

Basic Determinant of Success of Interpersonal Relationship: Rejection Sensitivity

İlişki Başarısının Temel Belirleyicisi: Reddedilme Duyarlılığı

Dilek Şirvanlı Özen, Fulya Kübra Güneri

Öz

Reddedilmeyi kaygıyla bekleme, algılamaya hazır olma ve reddedilmeye karşı aşırı tepki gösterme olarak tanımlanan reddedilme duyarlılığı, bireyin, kişilerarası ilişkilerindeki sosyal ve psikolojik uyumunu etkileyen önemli bir olgu olarak görülmektedir. Reddedilme duyarlılığının bilişsel-duygusal bilgi işleme dinamiğine sahip olduğunu belirten ilgili literatür, aslında anılan duyarlılığın, benliği diğer insanlardan gelebilecek olası retten koruyabilmek amacıyla yönelik savunucu motivasyonun bir sistem olarak görmektedir. Öte yandan reddedilme duyarlılığının oluşmasındaki en önemli kaynağın ebeveynler olduğu ve bu bağlamda, bağlanma ve ebeveynlik stilleri ile de yakın ilişkide olduğu; aynı zamanda reddedilme duyarlılığının bazı psikopatolojilerle ilişkili olduğu ve en fazla kişinin romantik ilişkilerini etkilediği belirtilmektedir. Bu noktalardan hareketle, bu gözden geçirme yazısında, kişilerarası ilişki başarısının odağında bulunan reddedilme duyarlılığına yönelik ileride yapılacak olası görgül çalışmalara, yol gösterici olunması amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Reddedilme duyarlılığı, bağlanma, ebeveynlik.

Abstract

The rejection sensitivity, which is defined as waiting to be rejected, being ready to perceive, and being overreacted to rejection, is seen as an important fact affecting the social and psychological adjustment of the individual, the interpersonal relationship. The relevant literature, which states that the rejection sensitivity has a cognitive-affective processing dynamic, sees it as an advocacy motivational system intended to protect the possible rejection of the self from possible other people. On the other hand, the most important source of rejection sensitivity is parents, and in this context, they are closely related to attachment and parenting styles; at the same time it is stated that the rejection sensitivity is related to some psychopathologies and that most people affect romantic relations. Moving from these points, the purpose of the study is guiding the possible empirical work to be done in the future for the rejection sensitivity which is in the focus of the interpersonal relationship success..

Key words: Rejection sensitivity, attachment, parenting.

HUMAN BEINGS are social beings and they live in communities by their nature. The fact that it belongs to the community in which it lives and the acceptance from it is a psychological and physiological protection of the person (Uchino 2009, Thoıs 2011),

and the social exclusion and rejection of the individual cause negative results (Tang, Richardson 2013, Jaremka et al. 2013) . Therefore, the need to accept and avoid rejection is seen as a key point for humanity to live a meaningful and positive life. On the other hand, the main factor determining acceptance or rejection is how the person perceives, understands and responds to messages coming from the environment. The process of meaning/reacting messages varies depending on the person's first social relationship experience, how he or she experienced it at that time. When the first experience is in the direction of acceptance, the person's subsequent social life is positively affected by rejection, while it is negatively affected when it is rejected (Pietrzak et al. 2005).

Rejection at this point is important in interpersonal social relationships, and social groups (parents, close friends, peers, romantic partners, etc.) that are important to the individual and that are meaningful to the individual.(Marston et al. 2010). Rejection, on the other hand, is not just a painful experience. At the same time, in particular, the first rejection experiences of the individual are seen as a factor affecting the success of their subsequent social interactions. Therefore, it is not unexpected that human beings are more sensitive to potential rejection clues (Marston et al. 2010). However, in spite of life-long experiences of people being rejected many times, while some people have been positive to interpret these experiences and continue to be moderate in their relationships; others perceive them as an intentional act against them and are overreacting. The focus of successful social relations is on how susceptible people are to rejection (Marston et al. 2010).

In this paper, it is aimed to examine what is the sensitivity of rejection, how it occurs, and the feelings of people with high sensitivity of rejection, how they reflect it to their social relationships and how they can cope with this situation. This assessment will be useful both in the future scientific research and in the preparation of social studies that can be done to protect and improve the physiological health of the individual, both psychologically and physically.

Rejection Sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity is defined as an overreaction to waiting with rejection anxiety, readiness to perceive, and rejection (Downey and Feldman, 1996). Persons with a sense of rejection show extreme sensitivity to rejection, and as a result they expect to be rejected with care in all their relationships. Therefore, when they are rejected or confronted with ambiguous behavior, they perceive this as direct rejection and are overreacting (Pietrzak et al. 2005, Romero-Canyas and Downey 2005, Zimmer-Gembeck and Nesdale 2013). And once this dynamic happens, they are becoming more prone to generalize this expectation (Romero-Canyas and Downey 2005, Olsson et al. 2013) in whatever relation they have encountered throughout their lives. Therefore, the rejection sensitivity emerges as a lifelong process.

This dynamic is based on two assumptions. First, acceptance-rejection is a privileged dimension of computing knowledge, which reflects the fact that people need each other to survive (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010). Social ties support both mental and physical well-being. Therefore, potential threats to the absence of these links encourage the human being to act in accordance with the common benefit. Thus, gaining accep-

tance and avoiding rejection are seen as motivational power (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010).

The second assumption is that rejection is a product of our biopsychosocial history. So, in connection with our natural biological reactions to the threat, we learn to expect to be accepted or rejected by our experience (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010). The learned nature of our expectations of acceptance or rejection indicates that the anxiety about rejection may be specific to the environment. In other words, the person can learn to wait to be rejected from certain people (parents) or from certain groups (schoolmates) (Romero-Canyas et al.2010). On the other hand, the relevant literature states that our need for acceptance is universal, but that people differ according to how they handle the information about acceptance or rejection (Romero-Canyas et al. 2010). In other words, the perception of rejection has the dynamics of cognitive-emotional processing. As a matter of fact, the conceptualization of rejection sensitivity is based on the cognitive-emotional processing system of Mischel and Shoda (1995), a personality approach that emphasizes individual differences in cognitive-emotional processes.

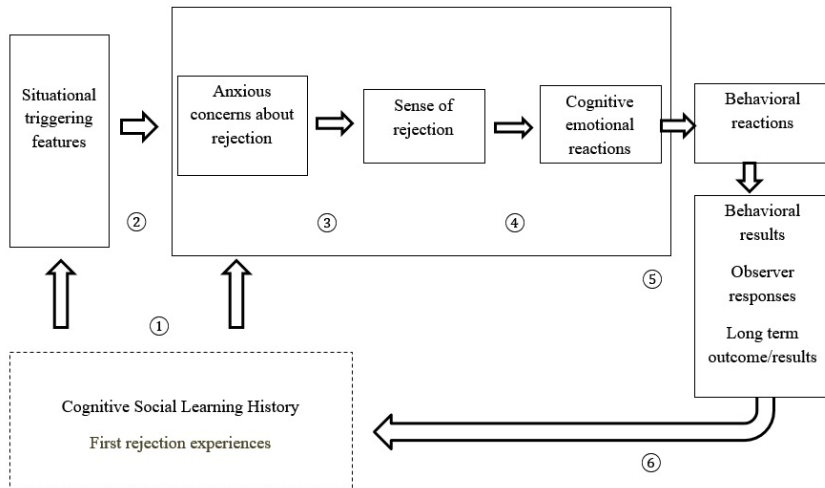


Figure 1. Rejection sensitivity model

The cognitive-emotional processing system refers to the importance of environmental variables and the individual's cognitive qualities in the development of personality. According to Mischel and Shoda, there are five cognitive-emotional elements about how information is processed. Each cognitive attribute determines behavior and how the individual interacts with the environment (Mischel and Shoda 1995). The five cognitive-emotional elements are coded (how the information is processed, stored and used), beliefs / expectations (the individual derives the consequences of the behavior of others), goals / values (rewarding of life goals and behavior), emotion (how the individual reacts emotionally) and talents/self-organization (intelligence, knowledge and skills). Items vary between individuals and personality development is based on how these cognitive-emotional qualities interact with environmental

In order to see how cognitive and emotional factors shape a relationship, Feldman

and Downey (1994) set up the “model for the sensitivity of rejection” (see Figure 1). The basic dynamic in the model emphasizes that past experiences of acceptance or rejection of persons lead them to develop specific cognitive-emotional frameworks. Later, in social contexts where there are clues to acceptance or rejection, this structure becomes active. The individual then exhibits some coping strategies and behaviors to prevent rejection or to ensure acceptance..

As can be seen from the model, the most important part of the rejection sensitivity dynamics is the anxious anticipation of rejection. Both this rejection and having a high level of anxiety about what would happen in standby, is described as high rejection sensitivity, while cases with low RS do not feel very anxious about the likelihood of being accepted and rejected. (Downey and Feldman 1996).

The most important source of the formation of anxious rejection expectation is seen as rejection by the parents. Experiences that cause concern are the exposure to domestic violence and hostile attitudes, physical and / or emotional neglect and / or exploitation, strict disciplinary practices, and favorable condition by parents (Feldman and Downey 1994). At this point, the emotional message that the child is rejected by attitudes and behaviors is conveyed (Figure 1, link 1) (Feldman and Downey 1994); this anxious wait brings with it the possible situational trigger that may exist afterwards (eg, romantic equilibrium is cold and distant), waiting and perceiving rejection of behaviors from other people (Figure 1, links 2 and 3) (Downey and Feldman 1996). Subsequently, perceived rejection leads to intense negative reactions (Figure 1, links 4 and 5) (Ayduk et al. 1999, 2008); Finally, the resulting hostile and aggressive reactions cause a real rejection (Figure 1, link 6).

On the other hand, the relevant literature indicates that the basis of the dynamics of rejection is the effect of another source of acceptance / rejection, which is peer groups. In studies done with adolescents, it has been reported that there is a relationship between internal and external orientation type problem behaviors (Burks et al 1995, Coie et al 1995, Hodges and Perry 1999, Haselagar et al 2002) with peer rejection. However, very few longitudinal studies have supported the finding that peer rejection has a causal role in shaping the social-cognitive process (Dodge et al. 2003).

Similarly, it is stated that bullying is one of the varieties of peer rejection, which is very common in schools. Olweus (1993) points out that victims, which are an important part of the bullying system, are silent, anxious, sensitive and depressive, in fact, this pattern is similar to the sensitivity of interpersonal rejection. Studies in this context focus on mockery, a type of bullying (Ledley et al. 2006). It is reported that those who remember childhood mockery experiences deteriorate in interpersonal relationships, that repetitive mockery experiences lead to incompatible cognitions, which in turn leads to difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Ledley et al. 2006). At this point, it is stated that the experience of bullying and mockery in childhood may be a leading factor in developing a sense of rejection in later periods of the person; but no direct findings supporting this view have been reported (Roth et al. 2002).

Rejection Sensitivity as a Defensive Motivational System

As mentioned before, those who have anxious anticipation of rejection are taking actions that confirm their fears. Towards a possible cause, Downey et al. (2004) state that RS dynamics act in order to protect possible retouches that may actually come from

other people or groups of people. The studies on how the behavior is organized refer to two basic systems. These are 1) the encouraging system (ES) (Appetitive System), which is the response given to the positive stimuli (awards) and 2) the Defensive Motivational System (DMS) which is the response given to negative stimuli (punishment, threat) the individual is actively avoiding and acting in the event of fight or flight (Lang et al. 2000). Which system will be activated depends on the perceived situation. When a negative meaning is encountered, DMS is activated for self protection purpose. As a matter of fact, the rejection sensitivity system is parallel to the DMS system. In an environment where high rejection sensitivity are likely to be rejected, the result is a critical value for them, detecting threats and triggering DMS (Lang et al. 2000). On the other hand, those with low rejection sensitivity rarely activate DMS in the same environment; because they think very little about the possibility of rejection. If the DMS is activated later on, the person starts looking for threat-related hints. In other words, for people with high rejection sensitivity, a rejection related environment causes the DMS system to be automatically activated. However, when this system is automatically activated despite the minimum / indefinite rejection cues, it loses its function and becomes a self-confirming prophecy in the direction of the actual rejection (Downey et al. 2004).

Variables Related to Rejection Sensitivity

The model of rejection sensitivity is theoretically parallel to Bowlby's theory of attachment. According to Bowlby, the inadequate interest, warmth, compassion, and confidence experienced in childhood caregivers negatively affect the behavior of people in later ages. Individuals have developed a negative self-model and relationship model for the negative experiences they experience and are trying to create a familiar pattern in each new relationship they experience (Bretherton 1992). Similarly, the model of rejection sensitivity developed by Downey and Feldman (1996) is in parallel with the internal study models; it reveals how cognitive and emotional processes shape behavior in a specific social environment or interpersonal relationships. Romero-Canyas and Downey (2005) assert that children are developing coding strategies that cause errors in their expectations and perceptions, with these cognitive emotional schemas that they build on the basis of their rejection experiences. Therefore, it is stated that, at a later age, they become inclined to perceive events or associations as negative, and that the indefinite signs are taken on their own and they start waiting to be rejected. Therefore, anxious anticipation of rejection makes people highly cautious towards rejection, and as a result, when they face the slightest sign of rejection in their interpersonal relations, they perceive it as a deliberate rejection and feelings of rejection emerge (Romero-Canyas and Downey 2005).

In this context, a study conducted on university students found that anxiety level and self-confidence were a partial tool variable in the relationship between anxiety-related attachment styles (obsessive and fearful attachment) and rejection sensitivity (Khoshkam et al. 2012). In another related study, it is reported that the rejection sensitivity is negatively correlated with the secure attachment and the students with the most fearful attachment style have the highest rejection sensitivity (Erözkan 2009). Similarly, another study examining the relationship between rejection sensitivity and attachment dimensions suggests that high anxiety (desire to be in close relationship and fear of

rejection) and high avoidance (emotional avoidance of close relationships), increased rejection sensitivity and affects the person negatively. The findings show that the anxiety and avoidance dimension of attachment has strong influences on rejection sensitivity (Özen et al. 2010).

Parenting

In addition to the attachment patterns, parents' attitudes are also an important factor, considering the effect of rejection of childhood experiences on the formation of rejection sensitivity. The studies reported that the rejection sensitivity scores of those who perceive their parents as authoritarian are higher than the scores of those who perceive their parents as democratic, irrelevant and protective (Erözkan 2004, Çardak et al. 2012). The finding supports the claims that people who perceived adverse situations such as pressure, displeasure, disapproval and rejection from their parents have developed a sense of rejection (McLachlan et al. 2010, Rowe et al. 2015). Indeed, a study by Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck (2014) reported that rejection and negative parental practices (psychological control, lack of parental warmth, pressure) lead to rejection in children. At the same time, peer-to-peer conflict has also affected parents' attitudes towards parents; which is indirectly implicated in the development of children's rejection sensitivities (Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck 2014).

Psychopathology

The view that the expectation of rejection is based on the first experience of people in their lives is supported by the findings of a number of psychopathological studies. In this context, rejection sensitivity appears to be one of the important components of social avoidance (such as social phobia, avoidant personality disorder) and social inclusion (dependent personality disorder, borderline personality disorder) (Feldman and Downey 1994). Studies have shown that those with addictive personality disorder and social phobia report more parental rejection experiences in their childhood than in normal groups (Blatt and Zuroff 1992; Parker et al. 1992).

On the other hand, studies conducted in recent years on the subject seem to focus on Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and avoidant personality Disorder (APD). In addition to the high impulsivity level of BPD, it is reported that in the case of perceived rejection, there is an increased susceptibility to inappropriate repulsive behavior (Berenson et al. 2011, Coifman et al. 2012). Similarly, it is reported that the APD, like BPD, is also associated with incompatible responses to stress creators (rejection) in interpersonal relationships (Gadassi et al. 2014). As a matter of fact, the relevant study findings report that individuals with BPD and APD have high rejection sensitivities (Berenson et al. 2011, Stabler et al. 2011), which also makes individuals more likely to experience extreme difficulty in interpersonal relationships (Berenson et al. 2016)

Romantic Relations

As already mentioned, people with high rejection sensitivity tend to have problems in all interpersonal relationships in general. However, especially in romantic relationships, where sincerity and closeness are important, and are more sensitive to the threats of rejection due to intense emotions felt, it appears that the rejection sensitivity is much greater. Persons with a high degree of rejection sensitivity tend to perceive their insen-

sitive and / or ambiguous behavior of their partner as intentional rejection (Downey and Feldman 1996), direct their feelings inward or outward against the threat of rejection (Downey and Feldman 1996). People feel insecure and unhappy about their relationship because they have to deal with emotions such as depression, loneliness, anger, jealousy, hostility and aggression as their romantic relationships lead their feelings inside and out (Creasey and McInnis 2001). Therefore, those respondents, who are highly sensitive to rejection, may give rise to relational problems in romantic relationships, especially when there is a certain closeness and the possibility of rejection is very high; which can lead to people having a tendency to keep themselves away from romantic relationships (Creasey and McInnis 2001).

In the literature examining the relationship between rejection sensitivity and romantic relationships, it is observed that people with high rejection sensitivity often encounter devastating problems in their romantic relationships (Downey et al. 2000, Romero-Canyas et al. 2010). Downey et al. (1998) found that even if one of the partners in a romantic relationship has the sensitivity of rejection, the likelihood of finishing this relationship is much greater than that of couples who have no sensitivity to rejection; they feel that they feel more insecure in their relationship and that their relationship satisfaction is less. In this study, it was reported that women behaved more negatively than men in a possible discussion environment and felt more angry feelings after the debate. This finding suggests that women's close relationships are more identified with the concept of self, so that the events that threaten intimacy and togetherness more easily activate the sensitivity of women to rejection.. Ayduk et al. (2001) found that women with high rejection sensitivity felt rejected when they were abandoned by their partners and showed more depressive symptoms; but they do not feel rejected and therefore do not show depression tendencies when they are separated or decide to leave by a common decision.

On the other hand, Downey et al. (1998) indicate that both men and women who have a sense of rejection use "self-silencing" in their relationships. The self-silencing strategy is defined as the suppression of one's own feelings and thoughts in romantic relationships by those who are highly sensitive to rejection. There is a significant relationship between rejection sensitivity and depression, and the relationship between rejection sensitivity and self-silencing behavior, the self-silencing strategy has been reported to be antagonized as a method that both men and women with the sensitivity of rejection often use in their relationships (Harper et al. 2006). The studies that investigate whether the self-silencing strategy makes a difference in terms of gender gives conflicting results. Some of the studies that have been done indicate that self-silencing is used more by men (Mellin, 2008); other research findings indicate that women are using more of the stated strategy (Hafen et al. 2014).

In addition, although people with low and high sense of rejection experience an equal conflict with their partners, those with high sense of rejection experience more responses (shouting, swearing, mocking and threatening to end the relationship) than those with high sense of rejection (Ayduk et al. 1999). In another study conducted by Galliher and Bentley (2010) on the subject, it is seen that young people who are highly sensitive to rejection perceive relations with romantic partners more distant and controversial; and that their partners have defined relations with them as relations with less warmth and power imbalance. As a result of the study, it is seen that people with rejec-

tion sensitivity both perceive their own relations more negative and behave more negatively to their partners. As the sensitivity of men to rejection and perceived aggression increases, the satisfaction of their girlfriends decreases (Gallagher and Bentley 2010). It is therefore supported by findings that people with high rejection tend to interpret their relationships more negatively and that these negative interpretations cause them to behave in a way that degrades the quality of the relationship.

In another study conducted by Volz and Kerig (2010), the relationship between sensitivity to rejection and relational insecurity, relationship aggression and victimization in relationship was investigated. The term "relational insecurity" refers to the effort to continue the relationship even if the relationship is moving in a negative direction. Relationship aggression is defined as an effort to control the person physically, sexually, and psychologically, resulting in harm. The result of the study indicates that relational insecurity is the full intermediate variable between rejection sensitivity and aggression, and that there is no mediating variable between rejection susceptibility and victimization. In other words, people who are sensitive to rejection are in an effort to maintain their relationship, and as a result of this feeling, they are likely to show violence to their partners. The findings obtained are interpreted as the result of angry reactions to the rejection sensitivity, resulting in aggression rather than passively being victimized in the relationship.

On the other hand, Downey et al. (2000) notes that men with a sense of rejection have developed two strategies to prevent them from being rejected. One of the aforementioned strategies is to avoid close relationships. These people are more cautious in their possible relationships and try not to let others hurt themselves. The second, on the contrary, is to seek close relationships and invest a lot in romantic relationships. The researchers hypothesized that men who apply to the second type of strategy may resort to too much violence in their relationships, because men with a high rejection sensitivity will have an extreme reaction to the slightest or vague signs of rejection when they become too dependent on their relationships. As a result, it was found that men with high sensitivity to rejection who invest very little in the relationship stay away from social relations and men who invest too much in the relationship have a higher rate of violence. It is anticipated, the rejection of men who are invest much into their relationship (with a serious commitment and an implicit relationship) tend to display more violence in case of rejection by a significant one in their lives (Downey et al. 2000).

Finally, Romero-Canyas et al. (2010) states that people with a high degree of rejection tend to have intrusive behavior after they have been rejected in romantic relationships. The reactions people give to rejection are attributed to the fact that rejection is stern and rejection is perceived as a threat to the situations in which the person identifies itself (when men are rejected by a group of friends, and women are rejected by someone close to them). In this hypothetical study, women with high rejection sensitivity exhibited their self-assertive behavior after rejection by their romantic partners, only in cases where they perceived their rejection as harsh; whereas when they are rejected by people who they do not have much interest, they feel only hostile feelings. Men who are highly susceptible to rejection appear to engage in an act of forcibly making themselves subject to all refusals.

Effect of Rejection on Interpersonal Functioning of Cases with Rejection Sensitivity

As mentioned earlier, denial sensitivity serves as a defensive motivational system that affects behavior and psychological functioning in many ways. At this point, it appears that people with rejection sensitivity react to the anticipation of rejection in two ways. Those who see themselves as the reason for rejection have anxious rejection sensitivity. If they are rejected, they give inward reactions (anxiety, withdrawal, depression). Those who see others as the reason for rejection have an angry rejection sensitivity. In the case of rejection, they give they give out external responses (aggression, anger etc.) (Ayduk et al. 2001).

Anxiety Rejection Sensitivity-Moving Emotions Inward

In the event what Downey calls "anxious rejection sensitivity" the person is concerned about being rejected, and keeps him out of relationships, in an attempt to protect himself against an inevitable threat that may arise. In other words, the person is in the "escape" behaviour and ultimately leads to the feelings of depression, social anxiety and loneliness in the person (Ayduk et al. 2001).

Studies reported that rejection sensitivity increases depressive symptoms and that it applies to both sexes (Mellin 2008, Chango et al. 2012) and leads to social inadequacy in close-friend relationships (Marston et al. 2010). Watson and Nesdale (2012), stated that people with a high sense of rejection are much more lonely because they withdraw themselves from social relationships that are likely to be rejected, and that their self-confidence and self-sufficiency are less.

In another study examining the effect of stress factors on rejection sensitivity, the factors causing the stress were divided into dependent stressors (which is caused by one's own behavior and feelings) and independent stressors (caused by the stress born outside one's own control) (Liu et al. 2014) . As a result, it is reported that individuals with high rejection sensitivity refer more to dependent stressors than independent stressors, while dependent stressors play an intermediary role between rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms. In this context, the situation experienced by those who have anxious rejection affects their social relations negatively (Liu et al. 2014). In another similar study, it is suggested that rejection sensitivity causes social and emotional adaptation problems (depression and social anxiety symptoms). As a result of the research, people with a high degree of rejection sensitivity exhibit more depression and social anxiety symptoms and show more sadness and withdrawal behaviors against threats of rejection (Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck 2014).

When the research findings are evaluated collectively, it is seen that those who have anxious rejection sensitivity show more loneliness, social anxiety and depression symptoms. However, it is reported that there may be protective factors in this relationship when the relevant literature is examined, and the most important of these is the support of friends. As a matter of fact, there is a meaningful correlation between the anxious rejection sensitivity and social anxiety and the depressive symptoms; however, in this correlation friend support acts as a protective factor (McDonald et al. 2010, Sebocková and Popelková 2014).

Angry Rejection Sensitivity – Externalization of Emotions

When Downey calls out "angry refusal sensitivity" and directs emotions outwardly, the person feels emotions like disappointment and anger towards rejection, acts hostile and destructive, and exhibits physical and verbal aggression in relationships. Those who have such an emotional response are in a "fighting" attitude and direct their emotions outwardly (Ayduk et al. 2001).

Studies conducted in this context report that people with angry rejection sensitivity are involved in aggression, destructive and opposing behavior (Downey et al 1998, Dibenigno et al 2007, Ayduk et al 2008, Zimmer-Gembeck and Nesdale 2013). Similarly, in a study conducted by Bondu and Krahe (2015), it is reported that people with angry rejection sensitivity show more proactive and reactive aggression models, even when age and gender are controlled. While proactive aggression is defined as a type of aggression directed towards purpose (entertainment, power display, etc.); reactive aggression is reaction to perceived provocation (self-protection, retaliation, revenge, etc.). In another study it is indicated that people with high levels of angry rejection sensitivity tend to be more reactive aggressive than being proactive aggressive (Jacobs and Harper 2013).

In the relevant literature, it is reported that people who have turned outward in response to the rejection sensitivity react aggressively to other people, as well as exhibit harm to them. In a study on the subject, people with a sense of rejection were found to be hostile to themselves because they were punished or perceived rejection as a failure to their standards (Breines and Aydin 2015). As a result of the study, a significant relationship was found between the rejection sensitivity of people and the hostile thoughts directed towards them after encountering a negative event. In addition, it has been determined that the hostile feelings of people with a high sense of rejection are a determining factor in the actions of damaging them. However, those with angry rejection sensitivity tend to use different mechanisms in their hostility towards and against others. When the overall hostility is associated with the hostile perception of others and showing an emotional response to it; self-directed hostility arises with the threat of self-value or self-image (Breines and Ayduk 2015).

Ways to Cope with Rejection Sensitivity

Although the relationship between the expectations of rejection and the possible adverse consequences of rejected persons is supported by studies, anyone with sensitivity to rejection is not experiencing the same interpersonal problem and unequally affected by sensitivity. In a study designed to determine the possible causes of this difference, it is shown that people should have the ability to control themselves (Ayduk et al. 2000) as a basis for not responding equally to the sensitivity of rejection. According to the researchers, those who are highly sensitive to rejection are able to deter themselves from showing unwanted reactive behavior with effective self-regulation methods. In this context, the most important demonstration of self-regulation is to delay pleasure of childhood. In this study, researchers reported that people who have high rejection sensitivity but capable of delaying pleasure behave in a more controlled manner and consequently both social relations and self concepts are more positive (Ayduk et al. 2000).

Similar to the delay strategy, another coping strategy in the related literature is examined within the framework of Regulatory Focal Theory (Higgins 1997). The motivational orientations of people according to the Constitution are based on two different self-regulating systems, with orientation and avoidance regulatory focus. The oriental regulatory focus is the approach strategy that achieves the desired results, maximizing the gains; avoiding regulatory focus, avoidance of unwanted consequences, and avoidance of losses (Higgins 1997). At this point, it is reported that people with a sensitivity to rejection are predominantly using an avoidant regulatory-focused system, thus protecting themselves from possible negative consequences. It has been claimed that the use of avoidant regulatory-focused strategy keeps people with high rejection sensitivity from clearly showing their negative feelings (disagreement, verbal hostility, etc.) (Ayduk et al. 2003). An avoidant regulatory focus strategy is defined as a strategy in which one is overly cautious in his or her past and strategically avoids mistakes and false alarms and thus prevents negative consequences. Ultimately, the tactics used by those who have a strategy of avoiding regulatory focus to avoid being rejected; instead of directing their emotions inside and out, they prefer to silence themselves instead of behaving cold and distant and discussing them in their relations. As a result of the research, it is reported that those who use a strategy with high rejection sensitivity and avoidant regulatory orientation use more secret strategies when coping with rejection, prefer to silence rather than argue, show less open hostility and reflect their anger more coldly and distantly (Ayduk et al. 2003).

Therefore, self-regulating methods are important for those who are highly sensitive to rejection. It appears that the ability to use high delaying pleasure ability and avoidant regulatory-focused strategies may be the factors that reduce the negative impact of rejection sensitivity.

Conclusion

Rejection sensitivity, as defined by components of overreaction to waiting, waiting to be perceived, and rejection with rejection anxiety; emphasizes individual differences in cognitive-emotional information processing processes. Direct refusal perceptions of possible rejections or uncertain stimuli of people who are highly susceptible to rejection in social relationships and the emotional and behavioral reactions they give to this perception cause people to have actual refusal from others. This condition in turn affects the social and psychological cohesion of these people negatively. Therefore, the rejection sensitivity emerges as an important concept that has been improved in terms of understanding the problems that people live in social and especially romantic relations. On the other hand, the dynamics of rejection sensitivity is actually a defensive motivational system aimed at protecting the self from possible rejections from other people and/or groups. However, when this system is automatically activated against the minimum or indefinite rejection hints, it loses its defensive function and the rejection takes place in the form of self-affirming prophecy.

When the related literature is examined, it is seen that some variables are related to rejection sensitivity. At this point, the relationship between rejection sensitivity and attachment styles appears to be positively related to the rejection sensitivity of obsessive and fearful attachment styles, particularly within the insecure attachment class. Similarly, another variable that appears to influence the formation of rejection sensitivity is

parental attitudes. Studies show that authoritarian parenting attitude, especially when there is little parental control, is an important factor in improving rejection sensitivity. Thus, when considering the relationships that parents feel with their parents in the early childhood period, it is important that parents establish their warm and trusting relationships with their children. Avoiding emotional and physical refusal behaviors, and being away from authority and repression will prevent the negative effects. Also, in the related literature, there is a relation between rejection sensitivity and some psychopathologies; Findings show that rejection sensitivity is one of the important components of social phobia, dependent personality disorder, borderline personality disorder and avoidant personality disorder.

In addition to the above, it seems that the rejection sensitivity influences all social relations of persons, but the effect on romantic associations is particularly strong, especially where closeness and sincerity are important. Some of those with a high rejection sensitivity, who are confronted with a possible rejection in their romantic relationships, exhibit behavior such as depression, loneliness, self-silencing and withdrawal; while others exhibit jealousy, hostile attitudes, violence, shouting, profanity, and forced self-acceptance. On the other hand, in the related literature, it is seen that people who are highly sensitive to rejection react in two ways to the possible rejection experiences they experience in their social relations. Those who have anxious rejection sensitivity are those who see themselves as their cause of rejection, show their escape from relationships, direct their emotions inward, and as a result they may experience social withdrawal, loneliness, depression. Their withdrawal from social relations to avoid being rejected prevents them from being accepted into new social settings; which causes them to continue to be overly sensitive to rejection. Those of a furious denial who constitute another group see the others as the basis of their rejection, show fighting behavior in relation to them, direct their emotions outwards and consequently exhibit physical and verbal aggression, anger, revenge and hostile behavior. As a result of the behaviors they show in the social environment in which they are present, they are not accepted by others around them and may face overreach behavior. However, when the literature on rejection sensitivity is examined, it is seen that everyone with this sensitivity does not have the same negativities in social relations; it is stated that people can put themselves back in showing some unwanted reactive behavior with some effective self-regulation methods. At this point, the ability to delay delays from self-regulation methods and the use of strategy with avoidant regulatory focus are emerging as important factors.

Since the rejection sensitivity is a structure that obstructs the process and disrupts the relationship, many research has been done to examine the aforementioned dynamics in the West, and significant results have been obtained in many interpersonal relationships, especially romantic relationships. However, studies on the concept of rejection sensitivity in our country are very limited. Therefore, it is seen that more studies are needed in order to close the lack of information on this subject in our country. However, it is observed that the related studies are carried out in countries such as the USA and Europe where individuality is at the forefront. However, in a collectivist society such as Turkey, it is important to determine the level of sensitivity of individuals to rejection, how they act against it, and what can be done in order to eliminate the potential negative effects of such sensitivity. As a matter of fact, in the literature, within

the framework of the aforementioned theory of regulatory focus, it is stated that culture has an important influence on the individual's regulatory focus orientation. The emphasis on purpose and performance, which is common in countries dominated by individualistic culture, contributes to the orientation of individuals. It is reported that in the countries where the cultural structure of the community is dominant, group membership and adaptation to the group is the basis of realizing the duties of individuals on the point of meeting the expectations of the group. Under these conditions, the avoidance-oriented approach is more common.

References

- Ayduk O, Downey G, Kim M (2001) Rejection sensitivity and depressive symptoms in women. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, 27:868-877.
- Ayduk, Ö., Downey G., Testa A, Yen Y, Shoda Y (1999) Does rejection elicit hostility in rejection sensitive women? *Soc Cogn*, 17:245-271.
- Ayduk O, Gyurak A, Luerssen A (2008) Individual differences in the reaction-aggression link in the hot sauce paradigm: The case of rejection sensitivity. *J Exp Soc Psychol*, 44:775-782.
- Ayduk O, May D, Downey G, Higgins ET (2003) Tactical differences in coping with rejection sensitivity: the role of prevention pride. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*, 29:435-448.
- Ayduk O, Mendoza-Denton R, Mischel W, Downey G, Peake PK, Rodriguez, M (2000). Regulating the interpersonal self: strategic self-regulation for coping with rejection sensitivity. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 79:776-792.
- Berenson KR, Downey G, Rafaeli E, Coifman KG, Leventhal PN (2011) The rejection-rage contingency in borderline personality disorder. *J Abnorm Psychol*, 120:681-690.
- Berenson KR, Gregory WE, Glaser E, Romirowsky A, Rafaeli E, Yang X et al. (2016) Impulsivity, rejection sensitivity, and reactions to stressors in borderline personality disorder. *Cognit Ther Res*, 40:510-521.
- Blatt S, Zuroff DC (1992) Interpersonal relatedness and self-definition: two prototypes for depression. *Clin Psychol Rev*, 12(5):527-562.
- Bondü R, Krahé B (2015) Links of justice and rejection sensitivity with aggression in childhood and adolescence. *Aggress Behav*, 41:353-368.
- Breines JG, Ayduk O (2015) Rejection sensitivity and vulnerability to self-directed hostile cognitions following rejection. *J Pers*, 83:1-13.
- Bretherton I (1992) The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Dev Psychol*, 28:759-775.
- Burks VS, Dodge KA, Price JM (1995) Models of internalizing outcomes of early rejection. *Dev Psychopathol*, 7:683-695.
- Chango JM, McElhaney KB, Allen JP, Schad MM, Marston E (2012) Relational stressors and depressive symptoms in late adolescence: rejection sensitivity as a vulnerability. *J Abnorm Child Psychol*, 40:369-379.
- Coie J, Terry R, Lenox K, Lochman J (1995) Childhood peer rejection and aggression as predictors of stable patterns of adolescent disorder. *Dev Psychopathol*, 7:697-713.
- Coifman KG, Berenson KR, Rafaeli E, Downey G (2012) From negative to positive and back again: polarized affective and relational experience in borderline personality disorder. *J Abnorm Psychol*, 121:668-679.
- Creasey G, Hesson-McInnis M (2001) Affective responses, cognitive appraisals and conflict tactics in late adolescent romantic relationship: Associations with attachment orientations. *J Couns Psychol*, 48:85-96.
- Çardak M, Sarıçam H, Onur M (2012) Perceived parenting styles and rejection sensitivity in university students. *The Online Journal of Counselling and Education*, 1:57-69.
- DiBenigno J, Romero-Canyas R, Downey G (2007) Do rejection sensitivity and performance predict extreme actions to rejection for performing artists. In Poster presented at the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), Memphis, TN.
- Dodge KA, Lansford JE, Burks VS, Bates JE, Pettit GS, Fontaine R et al. (2003) Peer rejection and social information-processing factors in the development of aggressive behavior problems in children. *Child Dev*, 74:374-393.
- Downey G, Feldman SI (1996) Implications of rejection sensitivity for intimate relationships. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 70:1327-1343.
- Downey G, Feldman S, Ayduk O (2000) Rejection sensitivity and male violence in romantic relationships. *Pers Relatsh*, 7:45-61.
- Downey G, Freitas AL, Michaelis B, Khouri H (1998) The self-fulfilling prophecy in close relationships: rejection sensitivity and rejection by romantic partners. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 75:545-560.
- Downey G, Mougious V, Ayduk O, London BE, Shoda Y (2004) Rejection sensitivity and the defensive motivational system: Insights from the startle response to rejection cues. *Psychol Sci*, 15:668-673.
- Erözkan A (2004) The analysis of university student's interpersonal sensitiveness and rejection sensitiveness. *Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5:85-98.
- Erözkan A (2009) Rejection sensitivity levels respect to attachment styles, gender and parenting styles: a study with Turkish students. *Soc Behav Pers*, 37:1-14.
- Feldman S, Downey G (1994) Rejection sensitivity as a mediator of the impact of childhood exposure to family violence on adult attachment behavior. *Dev Psychopathol*, 6:231-247.
- Gadassi R, Snir A, Berenson KR, Downey G, Rafaeli E (2014) Out of frying pan, into the fire: Mixed affective reactions to social proximity in borderline and avoidant personality disorders in daily life. *J Abnorm Psychol*, 123:613-622.

- Galliher RV, Bentley CG (2010) Links between rejection sensitivity and adolescent romantic relationship functioning: The mediating role of problem-solving behaviors. *J Aggress Maltreat Trauma*, 19:603-623.
- Hafen CA, Spilker A, Chango, Marston ES, Allen J P (2014) To accept or reject? the impact of adolescent rejection sensitivity on early adult romantic relationships. *J Res Adolesc*, 24:55-64.
- Harper MS, Dickson JW, Welsh DP (2006) Self-silencing and rejection sensitivity in adolescent romantic relationships. *J Youth Adolesc*, 35:435-443.
- Haselager G, Cillessen A, VanLieshout C, Riksen-Walraven J, Marianne A, Hartup W (2002) Heterogeneity among peer rejected boys across middle childhood: Developmental pathways of social behavior. *Dev Psychol*, 38:446-456.
- Higgins ET (1997) Beyond pleasure and pain. *Am Psychol*, 52:1280-1300.
- Hodges EVE, Perry DG (1999) Personal and interpersonal consequences of victimization by peers. *J Pers Soc Psychol*, 76:677-685.
- Jacobs N, Harper B (2013) The effects of rejection sensitivity on reactive and proactive aggression. *Aggress Behav*, 39:3-12.
- Jaremka LM, Fagundes CP, Peng J, Bennett JM, Glaser R, Malarkey WB et al. (2013) Loneliness promotes inflammation during acute stress. *Psychol Sci*, 24:1089-1097.
- Khoshkam S, Bahrami F, Ahmedi A, Fatehizade M, Etemadi O (2012) Attachment style and rejection sensitivity: The mediating effect of self-esteem and worry among Iranian college students. *Eur J Psychol*, 8:363-374.
- Lang PS, Davis M, Ohman A (2000) Fear and anxiety: animal and human cognitive psychophysiology. *J Affect Disord*, 61:137-159.
- Ledley DR, Storch E, Coles ME, Heimberg RG, Moser S, Bravata EA (2006) The relationship between childhood teasing and later interpersonal functioning. *J Psychopathol Behav Assess*, 2:33-40.
- Liu R, Kraines MA, Massing-Schaffer M, Alloy LB (2014) Rejection sensitivity and depression: mediated by stress generation. *Psychiatry*, 77:86-97.
- Marston EG, Hare A, Allen JP (2010) Rejection sensitivity in late adolescence: Social and emotional sequelae. *J Res Adolesc*, 20(4):959-982.
- McDonald KL, Bowker JC, Rubin KH, Laursen B, Duchene MS (2010) Interactions between rejection sensitivity and supportive relationships in the prediction of adolescents' internalizing difficulties. *J Youth Adolesc*, 39: 3-574.
- McLachlan J, Zimmer-Gembeck M J, McGregor L (2010) Rejection sensitivity in childhood and early adolescence: peer rejection and protective effects of parents and friends. *Journal of Relationships Research*, 1:31-40.
- Mellin EA (2008) Rejection sensitivity and college student depression: findings and implications for counseling. *Journal of College Counseling*, 11:32-41.
- Mischel W, Shoda Y (1995) A cognitive-affective system theory of personality: reconceptualizing situations, dispositions, dynamics and invariance in personality structure. *Psychol Rev*, 102:246-268.
- Olsson A, Carmona S, Downey G, Bolger N, Ochsner KN (2013) Learning biases underlying individual differences in sensitivity to social rejection. *Emotion*, 13(4):616-621.
- Olweus D (1993) *Bullying at School. What We Know and What We can Do*. Oxford, England, Blackwell Publishing.
- Özen A, Sümer, Demir M (2010) Predicting friendship quality with rejection sensitivity and attachment security. *J Soc Pers Relat*, 28:163-181.
- Parker G, Roy K, Haddzi-Pavlovic D (1992) Psychotic depression: a meta analysis of physical treatment. *J Affect Disord*, 24:17-24.
- Pietrzak J, Downey G, Ayduk O (2005) Rejection sensitivity as an interpersonal vulnerability. In *Interpersonal Cognition* (Ed MW Baldwin):62-84). New York, Guilford Press.,
- Romeo-Canyas R, Downey G (2005) Rejection sensitivity as a predictor of affective and behavioral responses to interpersonal stress: a defensive motivational system. In *Sydney Symposium of Social Psychology: The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection and Bullying* (Eds KD Williams, JP Forgas, W von Hippel):131-154. New York, Psychology Press.
- Romero-Canyas R, Downey G, Berenson K, Ayduk O, Kang NJ (2010) Rejection sensitivity and the rejection-hostility link in romantic relationships. *J Pers*, 78):119-148.
- Roth D, Coles M, Heimberg RG (2002) The relationship between memories for childhood teasing and anxiety and depression in adulthood. *J Anxiety Disord*, 16:151-166.
- Rowe SL, Gembeck MJ, Rudolph J, Nesdale D (2015) A longitudinal study of rejecting and autonomy-restrictive parenting, rejection sensitivity, and socioemotional symptoms in early adolescents. *J Abnorm Child Psychol*, 43:1107-1118.
- Rudolph J, Zimmer - Gembeck MJ(2014) Parent relationships and adolescents' depression and social anxiety: indirect associations via emotional sensitivity to rejection threat. *Aust J Psychol*, 66:110-121.
- Seboková G, Popelková M (2014) Friendship quantity and quality as predictors of rejection sensitivity in adolescents. *Psychology and its Contexts*, 5:17-31.
- Staebler K, Helbing E, Rosenbach C, Renneberg B (2011) Rejection sensitivity and borderline personality disorder. *Clin Psychol Psychother*, 18:275-283.

- Tang HHY, Richardson R (2013) Reversing the negative psychological sequelae of exclusion: Inclusion is ameliorative but not protective against the aversive consequences of exclusion. *Emotion*, 13:139-150.
- Thoits PA (2011) Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health. *J Health Soc Behav*, 52:145-161.
- Uchino BN (2009) Understanding the links between social support and physical health: A life-span perspective with emphasis on the separability of perceived and received support. *Perspect Psychol Sci*, 4:236-255.
- Volz AR, Kerig PK (2010) Relational Dynamics associated with adolescent dating violence: The roles of rejection sensitivity and relational security. *J Aggress Maltreat Trauma*, 19:587-602.
- Watson J, Nesdale D (2012) Rejection sensitivity, social withdrawal, and loneliness in young adults. *J Appl Soc Psychol*, 42:1984-2005.
- Zimmer-Gembeck MJ, Nesdale D (2013) Anxious and angry rejection sensitivity, social withdrawal, and retribution in high and low ambiguous situations. *J Pers*, 81:29-38.

Dilek Şirvanlı Özen, Okan University, İstanbul; **Fulya Kübra Güneri**, Okan University, İstanbul.

Correspondence: Dilek Şirvanlı Özen, Okan University Psychology Division, İstanbul, Turkey.

E-mail: dilek.sirvanli@okan.edu.tr

No conflict of interest is declared related to this article.

Submission date: 1 Aralık/December 1, 2017 · **Accepted:** 29 Ocak/January 29, 2018
