



## A STUDY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBMISSIVE BEHAVIOURS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL SYMPTOMS

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### ABSTRACT

*In this study, the relationship between submissive behaviours of university students and their psychological symptoms was analysed. The data were obtained from 260 girls ( % 69.7) and 90 boys (%30.2), a total of 350 students; studying at the University of OMÜ in the 2010-2011 academic year. In the study, personal information forms, submissive behaviour scales and briefs symptom inventories were used. The data were tested by using statistical methods of correlation, t-test with individual groups and analysis of variance. In the study, .05 is accepted as the significance level. Findings; there is a significant relationship between submissive behaviours of university students and their psychological symptoms. While a significant relation was found between the submissive behaviours of university students and their vocational training programs, no significant relation was found between their academic achievement and their gender and the frequency of visiting their home where their parents live.*

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**Keywords:** Submissive, Submissive behaviour, Social behavior, Psychological symptoms, Submissive behaviors influence, University students.

### Contribution/ Originality

This study is one of very few studies which have investigated relationship submissive behaviours and the psychological symptoms of university students in Turkey.

### 1. GİRİŞ

People are in need of other people. They desire to be in harmony with them, to be approved, loved, and respected by them (Köknel, 2005). The behavior of submission, which is used as a

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strategy to survive by most of the living beings (Gilbert, 2007), is defined as a set of personality traits arising through behaviors such as being attentive not to offend or hurt others, trying to please everyone, tending to be benevolent, being excessively giving, being unable to say “no”, tending to say “yes” despite being unwilling, having difficulty in expressing the situations she/he does not like, having difficulty in revealing their anger, constantly being in need of being approved, and being unable to defend their own thoughts or rights (Özkan and Özen, 2008).

The concept of submission that is evaluated within the scope of Social Ranking Theory is defined as an individual’s consideration of self to be inferior to the people who have a part in the social support system. However, it is emphasized that those who somehow account themselves as inferior to the others and who are afraid of being embarrassed quite likely perform submissive behaviors, and that they feel frustrated in some social situations; and those who account themselves as equal or superior to the others do not feel socially frustrated according to the Social Dominance Theory. As to behavioral oriented opinions asserting that external factors are more effective than internal factors in explaining an individual’s submissive behaviors claim that award, penalty, threat, learning from a model, and imitation are efficient in submissive behaviors and that individuals tend to perform the behaviors they observe in other people as is the case with many other behaviors. A submissive behavior starts when one puts oneself into a process of social ranking in one’s community. It is emphasized that the ones who compare themselves with the others in the community and account themselves inferior have more submissive behaviors (Connan *et al.*, 2007). An individual who accounts himself to be weak in his community prefers either to go away or to succumb under difficulties. That one starts to account oneself weak causes internal frustration, social anxiety, blocking to make new attempts, loss of self-confidence, and depression (Gilbert and Miles, 2002; Gilbert, 2004; Gilbert, 2007; Özkan and Özen, 2008). Loss or being refused perceived in interpersonal relations may cause depression for such people. However, some people give great importance to personal accomplishment or failure. Loss of control they establish on the environment or the failure perceived may cause depression (Kabakçı, 2001).

There are various opinions on what the environmental factors under discussion are regarding a submissive behavior emerges. Some of these assert that the family atmosphere which an individual was in during his childhood is determinant, while the other opinions assert that the immediate social environment and his perceptions are more determinant. Many researchers impute why individuals perform submissive behaviors and they have a submissive characteristic to they have been raised through parents’ attitudes which are authoritarian, disciplined, and tight-controlling, oppressive, and extremely restrictive (Cüceloğlu, 2003).

Teenagers who just start university begin to discover different points of view and lifestyles, and realize they have various roles. On one hand they try to become independent, on the other hand they strive to establish close relationships which are among the tasks they are supposed to do. University students try to strike a balance between meeting their expectations and those of other people ( their friends and family). Furthermore, university students try to discover themselves, and the process of self-discovery, however, might cause them to experience ups and downs in self-respect at times. Moreover, university students have to adapt to conditions such as the changing surrounding and sheltering. Therefore, university life brings to together both possibilities and

negative conditions of life and stress factors. In the end, university students may be more susceptible to some psychological symptoms and problems such as anger, anxiety, and depression as a consequence of constraint they undergo. It is observed that the methods teenagers use to cope with stress are respectively approach of self-confidence, optimistic approach, search for social support, approach of lack in self-confidence, and submissive approach (Razi *et al.*, 2009). One of the four factors why the feeling of anger emerges is to be obliged to submit to orders and sanctions; to exert pressure on an individual to do something that they do not want to. And this situation is an important factor in the deterioration of people's mental health. In the researchers conducted, relations at a meaningful level between submissive behavior and depression have been found (Cheung *et al.*, 2004).

Generally speaking, it can be mentioned that submissive behaviors influence a person's development negatively. Researches demonstrate that there is a negative relationship between submissive behavior and self-respect (Özkan and Özen, 2008); and a positive relationship between it and depression (Tuzcuoğlu and Korkmaz, 2001; Gilbert, 2007).

In this study, the relation between submissive behaviors of university students and their psychological symptoms have been examined, seeking answers to the following questions:

1. Is there any sensible relation between submissive behaviors of university students and their psychological symptoms?
2. Is there any sensible relation between submissive behaviors of university students and gender?
3. Is there any sensible relation between submissive behaviors of university students and the department studied?
4. Is there any sensible relation between submissive behaviors of university students and the frequency of visiting where the family live?
5. Is there any sensible relation between submissive behaviors of university students and the academic achievement?
6. Is there any sensible relation between psychological symptoms of university students and the department studied?
7. Is there any sensible relation between psychological symptoms of university students and the frequency of visiting where the family live?
8. Is there any sensible relation between psychological symptoms of university students and the academic achievement?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Sampling

260 (69,7 %) girls and 90 (30,2 %) boys out of a total of 350 students who study at Ondokuz Mayıs University in 2010-2011 school year make up the working group of the research.

#### 2.1.1. Means of Data Collection

In the research, Personal Information Form, Scale of Submissive Behavior, and Brief Symptom Inventory have been used to gather data. Information regarding the means for data collection is given below.

### 2.1.2. Personal Information Form

In this form, the demographic characteristics of an individual that could influence the dependent variables discussed in the research have been aimed to determine. These are gender, the department studied, academic achievement, and the frequency of going where the family live.

### 2.1.3. Scale of Submissive Behavior (SSB)

The scale called Submissive Acts Scale (SAS) Gilbert and Allan (1994) was adapted to Turkish by Şahin and Şahin (1992). It is a self-assessment scale which measures submissive social behaviors connected with depression and which can be applied to teenagers and adults. It includes 16 items that consist of a questions form. The items on the scale are evaluated on Likert type five grading basis, varying from 1 to 5. High points indicate submissive behaviors (Savaşır and Şahin, 1997).

### 2.1.4. Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)

Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) is a scale which is frequently used to make psychopathological evaluation. Adaptation studies of this scale was conducted by Şahin and Durak (1994). BSI is based on the Symptom Determination List of 90 items. On the scale there are 9 sub-scales of a total of 53 items and also supplementary items; evaluation is made in accordance with their total grades and three global indexes. BSI is graded just like a likert type scale which has values of 0,1,2,3, and varying from “none” and “very much”. The total grade determined for each sub-scale is divided by the number of items of the sub-scale, obtaining a point for that dimension. However, three scales that determine global discomfort are graded differently and they are called “discomfort seriousnessindex”, “total of symptoms”, and “symptom discomfort index” (Şahin and Durak, 1994).

## 2.2. Process

The means for data collection used in the research has been applied to university students during class hours in groups. Before application, students were made a statement related to the aim of the research and how the scale items would be replied. For the data analysis, SPSS 11.0 packaged software was used; the techniques of test an done-way variance analysis were benefited from. In the evaluation of the findings, meaning level 0.01 and 0.05 were based on.

## 3. RESULTS

The findings are presented within the scope of the eight aims, which were stated, of the research, explaining the aims of the research.

The first aim of the research is to investigate the relation between the submissive behaviors of university students and psychological symptom grades. Accordingly, correlation analysis has been made and the findings are given in Table 1.

**Table-1.** Results for correlation analysis regarding the submissive behavior and psychological symptom grades

		<b>Submissive Behavior</b>	<b>Psychological Symptom</b>
Submissive Behavior	Correlation p	1	.134(*) .012
Psychological Symptom	Correlation p	.134(*) .012	1

As seen in Table 1, meaningful difference has been discovered between submissive behavior and psychological symptom grades ( $p < .05$ ). As submissiveness of students increases, their psychological symptoms as well rises.

In Table 2 is given whether there is meaningful relation between submissive behaviors of university students and gender, the number of male and female students taking part in the sample, the averages of the grades they got from the scales of their submissive behaviors ( $\bar{x}$ ), their standard deviations (Ss), t and p values.

**Table-2.** The average grades of university students' submissive behaviors (X), their standard deviations (Ss), t and p values

<b>Değişken</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Ss</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
Cinsiyet	Kız	244	38.23	10.37	0.005	0.996
	Erkek	106	8.24	12.325		

$p > .05$

As seen in Table 2, when the grades students got from the scales of submissive behaviors are compared as to gender, it is seen that the average grades of submissive behaviors of male students in the sample ( $\bar{x}=8.24$ ;  $Ss=12.325$ ) are lower than the average grades of female students ( $\bar{x}=38.23$ ;  $Ss=10.37$ ). Whether the difference between these two averages is meaningful has been analyzed by t-test and it is seen that the value is  $t=0.005$ ,  $p > .05$  and the difference is not meaningful. Submissiveness of students does not vary according to gender.

In Table 3 is given the dispersion showing the comparison of tukey test regarding the submissive behavior level of students who study at different departments.

**Table-3.** The dispersion showing the comparison of tukey test regarding the submissive behavior level of university students who study at different departments

<b>(I)Department</b>	<b>(J)Department</b>	<b>Mean Difference (I-J)</b>	<b>Sh</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>95% Confidence interval</b> <b>Lower Limit</b> <b>Upper Limit</b>
Psychological Counseling and Guidance	Biology	4.731	.862	.084	-0.38
	Chemistry	5.111	2.097	.108	9.84
	Pre-School	7.140	2.0222	.004	-0.64
	Special Education	10.881	3.375	.012	10.86
					1.59
					12.69
					1.62
					20.14

As seen in Table 3, because  $F(2.347)=1.261$ ,  $p<.05$  is among the submissive behavior levels of university students who study at different departments, meaningful difference has been discovered. According to Tukey test result which were done to determine between which departments the difference was, it is observed that there is meaningful difference between Psychological Guidance and Counseling ( $X=40.46$ ,  $Ss=12.722$ ) and Pre-School ( $X=33.32$ ,  $Ss=8.158$ ), Psychological Guidance and Counseling and Special Training Departments ( $X=29.58$ ,  $Ss=5.712$ ). Accordingly, students of the Psychological Guidance and Counseling department have more submissiveness. The relation between university students' frequency of going where the family live and their submissive behavior levels has been tested by variance analysis and the findings are given in Table 4.

**Table-4.** Results for the variance analysis regarding the relation between university students' submissive behaviors and the frequency of going where the family live

students whose frequency of going where the family live	Source of variance	KT	Sd	KO	F	p
Once a week	Intergroup	1200.798	6	200.133	1.460	.191
Fortnightly	Intragroup	47005.456	343	137.042		
Once a month	Total	48206.254	349			
Bimonthly						
Three months and more						

\* $p>.05$

As seen in Table 4, there is not meaningful difference  $F=1.460$ ,  $p >.05$  between students' frequency of going where the family live and their submissive behavior levels. It is seen that there is not meaningful difference between students' submissive behaviors and the frequency of going where the family live.

In Table 5, the mean square average of university students' submissive behavior grades and p value according to their academic achievement are given.

**Table-5.** Results for the variance analysis regarding the relation between university students' submissive behaviors and academic achievement

Academic Achievement	Source of variance	KT	Sd	KO	F	p
Low	Intergroup	347.961	2	173.980	1.261	.285
Medium	Intragroup	47858.93	347	137.920		
High	Total	48206.254	349			

\* $p>.05$

As seen in Table 5, no meaningful difference  $F=1.261$ ,  $p>.05$  between university students' academic achievement and their submissive behavior level has been discovered. Any difference of academic achievement is not a factor in university students' submissiveness.

In Table 6, the results for variance analysis done to determine whether the psychological symptoms of university students are different according to department variables are given.

**Table-6.** Results for the variance analysis regarding the psychological symptom grades of university students who study at different departments

Departments	Source of variance	KT	Sd	KO	F	p
Biology	Intergroup	48.794	114	428	.421	1.00
Chemistry	Intragroup	238.866	235	1.016		0
Psychological counseling and Guidance	Total	287.660	349			
Pre-School						
Special education						

\*p>.05

As seen in Table 6, no meaningful difference  $F=.421$ ,  $p>.05$  between university students' studying at different departments and their psychological symptoms has been discovered.

The relation between psychological symptoms and academic achievement has been tested by variance analysis and the findings are given in Table 7.

**Table-7.** Results for the variance analysis regarding the relation between psychological symptoms and academic achievement

Academic achievement	Source of variance	KT	Sd	KO	F	p
Low	Intergroup	25.282	114	.222	1.032	.415
Medium	Intragroup	50.492	235	.215		
High	Total	75.774	349			

\*p>.05

As seen in Table 7, no meaningful difference  $F=1.032$ ,  $p>.05$  among the psychological symptom grades of university students who are at different levels of achievement has been discovered.

The relation between students' frequency of going where the family live and the average of psychological symptom grades has been tested by the test of one-way anova and the results are given in Table 8.

**Table-8.** Results for the test of ANOVA regarding the psychological symptom grades of students whose frequency of going where the family live varies

students whose frequency of going where the family live	Source of variance	KT	Sd	KO	F	p
Once a week	Intergroup	385.926	114	3.385	1.205	.119
Fortnightly	Intragroup	660.362	235	2.810		
Once a month	Total	1046.289	349			
Bimonthly						
Three months and more						

\*p>.05

As seen in Table 8, the value ( $F=1.205$ ,  $p>.05$ ). regarding the difference between university students' psychological symptoms and the grades of going where the family live is not at a meaningful level. No meaningful difference has been found between their psychological symptoms and grade averages of frequency of going where the family live ( $p>.05$ ). Students' psychological symptoms do not vary according to the frequency of going where their family live.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Meaningful relations between submissive behaviors and psychological symptoms have been found. Namely the high level of submissive behavior is the factor in the incidence of psychological symptoms. As a subservient person regards himself to be more inferior to the others, he will feel a constant need for approval and concern of disapproval by people. That the individual feels these emotions can be explained in a way it can cause its psychological symptoms.

One of the four agents in the emergence of a sense of anger is to have to submit to the orders and sanctions, and oppress or use force on an individual to do something he does not want to. This is an important factor in the deterioration of people's mental health (Özmen, 2006). In the studies conducted, significant relationships between submissive behaviors and depression have been detected. In the study which Tekin and Filiz (2008) did with students who study at schools of physical education and sports, it has been observed that students' level of submissive behaviors increases as their level of despair rises.

There is no significant difference between the levels of submissive behaviours of male students and those of female students. Submission does not vary according to gender. In the study the reason for the lack of difference of submission between the genders may be arising from the fact that girls managing to receive university education in our society Express themselves better compared to their fellows, and they are aware of the fact that they have more rights. Moreover, in the studies of (Tuzcuoğlu and Korkmaz, 2001; Kaya *et al.*, 2004; Yıldırım, 2004; Kabasakal, 2007; Dönmez and Demirtaş, 2009; Atli *et al.*, 2010; Koç *et al.*, 2010). submissive behaviors of males were detected higher than females. In the studies of (Deluty, 1983; Chaplin *et al.*, 2005), submission of females was detected higher than males. And in the study (Beştepe *et al.*, 2010) conducted, that women behaved more submissively than men and the difference between them was determined to be statistically significant in a group consisting of 50 married couples who applied to get psychiatric help for the first time.

Submissive behaviors of university students varies according to the department at which they study. The level of submissive behavior of students who study at psychological counselling department was detected to be higher. Each vocational training program has its own dynamics. While some vocational training programs help people indirectly, some of them provide direct assistance to people. Depending on this feature, philosophies which vocational training programs will provide with their candidates vary, too. For example, a student studying in a medical school or at a Psychological Counseling program ought to ensure the symptoms which the person he will help undergoes and query until he is sure. Grown in this manner, submissive behaviors of these students may vary from those of students grown by another orientation. The findings of Koç *et al.* (2010) support the findings of this study. It has been observed that there is no significant



relationship between submissive behaviours of university students and the frequency of going where the family live.

No significant relationship has been detected between submissive behaviors of university students and academic achievement. This finding can be explained that parents and teachers do not tyrannize the students whose school achievement is low and students do not learn submissive behaviors. In the studies of (Dökmen, 1987; Stuart, 1997; Alver, 2003; Bektaş, 2003), the result of psychological symptoms are higher in males than females has been detected.

It has been observed that studying at different departments has no influence on the incidence of psychological manifestations in students. The findings of Alver (2003)'s study support the conclusion of this study. No significant relationships have been found between the frequency of university students' going to the residence of the family and its psychological symptoms. No relationships have been found between the university students' variable of academic achievement and its psychological symptoms. It has been determined through the studies which were conducted that excessive level of anxiety has a negative impact on learning, and the very low level of anxiety complicates learning. And a moderate level of anxiety has a positive impact on learning. In general, high-anxious students fail more than low-anxious students. For students whose academic ability is very high or very low, the level of anxiety does not affect the achievement. Anxiety is an important factor for students with moderate level of academic ability (Morgan, 1981). The anxiety levels of the students in this study may be considered to be moderate.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The sample of this study is limited to students studying at departments of Biology, Chemistry, Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Pre-School Education, and Special Education at Ondokuz Mayıs University. It has been thought that studies to conduct in different regions of Turkey and on a wider group of samples are needed. Students with a high level of submissive behaviors should be provided with the necessary psychological support. Students with psychological symptoms should be provided with the necessary psychological support. For individuals showing submissive behavior, the factors determining this property as from childhood can be studied longwise. Relationships with families of individuals who Show submissive behavior can be examined. In this study, submissive behaviors have been examined in relation to psychological symptoms. Examination of submissive behaviors with various psychological aspects is thought to be useful in explaining its impact on mental health.

More extensive research on the factors that give rise to submissive behaviors in university education can be done. By ensuring co-operation between the University and the Department of Health, Culture, and Sports, leisure and cultural activities of students can be enhanced even more.

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