*
	Divorced	46	15.52	9.66			
Behavioral Jealousy	Married	378	23.54	10.81	1.69	423	0.092
	Divorced	47	20.70	11.40			
Cognitive Jealousy	Married	380	39.03	10.44	1.32	425	0.187
	Divorced	47	36.91	9.57			

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4. T-test Results Comparing Psychologically Treated and Psychologically Not Treated on Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale Scores and Borderline Personality Questionnaire Scores

		n	M	SD	t	df	p
Borderline Total	Yes	72	47.47	13.67	-4.73	91.53	0.000*
	No	342	55.59	11.05			
Jealousy Total	Yes	71	84.59	27.93	1.21	90.10	0.231
	No	347	80.33	22.83			
Emotional Jealousy	Yes	72	21.72	13.47	2.05	417	0.041*
	No	347	18.46	12.07			
Behavioral Jealousy	Yes	74	25.45	13.16	1.65	92.86	0.102

	No	351	22.76	10.32			
Cognitive Jealousy	Yes	74	37.47	11.53	-1.21	425	0.227
	No	353	39.08	10.10			

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 5. Findings of the Relationship between Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale Scores and Borderline Personality Questionary Scores by Regression Analysis

	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	50.590	5.234		9.666	.000
Age	.444	.209	.098	2.121	.035
Emotional Jealousy	-.301	.049	-.310	-6.129	.000
Behavioral Jealousy	-.104	.057	-.095	-1.839	.067
Cognitive Jealousy	.059	.055	.051	1.068	.286

A. Dependent Variable: Borderline Total

In the regression model we established, R2 value was 0.133 and it was found to be effective on age and borderline level of jealousy.

Table 6. Findings of the Relationship between Borderline Personality Questionary Scores and Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale Scores by Regression Analysis

	B	SE	β	t	p
(Constant)	112.335	5.232		21.469	.000
Borderline Total	-.577	.094	-.289	-6.119	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Jealousy Total

In the regression model we established, R2 was found to be 0.084 and borderline level was found to be effective on jealousy.

Table 7. Findings on Examining the Relationship between Multi-dimensional Jealousy Scale and Borderline Personality Questionary

	1	2	3	4	5
1-Jealousy Total	-	.753**	.773**	.593**	-.289**
2-Emotional Jealousy		-	.412**	.103*	-.353**
3-Behavioral Jealousy			-	.216**	-.221**
4-Cognitive Jealousy				-	-.014
5-Borderline Total					-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4. DISCUSSION

Romantic relationships are an important part of our lives. They provide a variety of positive rewarding effects, such as friendship, passion, and intimacy (Gable and Impett, 2012). While a healthy relationship can increase our life satisfaction and psychological well-being, it empowers us against the harmful effects of stress (Kawamichi et al., 2016; Love and Holder, 2016; Kiecolt-Glaser and Wilson, 2017). Unfortunately, romantic relationships can also be a source of great sadness and pain when factors such as abandonment, rejection, jealousy, discord come into play (Stravogiannis, 2018).

The sense of jealousy is defined as a complex emotional response that occurs as a result of a perception that a relationship that is important for the individual will be harmed or threatened by fear of losing (Pines, 1998). It is known that individuals with borderline personality organization have an extremely increased sensitivity to abandonment, relationship damage and interruption (Atak, 2012). Therefore, jealousy is expected to have a dominant role in their close relationships.

Anger, which is a characteristic feature of borderline personality, often appears as jealousy in close interpersonal relationships (Stockdale et al. 2015). Intense anger is the basic way to maintain contact with the needed object, to control it, and to maintain the sense of self depending on the

relationship with the object. In this study, it was seen that the increase in borderline personality level accompanied the decrease in the level of jealousy total, emotional jealousy and behavioral jealousy. This is one of the basic defense mechanisms of borderline individuals and points to the widely used “denial”. There is a lack of a holistic and consistent self-design in borderline personality. The individual becomes dependent on the existence of the other in order to obtain a consistent and valuable sense of self (Gunderson, 2007). Denial, on the other hand, is a defense mechanism characterized by the exclusion of a phenomenon that causes perceptions of danger or anxiety in the self (Öztürk & Uluşahin, 2014). There may be a high level of denial in isolation, as well as lower level denial mechanisms associated with the partition. In borderline pathologies, it is seen that the opposite level of denial is applied by denial of the main emotion (Kernberg, 1967).

In this study, it was observed that the increase in borderline personality level was accompanied by a decrease in jealousy level, but emotional jealousy was associated with borderline level. This situation is explained by the fact that the borderline individuals have emotion regulation difficulty (Faraji, 2020). This is why they have difficulty recognizing and recognizing their emotions. Therefore, they experience jealousy at the emotional level, but with the mechanisms of splitting and denial, jealousy is immediately removed from the level of consciousness. Instead of emotions such as jealousy and sadness that are removed from consciousness, anger is revealed and opens the way for the “putting into action” that we often encounter in borderline tables. It is known that borderline individuals who can simultaneously carry feelings of both commitment and hostility can have irregular interpersonal relationship patterns (Hero, 2018). Another point that leads to deterioration in the interpersonal relationships of individuals with Borderline organization is their tendency to treat the individuals around them in a hostile way (Hepp et al. 2018). Again, due to the difficulty of emotion regulation and ego weakness, they cannot bear the feelings of inner emptiness and they have a compelling need for the presence of the other (Faraji, 2020). This weakness is thought to lead to their avoidance of searching for clues about cheating and to lower behavioral jealousy.

In a study conducted with babies (12 months), it was determined that higher levels of jealousy appeared in infants with depressed mothers. Babies which have mothers with depressive patterns, showed more negative

reactions and jealousy when their mothers turned towards another baby or a toy, and (Hart et al., 1998). This situation is not only valid for infants and in this study, adults with a family history of mental illness have a higher level of jealousy.

Borderline individuals (Kahraman, 2018), whose tolerance to loneliness is quite low, are dependent on others because of their lack of holistic self-perception and a consistent self-design. In this respect, it is expected that an individual with borderline characteristics should experience their attitudes and beliefs as if they were their own, rather than being influenced by individuals in their immediate surroundings. In this study, the increase in borderline features, the level of general jealousy and the level of emotional jealousy were found to be related to the increase in the effect of the close environment on relationships.

In the same way that borderline individuals determine themselves through their close relationships, their virtual environment is expected to have a significant impact on themselves, and therefore social media relationships are expected to have an effect on their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs. In this study, it was observed that the increase in borderline level and the increase in total jealousy and emotional jealousy were associated with the increase in the level of influence on an individual's social media account. There is evidence in other studies that social media use is positively associated with situations where feelings and behaviors related to jealousy are more frequent (Elphinston & Noller, 2011; McAndrew & Shah, 2013).

In this study, it was observed that the total scores of emotional jealousy and jealousy were higher if the parents of the participants were divorced. As a result of the individual's sensitivity to loss due to the fact that other individuals can enter in their parents lives as a result of the individual's parents, who are the first love objects, are divorced or live separately from each other, In the face of the perception of loss that the individual experiences as a threat, jealousy defined as an attempt to violently protect the object, asset or position is likely to be triggered (Spielman, 1971).

Sullivan (1953) also argues that jealousy decreases with age and maturation. This may be due to increased experience with age, as noted by Mathes (1992). However, in this study, no significant relationship was found between age and jealousy and borderline personality features. This situation can be explained by the limited age range, since the participants of the study are only university students.

In this study, it was observed that the total scores of borderline personality scale levels were higher if the participants had previously received psychological treatment. As we highlighted before increase in borderline personality features makes the borderline personality organization close to borderline personality disorder. The comorbidity of borderline personality disorder with first-axis disorders was approximately 75%. This disorder is mostly seen with depressive disorders and it is stated that 41–83% of patients are diagnosed with major depression and show a 12-39% prevalence of lifelong dysthymia (Lieb et al., 2004). It is accompanied by depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, substance abuse and eating disorders (Oldham et al., 1995; Zanarini et al., 1998; Skodol et al., 1999). There are studies linking borderline personality disorder genetically with schizophrenia and psychopharmacologically with mood disorders (Atak, 2012). The fact that borderline personality disorder shows high comorbidity with other mental pathologies shows consistency with our findings.

It is thought that it would be beneficial to extend the age range and to include individuals with the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder in the later studies.

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