

DEATH ANXIETY, ATTACHMENT STYLES AND RELATIONSHIP STATUS



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JUNE, 2022

DEATH ANXIETY, ATTACHMENT STYLES AND RELATIONSHIP
STATUS

BY

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MA

IN

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

YEDITEPE UNIVERSITY

JUNE, 2022

PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ABSTRACT

In literature, there is little research focusing on death anxiety. This is because there is a large number of variables that relate to death anxiety. The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between death anxiety and two anxiety buffer mechanisms which were attachment styles and relationship status. The sample of the study consisted of 207 university students. In this study, the Thorson-Powell Death Anxiety Scale was used to measure death anxiety levels of the participants, and the Relationship Scale Questionnaire was used to measure their attachment styles.

According to the results of the research, a positive correlation was found between the death anxiety scores of the participants and their secure, dismissing, and fearful attachment styles. However, no significant relation was found between the death anxiety scores of the participants and their preoccupied attachment styles. A significant difference was found between death anxiety scores of the participants who were in a relationship and of those who were not. Participants who were in a relationship reported higher death anxiety than those who were not in a relationship.

Keywords: death anxiety, attachment styles, relationship status

ÖZET

Literatürde ölüm kaygısına odaklanan çok az araştırma bulunmaktadır. Bunun nedeni ölüm kaygısı ile ilişkili eden çok sayıda değişken olmasıdır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bağlanma stilleri ve ilişki durumunun ölüm kaygısı üzerindeki kaygıyı tamponlayan işlevini incelemektir. Araştırmanın örneklemini 207 üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada katılımcıların ölüm kaygısı düzeylerini ölçmek için Thorson-Powell Ölüm Kaygısı Ölçeği, bağlanma stillerini ölçmek için ise İlişki Ölçeği Anketi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, katılımcıların ölüm kaygısı puanları ile güvenli, kayıtsız ve korkulu bağlanma stilleri arasında pozitif yönde bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Ancak katılımcıların ölüm kaygısı puanları ile saplantılı bağlanma stilleri arasında anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır. İlişkisi olan ve olmayan katılımcıların ölüm kaygısı puanları arasında anlamlı bir farklılık çıkmıştır. Buna göre bir ilişkisi olan katılımcıların ölüm kaygısı puanları, ilişkisi olmayan katılımcıların puanlarından daha yüksek çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: ölüm kaygısı, bağlanma stilleri, ilişki durumu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alev Yalçınkaya for her support and encouragement during my thesis process.

I would like to thank my jury members Assist. Prof. Dr. Esra Savaş and Assist. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Berna Sarı Arasıl for their interest and support during my thesis defence.

I would like to thank my husband Uğur Sarsmaz, for his unconditional support, love and compassion during my thesis and my bereavement process.

I would like to thank my family members for being the greatest unconditional support through my education, academic career and for encouraging me to stand up and do my master's in my toughest days.

Finally, I would like to thank my endless love Ömer Faruk Ilıcan. Your loss has made me a completely different person, more emotional, stronger, more loving and more aware of the value of every moment. I was able to cope with your absence thanks to my husband and family. I kept my promise to you and did my master's degree. I love you more than everything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ÖZET	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Death Anxiety.....	1
1.2. Attachment Theory	8
1.3. Romantic Relationships within the Framework of Attachment Theory..	12
1.4. Death Anxiety, Attachment Styles and Relationship Status	13
1.5. Hypotheses	15
2. METHOD	16
2.1. Participants	16
2.2. Procedure	17
2.3. Materials	17
3. RESULTS.....	18
3.1. Participant Characteristics	18
3.2. Analyses	21
4. DISCUSSION.....	23
4.1. Death Anxiety and Attachment Style	23
4.2. Death Anxiety and Relationship Status	25
REFERENCES	27
APPENDIX A	36

APPENDIX B.....	37
APPENDIX C.....	38
APPENDIX D	39
APPENDIX E	41



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Gender Distribution of Participants	16
Table 2. Distribution of Participants in Terms of Income Levels	16
Table 3. Distribution of Participants in Terms of Current Relationships	20
Table 4. Duration of the Participants' Relationship.	21
Table 5. Distribution of Participants in Terms of Losing Any Relatives	21
Table 6. Distribution of Participants' Age of Loss (family)	22
Table 7. Participants ' Degree of Closeness to the Lost People	23
Table 8. Distribution of Participants in Age of Loss (relatives)	24
Table 9. Pearson Correlation Test Results of the Relationship Between Participants' Death Anxiety Scores and Attachment Styles	24
Table 10. Results of the t-test Analysis for the Relationship between Participants' Relationship Status and Death Anxiety Scores	26

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Death Anxiety

Somatic death is the loss of the central nervous system, respiratory and circulatory functions, which are accepted as the main body functions. The loss of one of these functions automatically causes others to disappear after a short time. There is a second form of death after somatic death that inevitably leads to loss of vitality of all organs and tissues, particularly due to the respiratory and somatic death in the brainstem. This is called cellular or biological death, and it is equal to somatic death (Koç & Can, 2011).

According to Freud (1999), death is the most comprehensive form of all misfortunes. Plato interprets death as the separation of the inhabited part of a living person from his physical part, that is, his body. According to him, the soul comes from a different dimension than the physical body. In other words, when the soul is born within the body, it becomes less conscious, and in the meantime, the body forgets the old truths it knows. Accordingly, Plato's death is a wake-up and recall (Moddy, 1993). Freud suggested that we are born with two basic instincts which are the death and the life instincts and he claimed that "The goal of life is death" (Freud, 1955).

In today's world, people still struggle with accepting the phenomenon of death. Moddy (1993) suggested that it is not easy to talk about death. According to him, there are two reasons for this: cultural and psychological. Culturally, many believe that biomedical sciences will one day prevent aging and eliminate what appears to be a disease. With these beliefs, the Committee on the Prevention of Death was established in the United States, and in 1976 an immortality company was established in France. The purpose of these organizations was to develop research to give every

person an eternal life (Thomas, 1991). Kastenbaum (2015) approached society as the social structure created by individuals to cope with the anxiety and fear they experience towards death. Psychologically, Kübler-Ross (1969) suggested that terminally ill patients go through five consecutive stages: denial, anger, bargaining, anxiety, and acceptance.

Becker (1973) argued that people have the capacity to be aware of human mortality. This awareness creates an anxiety and terror. Famous dramatist Friedrich Schiller (as cited in AZquotes, 2022) said that “Fear of death is more terrible than death”. The existential psychiatrist, Yalom (2000) claimed that death anxiety is not inevitable, but death is. He further defined death anxiety as the main concern of humanity and one of the most fundamental elements of existence. He also suggested that the onset of death anxiety is when the individual begins to face the impossibility and nothingness of being with his own death. In this respect, he suggested that anxiety cannot be evaluated independently from the phenomenon of death, and that anxiety is experienced as a result of the sense of nothingness experienced by the perception of death.

Rosenbaum (1989) categorized death anxiety into three different groups. He defined “current death anxiety” as the anxiety that people feel for inevitable death; “predatory death anxiety” as the oldest form of death anxiety in which worries arise from natural disasters and other threatening situations in life and “preventive death anxiety” as the anxiety in situations that cause emotional or physical harm to people.

Florian & Kravitz (1983) stated that death anxiety related to the person himself includes the fear of the disappearance of the body and the fear of not reaching the points that the person intended in life. Interpersonal death anxiety consists of concerns about what happens to the loved ones after his death and the loss of social

relations. The person feels fear about death from the unknown side of death and the punishment after death.

According to Lennon (1998) human beings' ability to look at the past, to comment on it using cognitive and linguistic abilities, to observe and shape the day and to express wishes for the future, leads to the awareness of the end and thus to anxiety. Therefore, human beings are able to think about time and have expectations for the future, thus they confront death. Unlike an animal which encounters danger, protects itself with the instinct for survival, fights for life, or surrenders to death, a human think and evaluates death and develops an attitude and belief against it (Becker, 1973).

Otto Rank (2012) argued that the child physically leaving the mother at birth constitutes the basic fear of death. For this reason, Rank said that we learn about human fear at birth and that every fear situation that we would face in the future is symbolically appropriate to the birth event and that the first fear sample is the birth of the individual.

Long-term research has shown that there is little research to find descriptors of death anxiety. The reason for that is because there is a large number of variables that manipulate death anxiety (Fortner & Neimeyer, 1999). For example, past experiences affect gender, culture, and death anxiety (Singh et al., 2003). Pollack (2007), while reviewing research results on death anxiety, used different measurement tools in studies related to death, and variables such as age, gender, and piety are reported with different findings. Some studies of death may have similar results, although different results of age, gender, and religiosity have emerged. Forter & Neimeyer (1999) identified predictors of high death anxiety as age, gender, physical and psychological

problems, religiosity, and poor ego integrity. Existential loneliness is also related to death anxiety (Smith, 2000).

When looking at gender differences, although some research findings (Howze, 2002) showed that gender is not a determinant variable in terms of death anxiety, some demonstrated that women show higher death anxiety than men (Conte et al., 1982). For example, Maglio analyzed 62 studies (1992) in terms of the impact of death education programs on death anxiety and reported that women showed higher death anxiety than men. Dattel & Neimeyer (1990), as well as Pollack (2007) also found that women's death anxiety was higher than men's. Tang et al., (2002) also conducted a study of anxiety on Chinese university students and reported gender differences with women having higher concerns of death than men. Lonetto et al., (1980) explained this by the fact that women expressed their feelings more easily as society supported them in this regard. Men do not show their emotions related to their social role and are less encouraged by society to express their feelings.

When looking at age differences, there is a belief that young people are far from death and postpone thinking of death, while older people are more likely to think about death because they assume that they are closer to death. Indeed, Justin (1988) found out that death of young people between the ages of 13 and 19 were never discussed in their families. However, Templer (1970) reported that age and death anxiety are not related. Some recent studies report a linear link between age and death anxiety (McMordie & Kumar, 1984) or a fluctuating curvilinear relationship between death anxiety and middle age (Gesser et al., 1994). However, a significant number of studies report that adult death anxiety is lower than adolescents (Fortner et al., 2000, Koocher et al., 1976; Rasmussen & Brems, 1996). Singh, et al., (2003) explain these contradictory findings with two reasons. The first reason is that adoption of maturity

and death resulting from the progression of age is gradually taking place. The second reason is that some elderly people's fear towards life may be higher than their death anxiety. Many older people have physical problems. They also suffer from social isolation. As a result of the experiences that emerge from these situations, they become dissatisfied with life at older ages. Therefore, death in older ages is less threatening. However, regret in old age and feeling of unexperience related to life generally affects the anxiety of death (Smith, 2000).

When looking at differences in religiosity, individuals with high religiosity levels were reported to have less death anxiety in connection with those believing in the afterlife. On the other hand, some research findings showed no relationship between religiosity and death anxiety (Keller et al., 1984). Leming (1980) examined 23 studies in his meta-analysis to examine the relationship between fear of death and religiosity. According to the mixed study results, religiousness was reported to have a reducing effect on death anxiety in 10 out of 23 studies. A linear relationship was detected in three of the remaining; in three, the current relationship was irregular. In the last seven studies, no relationship was found between death anxiety and religiosity. Furthermore, Massie (1995), in the study examining the relationship between religious preferences and death anxiety, found that Protestants had the lowest death anxiety. However, it was reported that Baptists had the highest death anxiety. There was no significant difference in terms of death anxiety scores among Catholics and groups that did not specify any religious preference.

1.1.1. Death Anxiety and Developmental Stages

How is death and death anxiety perceived and experienced through stages of development?

For the child, the loss of a protective adult is like a death threat. Bowlby said noted that the loss of a loved one for young children could have psychosocial consequences and affect the child's development (as cited in Holmes, 2014). Susan Carey (1985) states that the thought of death occurs in three developmental stages.

At the first stage, especially in children five years old and younger, the concept of death is related to the concept of sleep and separation. At this stage, children are concerned about separating from their parents or any of their loved ones (Nelson & Israel 2003). During this period of preschool education, death is the same as separation. The child experiences death emotionally as the final act of a complete separation or a possible attack. During this period, death is not an end. It is not a situation that can be prevented, either. Like waking up from sleep or returning from the journey, there is an expectation that there will be a return after death (Carey, 1985). During the second stage which covers the ages 6 through 9, the child begins to perceive death as an end. Although children at this age want to know if death is an end, they develop the expectation that death is not an end (Jersild & Günçe, 1979). In the child's mind a dead man is no longer a human being. However, there is still an understanding of the fact that death is due to an external factor. The child does not conceptualize death as a phenomenon that occurs in the body due to these external factors. During the third stage, death is understood as an inevitable biological process. The idea of death is formed between 9 and 10 years of age.

Death anxiety begins to be experienced openly during adolescence. and is influenced by the following factors: for example, social support, mental maturity, and individual experience. Adolescents ' perceive death as meaningless and do not think that they will die (Çileli, 2004). Yalom (2000) describes this situation as a forced heroism. According to Yalom, the death struggle stems in part from the underlying

death concern. Therefore, while the adolescent may seem unrelated to death, death is an important part of his life. However, research shows that adolescents indirectly express death anxiety. What seems terrible for adolescents in this respect is not dying but getting older. The adolescent perceives death as a threat to development. For this reason, death involves concerns about losing healthy bodies for adolescents, about completing future plans, making life meaningful, and self-actualization. Adolescents' perceptions of their lives and death are mostly influenced by their culture. In parallel, one can conclude that adolescents are anxious about death and make a special effort to try to protect themselves from it. Therefore, death can have an important effect on adolescent psychology (Koestenbaum, 1998).

According to Erikson (1976) around mid-40s is the end of middle age. In the transition from middle age to old age, the individual needs to review his/her life. Stump (2012) in his study with adult males found that almost all the men aged 40-45 have gone through a midlife crisis. For many people, this period is very complex and hectic. What is important in this period is to observe the extent to which the predetermined goals have been achieved. Failure to achieve the set goals may be an existential crisis, realizing that life must be partially or completely changed. Thus, a period develops in which life inevitably ends in death, and a period develops in which one starts to be forced to focus on the meaning of life (Onur, 2000).

According to study results conducted with 1000 men between the ages of 25 and 90, high, moderate, and low death anxiety were found in all age categories. Men with high levels of anxiety in the old and middle age category focused on symptoms of illnesses rather than life-threatening perceptions. (Çileli, 2004).

1.1.2. Coping with Death Anxiety: Terror Management Theory

One of the most known theories about death anxiety is the Terror Management Theory (TMT, Greenberg et al., 1986). TMT is about people being horrified of their mortality and clinging to worldviews to reduce their anxiety. According to TMT, people cope with death anxiety at both conscious and unconscious levels (Greenberg et al., 2000). TMT has 3 different hypotheses to explain the management of anxiety (Plusnin et al., 2018). The Anxiety-Buffer Hypothesis suggests that when reminded of death, there is the existence of a psychological structure with a protective function against the idea of death (Doğulu & Uğurlu, 2015). According to the Mortality Saliency hypothesis (MS), reminders of death will increase confidence in the mechanism of death if a psychological construct buffers about death related thoughts (Mikulincer et al., 2002). According to the last hypothesis Death-Thought Accessibility (DTA), there is a structure which serves as a protection against death awareness. If this structure is weakened the availability of death-related cognitions will increase (Doğulu & Uğurlu, 2015). For example, self-esteem being a buffer--high self-esteem leading to less feelings and behaviors which are anxiety-related in a person who faces symbolic threats (Simon et al., 1998). Taubman Ben-Ari's study (2011) also showed that participants with higher self-esteem, had a more meaningful life than participants with low self-esteem.

Attachment style is considered as another buffer against terror of death (Mikulincer & Florian, 2000), and will be investigated further as follows.

1.2. Attachment Theory

John Bowlby, in his Attachment Theory (1969,1973,1980, 1982) argued that the attachment system is an innate means of regulation that affects babies' survival. As human babies are immature at birth, they need the protection and care of an adult

to survive. Infants bond to adults with behaviors like cuddling, babbling, crawling, crying, and laughing, beginning as early as the first week after birth. When a threat is recognized which is either physical, or physiological, or psychological (e.g. unreasonable distance from the attachment pattern, a predator, starvation, illness, etc.), the attachment system gets activated and the baby stops the discovery behavior, and looks for intimacy, i.e., attachment behavior. Then the attachment and the discovery systems become active and the baby explores the environment safely and freely. Repetition of this cycle helps develop a positive inner world model and a secure attachment style ("other people are trustworthy, and I can get help whenever I want").

Mary Ainsworth et al., (1978) in their classical study using the Strange Situation Procedure developed an attachment classification model. In this experiment the reaction of babies (usually about 12 months) to the return of their mothers following separation was the fundamental indicator of various attachment styles:

Securely attached child was disturbed by the mother's leave but was quickly calmed down with her mother's return. These securely attached infants learn to trust others, can increase their competence and approach others with empathy. In this sense, as children they have sincere and warm relations with their mothers. They also have clear, supportive, and positive content in their stories when they were parents (Cassidy, 1988). **Anxiously attached** child was overly distressed during the separation and showed conflicting or ambivalent reactions to the mother when she returned. **Avoidantly attached** child was not disturbed by the mother's leave and avoided her when she returned. This group of infants perceived their separation time as a permanent abandonment and showed protest reactions against the mother.

Avoidance behaviors are defensive behaviors that help reduce anger in conflict and anxiety situations and help maintain the distance from the mother (Main et al., 1985).

1.2.1. Adult Attachment Styles

Bowlby (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1973) suggested attachment theory to be a life-long process. He claimed that repeated reinforcement of the attachment style formed the adult attachment style, which affected later relationships. Hazan & Shaver (1987) suggested that attachment styles continue throughout life, especially in romantic relationships. They studied people aged 14 to 82 years and found that people with a secure attachment style had better romantic relationships, defined their romantic relationships as happy, friendly, and reassuring. Insecurely attached people were afraid of closeness in their love experiences, they experienced jealousy, fear of emotional intimacy and emotional fluctuations.

Following Bowlby (Bowlby, 1982; Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1973; Bowlby, 1980) and Hazan & Shaver (1987), Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) came up with a new categorization for attachment styles, producing a four-category model.

- **Secure Attachment:** a secure relationship with family and friends in adolescents is closely related to social and emotional skills. The secure attachment style of the individual can increase the level of empathy, emotional awareness, and emotional expression. In addition, negative emotional expressions of individuals are reduced. However, appropriate social behavior is increased (Laible, 2007). Secure attachment, close friendship, harmony seen in the group of friends, and regulation of emotions related to close friends, which help suppress the negative characteristics of individuals, are related to each other.

- **Preoccupied Attachment:** This form is based on the synthesis of anxious/preoccupied attachment patterns in which the origins of this form are

emphasized by the unbalanced grip style developed by Ana and others by Hazan & Shaver (1987). In this way, there is an explanation of the need to be in contact with others. People exhibiting this form have a negative self-perception and positive perceptions of others. Obsessed individuals have low self-esteem, obedience to the wishes of others, wanting to be in contact with others, but afraid to leave. Obsessions in dangerous situations have more negativity, emotion, and avoidance behaviors.

- **Fearful Attachment:** A form of attachment characterized by individuals describing themselves and others as negative. Fearful persons have a for approval and acceptance by others. In addition, their fear of suffering, abandonment, and rejection may lead to a tendency to avoid intimacy (Bartholomew and Shaver, 1998). This trend shows that feared people are drawn to their shells and have a structure that tries to protect their security and independence. Research shows that fearful attachment to individual independence and behavior can be an explanatory factor for depression.

- **Dismissing Attachment:** In this context, the first classification of Hazan and Shaver (1987) is not equivalent. For example, the inevitable attachment pattern corresponds to the feared individual in the Bartholomew 15 classification, but there is no completely appropriate equivalent for dismissing attachment. Bartholomew adopted these forms and divided the two forms of avoidance. In short, he developed a four-way attachment model. People who are not positive in themselves, who evaluate themselves negatively and who have negative attitudes towards others have a dismissing attachment style. They avoid closeness with others because of fear of negativity and tend to keep their value high by denying the value of sincerity with others. Therefore, a positive relationship between dismissing attachment style and well-being is considered a normal condition considering the value given to a person (Merz & Consedine, 2012)

1.3. Romantic Relationships within the Framework of Attachment Theory

In adulthood, when peers and spouses provide emotional support and safety that the family is responsible for during infancy and childhood and perform similar functions to meet needs, attachment behavior is transferred from family to peers. (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Romantic attachment is based on love and affection between spouses (lovers, husband, wife, etc.), as well as emotional, social, and sexual needs. Need-based factors such as proximity, satisfaction, trust, unity, and commitment play an important role in developing such attachment (Çetinkaya, 2013).

The primary source of attachment difference between infant-caregiver and adults is attachment motivation. The bond between the mother and the baby is one-way. The baby expects love, care, and comfort to meet their needs and the mother is sensitive to these demands. However, the attachment process in adult romantic relationships is not one-sided, but reciprocal. In such processes, the two individuals in the relationship are both in receiving and giving positions. In addition, there are factors such as sexual intercourse and the existence of common goals in the adult attachment process (Çetinkaya, 2013).

Hazan & Shaver (1987) described romantic love as a process of attachment. Individuals with a secure attachment style express their love experiences as happy and reliable. On the other hand, individuals with anxious attachment style describe their experiences of love as emotional ups and downs and obsessions. Jealousy was found to be high with emotional ups and downs in individuals with avoidant attachment styles. These individuals are also afraid of getting closer to others.

Securely attached individuals have high levels of personal and relationship expectation, high levels of trust in self and environment, self-disclosure, and satisfaction (Welch & Houser, 2010). In a study by Feeney & Noller (1990) results

showed that securely attached individuals find their relationships more reassuring and have a higher level of self-confidence. Similarly, Simpson (1990) concluded that positive emotions and negative emotions were low in the relationships of securely attached individuals. According to Campbell et al., (2005) anxiously and avoidantly attached individuals experience more stress in their relationships.

1.4. Death Anxiety, Attachment Styles and Relationship Status

According to Mikulincer & Florian (2000), studies showed that attachment style of an individual influence the terror of death. In one of the rare studies in the literature, Mikulincer et al., (1990) examined the effect of 80 male students' attachment styles on death anxiety. The researchers divided the participants into three groups according to their attachment styles measured by the self-assessment method. They measured death anxiety with both self-assessment scales and Thematic Apperception Test. Those with a secure attachment style reported less death anxiety than those with an insecure attachment style. Participants with insecure attachment style had higher levels of death anxiety at both conscious and unconscious levels compared to participants with secure attachment style. Those with insecure attachment style got higher scores from the sub-dimension of death mostly associated with the loss of social identity. The researchers attributed this situation to participants with insecure attachment style experiencing more fear of social rejection than those with other attachment style. While there was no difference in the death anxiety scores measured by self-assessment scales between the avoidant and securely attached participants, those with avoidant attachment styles reported more death anxiety in the Thematic Apperception Test than those with secure attachment style. In the light of all findings research showed that attachment styles moderated mortality salience effects (Mikulincer & Florian, 2000).

Romantic relationships allow people to feel a sense of connectedness which then decreases the death anxiety (Mikulincer et al., 2003). Vance (2014) supported that being in a relationship has a central role to escape the existential problem which is death anxiety. Florian et al., (2002), claimed that close relationships has a buffering function against death anxiety because close relationships may improve the chance of survival. In the light of this information, maintenance of close relationships such as romantic relationships may serve a buffering function of death anxiety. Cox et al., (2008) also investigated the effects of basic caregivers on death anxiety from the perspective of the Terror Management Theory. When participants' awareness of mortality increased (they were asked to write about their own deaths), those who had a secure attachment style turned towards romantic relationships to get emotional support, those with anxious attachment style turned to relationships with their parents, while those who had avoidant attachment style did not indicate any intimacy.

According to Mikulincer et al., (2003), close relationships have two primary functions on death anxiety. The first is that close relationships have a relaxing and anxious effect on all kinds of internal and external stressors, including death anxiety. However, this characteristic of close relationships does not provide any symbolic protection for the mortality of humans. The second function of close relationships is that it gives people a sense of immortality. People experience a symbolic immortality with the feelings of love, support, loyalty provided by close relationships and that they will be remembered constantly after death. This thought provides a protection against death.

1.5. Hypotheses

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship among death anxiety, attachment styles, and relationship status. Accordingly, the hypotheses of the research are as follows:

H1: There will be a negative correlation between death anxiety scores and secure attachment styles scores of the participants.

H2: There will be a positive correlation between death anxiety scores and preoccupied attachment style scores of the participants.

H3: There will be a positive correlation between death anxiety scores and dismissing attachment style scores of the participants.

H4: There will be a positive correlation between death anxiety scores and fearful attachment style scores of the participants.

H5: People in a romantic relationship will have lower death anxiety scores than people who are not in a romantic relationship.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 207 participants who were university students. (60.9% men, 39.1% women) with a mean age of 22.27 ranging between 19 and 27 years old.

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the participants.

Table 1.

Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender					
		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	81	39.1	39.1	39.1
	Male	126	60.9	60.9	100.0
	Total	207	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the income levels of the participants.

Table 2.

Distribution of Participants in Terms of Income Levels

Income rate					
		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	108	52.2	52.2	52.2
	Middle	72	34.8	34.8	87.0
	High	27	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	207	100.0	100.0	

2.2. Procedure

Data were collected from randomly selected university students. Participants were students at four different universities in Ankara and Istanbul. Data collection was completed within one week. They were asked whether they wished to participate in a research project. If they accepted to do so, first, the informed consent form (see Appendix A) was given to them. Subsequently, participants completed the questionnaire package which took 15 minutes to complete. After the completion of the questionnaire package, the participants were given the debriefing letter (see Appendix B).

2.3. Materials

Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to give the following information: age, gender, income rate, birthplace, and other two questions asking about their current relationship and about their loss of family members.

Thorson- Powell Death Anxiety Scale (Thorson & Powell, 1992). This scale measures death anxiety levels of the participants. It has 25 items rated on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale (See Appendix D). The Turkish adaptation was developed by Karaca & Yıldız (2001), The Turkish adaptation has a Cronbach alpha value of .84 and test-retest reliability of .90.

Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). The Turkish adaptation was developed by Sümer & Güngör (1999) This scale measures the four types of attachment styles which were secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment styles. It has 17 items rated on a 1 to 7 Likert-type scale (See Appendix E).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Participant Characteristics

Table 3 shows current relationship status of the participants.

Table 3

Distribution of Participants in Terms of Current Relationships

Relationship status		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Relationship	113	54.6	54.6	54.6
	I have a relationship but I do not live with my partner.	51	24.6	24.6	79.2
	I have a relationship and I live with my partner	16	7.7	7.7	87.0
	Married	27	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	207	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows the duration of the participants' relationship.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Minimum Maximum Scores of Participants Length of their Relationship with their Partners (in Months)

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
If you are in a relationship, how long have you been together?	94	1	72	7.93	11.021
Valid	94				

Table 5 shows participants' loss of family members.

Table 5

Distribution of Participants in Terms of Losing Any Relatives

Have you lost any relatives?					
		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	165	79.7	79.7	79.7
	No	42	20.3	20.3	100.0
	Total	207	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 shows participants' degree of closeness to the people they lost and their age when they lost

Table 6

Distribution of participants in terms of their degree of closeness to the people they lost and their age when they lost

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation	
Ages when their mother died	18	1	22	9.28	6.658	
Ages when their father died	22	1	21	10.23	6.347	
Ages when their brother/sister die	11	2	17	8.27	5.159	
Valid	0					

Table 7 shows degree of closeness to the people they have lost and their distribution in terms of the people they have lost

Table 7

Participants ' degree of closeness to the people they have lost and their distribution in terms of the people they have lost

Another person				
	N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	93	44.9	44.9	44.9
Uncle	6	2.9	2.9	47.8
Grandmother	22	10.6	10.6	58.5
Friend	6	2.9	2.9	61.4
Grandma	24	11.6	11.6	72.9
Uncle	8	3.9	3.9	76.8
Grandfather	32	15.5	15.5	92.3
Still	4	1.9	1.9	94.2
Cousin	9	4.3	4.3	98.6
Aunt	3	1.4	1.4	100.0
Total	207	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows the age of the participants when their relatives died.

Table 8

Distribution of Participants in Terms Of Their Age When They Lost Relatives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age when relatives died	115	2	25	14.96	6.012
Valid	115				

3.2. Analyses

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the Death Anxiety scores and secure, preoccupied, dismissing, fearful attachment styles scores of the participants who participated in the study, and the results are given in Table 9.

Table 9

Pearson Correlation Test Results of the Relationship Between Participants' Death Anxiety Scores and Attachment Styles (N=207)

		Death Anxiety	S	P		D	F
	Death Anxiety	1	.572**	.039		.492**	.580**
	S	.572**	1				
	P	.039		1			
	D	.492**				1	
	F	.580**					1

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

As a result of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between death anxiety scores and secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful attachment styles scores of the participants, a significant positive relationship was found between the participants' death anxiety scores and secure, dismissing, fearful attachment styles. Furthermore, no relationship was found between the participants' death anxiety scores and preoccupied attachment styles scores. As the participants' secure, dismissing and fearful attachment levels increase, their death anxiety increases also, it can be said that preoccupied attachment is not related to death anxiety.

Table 10

Relationship between Participants' Relationship Status and Death Anxiety Scores

	Relationship Status	N	M	SD	t	p
Death Anxiety	No Relationship	113	61.8407	22.47203	-1.27	.206
	Relationship	94	65.2553	16.19102		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare death anxiety for no relationship and relationship status. There was a significant difference in the scores for no relationship ($M = 61.84$, $SD = 22.47$) and relationship ($M = 65.26$, $SD = 16.19$) conditions $t(205) = -1.27$, $p = 0.21$. These results suggest that the participants not in romantic relationship, have lower death anxiety.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Death Anxiety and Attachment Style

In this study, the hypotheses were that death anxiety scores and secure attachment style scores would be negatively correlated and that death anxiety and fearful, dismissing and preoccupied attachment style scores would be positively correlated, but the research findings showed that a positive correlation was found between death anxiety scores of the participants and their secure, dismissing and fearful attachment style score. No significant correlation was found between death anxiety scores and preoccupied attachment style scores of the participants.

Some of these results are parallel with findings in the literature. Based on the work of Bowlby (1980) and Ainsworth (1978), Hazan & Shaver (1987) developed three types of attachment styles: secure, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant. Individuals with a secure attachment style are defined as people who can seek support in case of need, establish closeness with others and feel comfortable in relationships. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style often have an emotional distance to their relationship and have trouble opening themselves, while those with an anxious-ambivalent attachment style experience fear of being abandoned and rejected. Also, individuals with a secure attachment style have a positive perception about themselves and others, and those who have insecure attachment style cannot use their intimate relationships in this context (Mikulincer et al., 2003). In their study with 270 Israeli students, Florian & Mikulincer (1998) found that those with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles scored higher in the Personal Loss of Fear Scale's 'post-mortem social identity' subscale than those with a secure attachment style. Those who have both avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachment styles achieved higher scores in the 'unknown side of death' sub-scale compared to those with secure attachment

style. At the same time, a negative relationship was found between symbolic immortality and death anxiety only for those with a secure attachment style. The researchers attributed this finding to the positive perceptions of people with a secure attachment style towards themselves and others which can give them a symbolic sense of immortality, and this provides some kind of protection against death anxiety.

According to research findings of Mikulincer & Florian (2000) who investigated the effect of attachment styles on mortality awareness through a series of experimental studies participants with different attachment styles reacted to stimuli reminding death in different ways. "Mortality awareness" a concept used in the Terror Management Theory is the reminder that people are mortal by using some techniques (e.g. showing cemetery pictures, making people think about their own death), which are generally used in experimental research methods. The assumption is that people with increased awareness of mortality use cultural worldviews more. In their study, Mikulincer & Florian (2000) gave half of their participants a self-assessment scale that measured death anxiety to increase awareness of mortality, while others were given a neutral scale. Then, all participants were asked to fill in a scale that measures their desire to establish close relationships and a scale related to the violation of social norms. Participants with insecure attachment styles judged non-normative behaviors more severely when mortality awareness increased. Those with a secure attachment style stated that when the awareness of mortality increased, they wanted to establish more intimacy in their relationships. In other words, those who have a secure attachment style use their relationships as a protection when they are reminded that they are mortal, while those who have an insecure attachment style have mostly taken refuge in cultural worldviews. Researchers have linked these findings to individuals' avoidant and anxious-ambivalent attachment style being unable to create a sense of

trust in their inner worlds and to welcome others with suspicion. Mikulincer & Florian (2000), found that death anxiety was high in all attachment styles, but the coping skills (symbolic immortality and desire for intimacy) of those with secure attachment buffered death anxiety compared to other attachment styles. Moreover, emotion regulation skills were better in securely attached individuals than others (Gillath et al., 2005). In a study with advanced cancer patients conducted by Dülger (2014) death anxiety decreased as secure attachment increased.

4.2. Death Anxiety and Relationship Status

The hypothesis of this study that people in a romantic relationship will have lower death anxiety scores than people who are not in a romantic relationship was not supported. However, there was a significant difference in death anxiety scores of the participants who are in a relationship and of the participants who are not in a relationship. People not in a romantic relationship had lower death anxiety scores than people who were in a romantic relationship. This result was the opposite of what was hypothesized.

One explanation for these unexpected results comes from the study of Mikulincer et al., (2003) who suggested that short-term relationships are not a source of meaning and therefore cannot be used as a buffer for the terror of death. The authors further added that, only long-term relationships with a strong sense of togetherness and loyalty provide symbolic protection. Based on this information, we can conclude that the presence of short-term relationships in this sample may have affected death anxiety and relationship status scores. At the same time, the quality of the relationships and the ways people relate also play a role in death anxiety. However, in this study the focus was not on the quality of the relationships. In the literature some research showed that married people were found to have higher death

anxiety than those who were single (Erdoğdu & Özkan 2007; Turgay 2003). Also, in a study by Dağlı (2010), as well as by Öztürk (2010) no significant relationship was found between marital status and death anxiety.

In the light of the results obtained in this study the following can be suggested regarding future research. Since the study did not measure the coping mechanisms of attachment styles, future studies may provide important findings about coping skills of attachment styles. In this study, attachment styles and death anxiety were measured with scales. More reliable results can be obtained by making one-on-one interviews with individuals. While determining attachment styles of individuals, the past life of the person with his family was not taken into consideration. In future studies, questions such as parental values can be asked additionally. Lastly, in future studies, measuring the quality of the relationship can also lead to results that will contribute to the relationship between death anxiety and relationship status.

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APPENDIX A

BİLGİLENDİRİLMİŞ ONAM FORMU

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu araştırma Yeditepe Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Merve Ilıcan tarafından, Doç. Dr. Alev Yalçınkaya danışmanlığında yüksek lisans tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Üniversite öğrencilerinin ölüm ve ilişkiler hakkındaki çeşitli düşünce ve davranışları ile alakalı bilgi edinmektir. Çalışma yaklaşık 20-30 dakikanızı alacaktır.

Bu araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllüdür. İstedığınız zaman anketi yarıda bırakabilirsiniz. Ama ne kadar çok soruyu cevaplandırırsanız, o kadar çok yardımcı olursunuz.

Anketin hiçbir yerinde isim sorulmayacaktır, dolayısıyla anketin hiçbir bölümünde isminiz yer almayacaktır. Cevaplayacağınız ankete sadece herhangi bir sayı verilecek ve anketin kime ait olduğu hiçbir şekilde bilinmeyecektir. Anketi doldurduktan sonra size verilen zarfın içinde, zarfı kapalı ve imzanızla mühürlenmiş olarak geri verebilirsiniz.

Bilgileriniz kilitli bir ortamda korunacak ve sadece bu araştırmada ki görevlilerin kullanımına açık olacaktır. Anket sonuçları profesyonel dergi ve konferanslarda bir bütün olacak sunulabilecek ve eğer isterseniz size e-posta yoluyla gönderilebilecektir. Ayrıca anketi cevaplandırmayı bitirdiğinizde size, araştırma ile ilgili daha ayrıntılı bilgi içeren bir form verilecektir.

Bu çalışmaya katılmaktan ötürü herhangi bir kaygı veya rahatsızlık duyarsanız Yeditepe Üniversitesi Psikoterapi Merkezine ulaşp görüşmek için randevu alabilirsiniz.

İletişim Numarası: 0-216-578-0000,

Dahili: 3772, 3238, 3279

Tüm sorularınız için şuradan ulaşabilirsiniz: ilicanmerve@gmail.com

Bu belgeyi okumuş, araştırmanın işlemlerini anlamış bulunuyorum ve bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

APPENDIX B**KATILIM SONRASI BİLGİ FORMU**

Bu araştırma ilk sayfada belirtildiği gibi Yeditepe Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Bölümü Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Merve Sarsmaz tarafından Doc. Dr. Alev Yalçinkaya danışmanlığındaki yüksek lisans tezi kapsamında yürütülmektedir. Bu tez çalışmasında ölüm kaygısı, bağlanma stilleri ve ilişki durumu arasındaki ilişki çalışılmaktadır. Üniversite öğrencilerinin katılımı ile yürütülen bu çalışmada iki adet anket kullanılmıştır. Ölüm kaygısı, bağlanma stilleri ve ilişki durumu arasında yapılan çalışmaların çok az olması göz önünde bulundurulduğunda bu çalışmanın literatür için yenilikçi bir çalışma olacağı düşünülmüştür.

Elde edilen bilgiler sadece bilimsel araştırma ve yazılarda kullanılacaktır. Çalışmanın sağlıklı ilerleyebilmesi ve bulguların güvenilir olması için çalışmaya katılacağını bildiğiniz diğer kişilerle çalışma ile ilgili detaylı bilgi paylaşımında bulunmanızı dileriz. Bu araştırmaya katıldığınız için tekrar çok teşekkür ederiz.

APPENDIX C**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM**

Yaşınız:

Cinsiyetiniz: Kadın ____ / Erkek ____

Doğum Yeriniz: _____

Gelir düzeyiniz:

Düşük ()

Orta ()

Yüksek ()

Şu andaki ilişki durumunuz nedir?

Bekarım ()

Bir ilişkim var ama partnerimle beraber yaşamıyorum ()

Bir ilişkim var ve partnerimle beraber yaşıyorum ()

Evliyim ()

Diğer _____

İlişki durumunuz var ise, ne kadar zamandır birliktesiniz?

(Ay cinsinden belirtiniz): _____.

Herhangi bir yakınınızı kaybettiniz mi? Evet () Hayır ()

Cevabınız Evet ise yakınlık derecesi ve kaybettiğinizde ki yaşıınız:

Anne (), Yaşıınız: _____

Baba (), Yaşıınız: _____

Kardeş (), Yaşıınız: _____

Diğer _____, Yaşıınız: _____

APPENDIX D

THORSON – POWELL DEATH ANXIETY SCALE

Aşağıdaki cümlelerin her birini okuyunuz. Cümlelerin sizin için ne kadar geçerli olduğunu 1’den 5’e kadar olan ölçekte uygun rakamı işaretleyerek belirtiniz. Ölçekte 1 “Hiç Katılmıyorum”, 5 ise “Tamamen Katılıyorum” ifadelerini temsil etmektedir.

1. Acı çekerek ölmekten korkarım.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
2. Öbür dünyanın nasıl bir yer olduğunu bilmemek beni tedirgin eder.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
3. Öldükten sonra bir daha düşünmemek fikri beni dehşete düşürür.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
4. Gömüldükten sonra cesedime ne olacağı konusu beni kaygılandırıyor.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
5. Tabutlar beni huzursuz eder.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
6. Öldükten sonra işlerim üzerindeki kontrolü kaybedeceğim düşüncesinden nefret ederim.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
7. Ölüm sonrası tamamen hareketsiz kalmak beni kaygılandırır.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
8. Ameliyat olacağımı düşündüğümde çok korkarım.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
9. Ölümünden sonraki hayat beni oldukça kaygılandırıyor.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
10. Yavaş ve uzun süren bir ölümden (canımın yavaş yavaş çıkmasından korkmuyorum).
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
11. Öldüğüm zaman bir tabuta kapatılacak olmam düşüncesi benim için sorun değil.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
12. Öldükten sonra tamamen aciz olacağım fikri beni huzursuz eder.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
13. Öldükten sonra başka bir hayatın olup olmamasıyla hiç ilgilenmiyorum.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
14. Öldükten sonra asla tekrar bir şey hissedememek beni huzursuz eder.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
15. Ölürlen çekilen ıstırap beni kaygılandırıyor.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
16. Öldükten sonra yeni bir hayatın olmasını çok istiyorum.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
17. Ebediyen aciz olmaktan endişe duymuyorum.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
18. Cesedimin mezarda çürüyeceği düşüncesi beni dehşete düşürüyor.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
19. Öldükten sonra dünyalık birçok şeyden mahrum kalacağım düşüncesi beni rahatsız eder.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)

20. Öldükten sonra bize ne olacağı konusunda çok kaygılanıyorum.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
21. Dünyevi şeyleri elde etmek ve onları kontrol altında tutmak benim için önemli değildir.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
22. Ölümün insani her şeyden ayıracak olması beni dehşete düşürüyor.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
23. Kansere yakalanmaktan özel bir korku duymuyorum.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
24. Öldükten sonra yapılması gerekenlerle ilgili teferruatlı bir vasiyet bırakacağım.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
25. Öldükten sonra vücuduma ne olacağı umurumda değil.
(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)



APPENDIX E

RELATIONSHIP SCALES QUESTIONNAIRE (RSQ)

Aşağıda yakın duygusal ilişkilerinizde kendinizi nasıl hissettiğinize ilişkin çeşitli ifadeler yer almaktadır. Yakın duygusal ilişkilerden kastedilen arkadaşlık, dostluk, romantik ilişkiler ve benzerleridir. Lütfen her bir ifadeyi bu tür ilişkilerinizi düşünerek okuyun ve her bir ifadenin sizi ne ölçüde tanımladığını aşağıdaki 7 aralıklı ölçek üzerinde değerlendiriniz.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7

Beni hiç tanımlamıyor Beni kısmen tanımlıyor Tamamıyla beni tanımlıyor

Başkalarına kolaylıkla güvenemem. (Korkulu)

Kendimi bağımsız hissetmem benim için çok önemli. (Kayıtsız)

Başkalarıyla kolaylıkla duygusal yakınlık kurarım. (Güvenli)

Başkalarıyla çok yakınlaşırsam incitileceğimden korkuyorum. (Korkulu)

Başkalarıyla yakın duygusal ilişkilerim olmadığı sürece oldukça rahatım. (Kayıtsız, Saplantılı-t)

Başkalarıyla tam anlamıyla duygusal yakınlık kurmak istiyorum. (Saplantılı)

Yalnız kalmaktan korkarım. (Güvenli-t)

Başkalarına rahatlıkla güvenip bağlanabilirim. (Güvenli)

Başkalarına tamamıyla güvenmekte zorlanırım. (Korkulu)

Başkalarının bana dayanıp bel bağlaması konusunda oldukça rahatımdır. (Güvenli)

Başkalarının bana, benim onlara verdiğim kadar değer vermediğinden kaygılanırım. (Saplantılı)

Kendi kendime yettiğimi hissetmem benim için çok önemli. (Kayıtsız)

Başkalarının bana bağlanmamalarını tercih ederim. (Kayıtsız)

Başkalarıyla yakın olmak beni rahatsız eder. (Korkulu)

Başkalarının bana, benim istediğim kadar yakınlaşmakta gönülsüz olduklarını düşünüyorum. (Saplantılı)

Başkalarına bağlanmamayı tercih ederim. (Kayıtsız)

Başkaları beni kabul etmeyecek diye korkarım. (Güvenli-t)