

The Mediating Role of Cognitive Flexibility between Self Forgiveness and Psychological Well-Being

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Abstract

In this study, self-forgiveness and psychological well-being the role of cognitive and psychological well-being in the relationship was examined. The research was carried out with 215 female and 176 male participants. The ages of the participants vary between the ages of 23-61 and the average age is 37.19. In the research, 'Heartland Forgiveness Scale', 'Cognitive Flexibility Inventory' and The 'Psychological Well-Being Scale' and 'Personal Information Form' were used to determine the demographic information of the participants as data collection tools. This research was designed according to the correlational design, one of the quantitative research models. The easily accessible case sampling method, one of the sampling methods, was used. Research data were collected online. SPSS in the analysis of data obtained with data collection tools 25.0 program and Hayes' PROCESS 4.0 macro used. Before the analysis of the data, the normality test was performed to determine whether the scores obtained from the scales showed a normal distribution. Relationships between variables were revealed by Pearson correlation analysis, and then mediation analyzes were started. It was determined that there were positive significant relationships. Self Forgiveness predicts cognitive flexibility, cognitive flexibility predicts psychological well-being and that self-forgiveness predicts psychological well-being was found to predict well-being. Also, self-forgiveness and the mediating role of cognitive flexibility between psychological well-being has been determined. These findings are in conjunction with similar studies discussed and made recommendations to researchers and practitioners has been found. All this information expands the literature on positive psychology and brings new findings to the literature. Considering the variables of self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility instead of focusing on only one variable in studies focusing on psychological well-being, approaching them from a holistic perspective will contribute to mental health professionals.

Keywords: Self-forgiveness, Cognitive flexibility, Psychological well-being, Forgiveness



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INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness, which is accepted as the basis of human love in many different cultures from past to present, has been accepted as a virtuous behavior (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). According to the most common definition, forgiveness is the anger, anger, etc., that the individual feels towards the other person who has wrongly hurt him. It is explained as giving up the disturbing feelings such as, instead of developing positive feelings towards that person and starting to feel love (Enright, 1996) forgiveness by Thompson et al., (2005); grouped as forgiveness of self, others, and the situation. When the literature is examined, it is seen that the studies mostly focus on forgiving others (Worthington & Langberg, 2012). In the early 1990s, scientific studies on forgiveness began and although these studies mostly focused on forgiving others, the subject of self-forgiveness was neglected for a long time (Hall & Fincham, 2005). For this reason, it is thought that the definitions made to explain the concept of self-forgiveness are limited (Bugay & Demir, 2010).

Hall and Fincham (2008), who presented the first study on self-forgiveness, defined self-forgiveness as "a set of motivational changes that occur through a decrease in motivation to avoid stimuli associated with crime or mistake and retaliate against oneself, and an increase in motivation to be optimistic about oneself". While forgiving another person focuses on forgiving an undesirable behavior; On the other hand, self-forgiveness focuses on forgiving a behavior towards himself or his unwanted, negative or wrong behavior towards another (Hall & Fincham, 2005). Webb et al. (2017), on the other hand, expressed self-forgiveness as a process in which the individual takes responsibility for his mistake as a result of the negative emotions he feels due to his individual mistakes and changes in the emotions directed towards himself over time.

Self-forgiveness takes place in three stages (Hall & Fincham, 2005). The first stage is to realize the wrong behavior of the person towards himself and accept his responsibility. The second stage is the feeling of guilt and remorse depending on this situation. The third stage is the mental change in which the person overcomes these negative feelings and accepts himself instead of the thought of punishing himself. Research results (Bono & McCullough, 2006; Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2007; Halisdemir, 2013; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Thompson et al., 2005) show that there are significant relationships between forgiveness and well-being. While forgiveness increases well-being, unforgiveness is seen as a structure that negatively affects mental health and prevents development (Akhtar, Dolan, & Barlow, 2017). The inability to forgive oneself leads to much more negative consequences than other types of forgiveness (Enright et al., 1996; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Kaleta & Mroz, 2020). Studies on the concept of self-forgiveness (Barber et al., 2005; Brown, 2003; Maltby et al., 2001; Marcinechova et al., 2023; Ross et al., 2004; Thompson et al., 2005; Toussaint et al., 2020) revealed that this concept is closely related to psychological health. Forgiveness increases the well-being of the individual by allowing negative emotions to decrease, positive emotions to increase, to develop interpersonal relationships, individual development and to feel self-sufficient (Akhtar, Dolan, & Barlow, 2017).

According to Seligman (2011) "well-being" is one of the most basic and important concepts of positive psychology. Psychological well-being is highly correlated with life satisfaction (Ryff, 1989). The concept of psychological well-being, which has a multidimensional structure, is explained by Ryff and Keyes (1995) in six dimensions. Psychological well-being includes being able to accept oneself as they are, willingness for personal development, being able to act independently, having positive relationships with other people, having environmental control, and having a meaningful life purpose. Psychological well-being also includes coping with the existential difficulties of life (Keyes, Smotkin & Ryff 2002). Psychological well-being focuses on self-development and psychological well-being approaches state that well-being is related to mental health (Ryff & Singer, 2008). One of the variables that contribute to an individual's psychological well-being is cognitive flexibility (Parvizi, 2021). Studies have found that cognitive flexibility is negatively related to depression and anxiety and positively related to psychological well-being (Cardom, 2017).

Cognitive flexibility is expressed as the capacity to adapt to certain situations, to establish a connection between thoughts and to look at different problem situations from multiple perspectives (Stevens, 2009). In another definition, cognitive flexibility is explained as a cognitive process that

facilitates the capacity to choose the most appropriate solution to a person's problem from among the options or to adapt to the demands of the changing environment (Esterhuysen et al., 2013). Cognitive flexibility requires choosing the most appropriate implementation plan among many elements in attention systems in order to adapt to the environment efficiently (Dajani & Uddin, 2015; Walwanis & Ponto, 2019). Cognitive flexibility is the ability to be mentally flexible. For this reason, it can be thought that it can be a facilitator in the change of one's thoughts (Çakmak Tolan & Kara, 2023). Cognitive flexibility is an important factor for people to develop options and cope better with changes in life (Canas, Fajardo & Salmeron, 2006). Hill (2008) states that people with high cognitive flexibility can use their abilities in a functional way and find alternative solutions to the problems they experience. Cognitive flexibility enables individuals to respond more effectively to stressors in their lives. This process naturally affects psychological well-being positively (Cordom, 2017). Researchers (Demirtaş, 2020; Jen et al., 2019) have determined that cognitive flexibility is positively related to well-being. It is necessary to find alternative solutions to the problems experienced in the forgiveness process and to implement these solutions (Thompson and Shahen, 2001). Forgiveness can be expressed as the ability to be flexible in minimizing the negative aspects of events by using cognitive, affective and behavioral skills together. For this reason, it can be said that forgiveness is related to the concept of flexibility (Kara, 2020). According to Braun (2023), cognitive flexibility and self-forgiveness appear intertwined. In order to forgive oneself, a person usually needs to adapt to and resolve negative thoughts and feelings about itself. Therefore, self-forgiveness can be seen as a coping strategy. The self-forgiveness process involves motivational changes towards the individual (Hall & Fincham, 2005). In this regard, these motivational changes encourage cognitive flexibility, thus contributing to the processes of accepting oneself and showing compassion to oneself instead of avoiding admitting one's guilt and punishing oneself (Braun, 2023). Self-forgiveness also positively affects mental health as it allows a positive change in a person's attitude towards itself (Carpenter et al., 2014; Pelucchi et al., 2017; Toussaint et al., 2017).

Forgiveness affects cognitive flexibility (Küçükler, 2016), cognitive flexibility affects psychological well-being (Cordom, 2017) and it has been determined that self-forgiveness affects psychological well-being (Toussaint et al., 2017). However, no study examining these concepts together has been found in the literature. What adds originality to this research is that there is no study that examines the concepts of self-forgiveness, cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being together. The role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being is unknown. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between adults' self-forgiveness levels and psychological well-being levels. Based on the above theoretical framework, the hypothesis of this study was determined as 'cognitive flexibility has a mediating role in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being'.

METHOD

This research was designed according to the correlational design, one of the quantitative research models. The correlational design is the design used to reveal the relationships between the existing variables and to reveal the relationships between these variables without any intervention (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). The easily accessible case sampling method, one of the sampling methods, was used. The easily accessible case sampling method is the researchers' collection of data from a relatively easily accessible group (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). Data collection tools were delivered to the participants via Google Forms. The research was carried out with 215 female (55.0%) and 176 male (45.0%) participants. The ages of the participants vary between the ages of 23-61 and the average age is 37.19.

Measuring Tools

Heartland Forgiveness Scale: The Heartland Forgiveness Scale developed by Thompson, Snyder, Hoffman, Michael, Rasmussen, & Billings, (2005) was used in the study. The translation and adaptation of the scale, which consists of 18 7-point Likert-type items and three sub-dimensions as "self", "others" and "forgiving the situation", was translated and adapted by Bugay and Demir (2010). The consistency coefficient was .81, .64 for the "forgiveness" sub-dimension, .79 for the "forgiveness of others" sub-dimension, and .76 for the "forgiving situation" sub-dimension. In addition, within the scope of adaptation studies, it was determined that the fit values of the scale's confirmatory factor analysis were

at a sufficient level. In this study, the self-forgiveness sub-dimension of the scale was used. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this research is .75.

Cognitive Flexibility Inventory: The translation and adaptation studies of the scale developed by Dennis and Wal (2010) to determine the cognitive flexibility level of individuals were carried out by Sapmaz and Doğan (2013). The 5-point Likert-type scale, consisting of 20 items, can be evaluated on the total score, as well as on the sub-dimensions of "alternatives" and "control". The alpha internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale was .90, .90 for the "alternatives" sub-dimension and .84 for the "control" sub-dimension. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was determined that the fit values of the scale were at a sufficient level. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this research is .93.

Psychological Well-Being Scale: To measure the psychological well-being of adults, Diener et al. (2010), the short form of this scale was translated and adapted by Telef (2013). As a result of the adaptation studies of the one-dimensional, 7-point Likert-type, 8-item scale, the test-retest reliability was determined as .86 and the alpha internal consistency coefficient as .80. As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, it was determined that the fit values were at a sufficient level. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this research is .83.

Personal Information Form: The Personal Information Form developed by the researchers included questions about gender and age information participating in the study.

Analysis of Data

Data collected via Google Forms was analyzed using SPSS 25.0 and Hayes' PROCESS extension. Relationships between variables were revealed by Pearson correlation analysis, and then mediation analyzes were started. For the purpose of the researcher, whether cognitive flexibility has a mediating role in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being was determined by using Model 4 in Hayes' PROCESS macro. In the intermediary model analyzes shown in Figure 1, 5000 resampling options were used with the bootstrap technique, and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals of the obtained effects were produced. The significance of the mediation effect was accepted as the fact that this confidence interval did not contain zero (Hayes, 2013). Before the analysis of the data, the normality test was performed to determine whether the scores obtained from the scales showed a normal distribution.

The methods and techniques applied for univariate normality can also be used to examine the "multiple normality" assumption, which means ensuring normal distribution for each level of the within-group factor of measurements of a dependent variable or for each subgroup (Tabachnick ve Fidell, 2013). One of the tests used to test the assumption of normality is the Skewness Test (Thode, 2002). Skewness and kurtosis values were determined as -.083 and -.489 for self-forgiveness, .121 and -.434 for cognitive flexibility, -.600 and .507 for psychological well-being. Since the skewness and kurtosis values are in the range of -2 and 2, it can be said that the measurements obtained do not show a significant deviation from the normal distribution (George and Mallery, 2003).

FINDINGS

In this section, research findings are given. First of all, descriptive statistics on the variables of self-forgiveness, cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being are explained and the relationships between the variables are included. Analysis results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Regarding The Variables And The Relationships Between The Variables

N=391	Descriptive statistics				Correlation		
	\bar{X}	Sd	Min	Max	1.	2.	3.
1. Self-forgiveness	29,00	5,55	13,00	42,00			
2. Cognitive flexibility	78,87	10,08	55,00	100,00	.354*		
3. Psychological well being	46,03	5,80	26,00	56,00	.322*	.562*	

*p<.05

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the average of the participants' self-forgiveness scores is 29.00, the average of their cognitive flexibility score is 78.87, and the average of their psychological

well-being score is 46.03. When the correlation table is examined, it is seen that there is between self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility ($r=.354, p<.05$), between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being ($r=.322, p<.05$), between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being ($r=.322, p<.05$). $r=.562, p<.05$ it is seen that there are moderately positive and significant relationships.

In this study, it was tried to determine the mediating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between adults' self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. The mediator model, which includes the effects of the variables, is given in Figure 1.

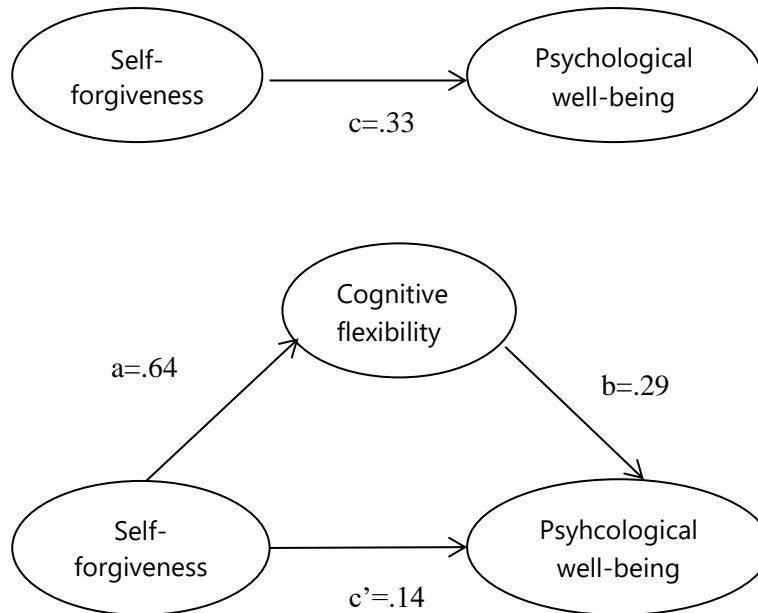


Figure 1. The mediating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being

When Figure 1 was examined, it was found that self-forgiveness predicted the mediating variable cognitive flexibility significantly ($B= .64, SE= .08, 95\% CI [.47, .81], p<.01$). It was found that cognitive flexibility, which is a mediating variable, predicted psychological well-being significantly ($B= .29, SE= .02, 95\% CI [.24, .34], p<.01$). It was found that self-forgiveness positively predicted psychological well-being ($B = .33, SE = .05, 95\% CI [.23, .43], p < .01$). It was found that when self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility were included in the regression equation, the direct effect of self-forgiveness on psychological well-being decreased ($B = .14, SE = .04, 95\% CI [.05, .23], p < .01$). The indirect effect of self-forgiveness through cognitive flexibility was found to be significant ($B = .18, SE = .03, 95\% CI [.13, .25]$). Cognitive flexibility plays a role in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. Self-forgiveness increases cognitive flexibility, and cognitive flexibility increases the level of psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the mediating role of cognitive flexibility in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being was investigated. As a result of this research, there is a positive significant relationship between self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility. It was determined that there was a positive significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being, a positive significant relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being, and that cognitive flexibility had a mediating role in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. In other words, self-forgiveness increases cognitive flexibility and cognitive flexibility increases psychological well-being. First, the bilateral relations of the variables with each other, and then the findings regarding the mediator model were discussed together with the relevant literature.

In this study, it was determined that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility. In other words, individuals with high self-forgiveness levels were also found to have high cognitive flexibility levels. Similar to this finding, studies in the literature (Küçüker, 2016; Thompson & Synder, 2003; Thompson et al., 2005) reveal positive relationships between forgiveness and cognitive flexibility. Katovsich (2007) states that cognitive flexibility plays a role in both individual and interpersonal dimensions in the forgiveness process. An individual who can evaluate negative situations from different perspectives can cope with the contradiction created by these negative situations and, contrary to expectations, can understand the people involved in the events and evaluate them from different perspectives (Kara, 2020). In her study, Küçüker (2016) determined that the greater the individual's tendency to forgive, the higher level of cognitive flexibility.

In this study, it was determined that there was a positive and significant relationship between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being. In other words, individuals with high cognitive flexibility levels were also found to have high levels of psychological well-being. Fu and Chow (2017) determined that people with high cognitive flexibility have a higher level of psychological well-being than people with low cognitive flexibility. The effect of cognitive flexibility on mental health, different researchers (Davis and Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Whitmer & Banich, 2007) and cognitive flexibility was seen as one of the foundations of well-being. High cognitive flexibility was found to be positively associated with high psychological well-being, while low cognitive flexibility was found to be associated with psychopathology (Johnson, 2016). Cognitive flexibility, as the ability to evaluate alternatives and allow alternative thoughts, is expected to be positively related to psychological health. Dennis and Vander-Wal (2010) state that individuals move away from automatic thoughts thanks to cognitive flexibility. Since negative automatic thoughts negatively affect mental health, it can be said that the individual's ability to filter alternative thoughts through the brain contributes to psychological well-being. In this study, it was determined that there is a positive and significant relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. In other words, it has been determined that individuals with high levels of self-forgiveness also have high psychological well-being. Hall and Fincham (2005) state that negative feelings directed towards oneself and the physical and psychological effects caused by these can be changed through self-forgiveness. Similar to the results of this study, it was determined that while life satisfaction and psychological well-being increased in individuals who forgive themselves, depression and fear of death decreased (Krause & Ellison, 2003). Halisdemir (2013) states in his study that self-forgiveness and psychological well-being have positive and meaningful relationships. As forgiveness increases, symptoms of depression, anger, regret and shame disappear (Chung, 2016). For all these reasons, it can be said that the psychological well-being of individuals with an increased level of self-forgiveness will also increase. In this study, it was determined that cognitive flexibility had a mediating role in the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. In other words, as the level of self-forgiveness increases, the level of cognitive flexibility increases, and the level of psychological well-being of people with an increased level of cognitive flexibility increases. When the literature was examined, no study was found in which these three variables were examined together.

Self forgiveness reduces feelings of guilt, self-blame and self-reproach and fosters self-worth and self-compassion (Wohl & McLaughlin, 2014). Forgiveness brings the person's self-esteem and self-worth back to himself (McLernon et al., 2004). When evaluated within this framework, it can be said that people who forgive themselves begin to behave more understanding towards themselves. Webb (2021) states that in the process of self-forgiveness, the individual consists of structures such as accepting himself, taking responsibility for what he has done, reconnecting with people and making a real effort to change. Self-forgiveness allows a positive change in a person's attitude towards itself and positively affects mental health (Carpenter et al., 2014; Pelucchi et al., 2017; Toussaint et al., 2017). At the same time, self-forgiveness has positive and significant relationships with psychological well-being (Hanna, 2012). Katovsich (2007), similar to the results of this research, concluded that forgiveness predicts cognitive flexibility. Maltby and Day (2004) state that the process of self-forgiveness creates changes in cognitions. Therefore, in the process of self-forgiveness, the person has different explanations for the event he has experienced. The forgiveness process is a process of generating alternative solutions and involves creating and applying alternative positive solutions to negative situations before forgiveness (Thompson and Shahen, 2001). Therefore, the forgiveness process requires being open to different thoughts. Flexible

thinkers also use alternative justifications, restructure their mindsets in a positive way, and accept challenging situations (Burton, Pakenham, Brown, 2010). Pierce et al. (2006), cognitive flexibility is an important feature in terms of being able to cope with difficulties in changing and unstable life events and to adapt to changing situations cognitively. It has been observed that individuals with high cognitive flexibility can exhibit appropriate approaches to events, change their thoughts according to changing environmental conditions, and cope better with stressful life events because they can produce many solutions (Dennis & Vander Wal, 2010). All these features serve to increase the psychological well-being of the individual. Naturally, when perspectives can shift, individuals may re-evaluate negative experiences, stressful situations, or negative emotions and be less prone to harm (Cheng et al., 2014). People with high levels of cognitive flexibility cope with internal and external stressors more easily, which facilitates communication in interpersonal relationships. The physical, emotional and psychological well-being of people with good interpersonal skills is also positively affected (Flora and Segrin, 2000; Koesten et al., 2009). Conversely, low cognitive flexibility has been associated with rumination, depression, and anxiety (Dennis and Vander Wal, 2010). Researchers (Canas et al., 2003; Johnson, 2016) state that people with high cognitive flexibility have high psychological well-being. Parvizi (2019) determined that cognitive flexibility is positively related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being. In the study conducted by Cardom (2017), a high positive relationship was found between psychological well-being and cognitive flexibility. Brewster, Moradi, DeBlaere, and Velez, (2013) also determined that there are positive significant relationships between cognitive flexibility and psychological well-being.

Self-forgiveness brings about some changes as a cognitive, affective and behavioral process. All these changes contribute to the cognitive flexibility process. Being open to different thoughts and being able to evaluate alternative thoughts positively affects a person's psychological well-being, as it enables a broad perspective rather than being stuck in a fixed thought.

Suggestions

This research also has some limitations. In this study, only the mediating effect of cognitive flexibility on the relationship between research variables was examined. However, there may be other variables that can mediate the relationship between self-forgiveness and psychological well-being. A cross-sectional research design was used in this study. New studies can be done using longitudinal research design or experimental designs. This research is limited to the adult age group. This research is limited to the self-forgiveness dimension of forgiveness.

Despite all these limitations, this research makes important contributions to the literature. In this study, it was determined that self-forgiveness increases cognitive flexibility, and cognitive flexibility increases psychological well-being. All this information expands the literature on positive psychology and brings new findings to the literature. When evaluated in terms of practice, self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility can be added to programs aimed at increasing psychological well-being, and these programs can be supported by activities that will increase self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility. Considering the variables of self-forgiveness and cognitive flexibility instead of focusing on only one variable in studies focusing on psychological well-being, approaching them from a holistic perspective will contribute to mental health professionals.

Kendini Affetme ve Psikolojik İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkide Bilişsel Esnekliğin Aracı Rolü

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Özet:

Bu çalışmada, kendini affetme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkisinde bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolü incelenmiştir. Araştırma 215 kadın ve 176 erkek katılımcı olmak üzere toplamda 391 kişi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların yaşları 23-61 arasında değişmekte olup, yaş ortalaması 37,19'dur. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak, 'Heartland Affetme Ölçeği', 'Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri' ve 'Psikolojik İyi Oluş Ölçeği' kullanılmış ayrıca katılımcıların demografik bilgilerini belirlemek amacıyla 'Kişisel Bilgi Formu' kullanılmıştır. Bu araştırma, nicel araştırma modellerinden biri olan ilişkisel desene göre tasarlanmıştır. Katılımcılar belirlenirken örnekleme yöntemlerinden kolay ulaşılabılır durum örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama araçları ile elde edilen verilerin analizinde SPSS 25.0 programı ve Hayes'in PROCESS 4.0 makrosu kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizine geçmeden önce ölçeklerden elde edilen puanların normal dağılım gösterip göstermediğini belirlemek için normallik testi yapılmıştır. Pearson korelasyon analizi ile değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler ortaya çıkarılmış ve ardından aracılık analizlerine geçilmiştir. Analizler sonucunda, kendini affetme ile bilişsel esneklik arasında, bilişsel esneklik ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasında ve kendini affetme ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasında pozitif yönde anlamlı ilişkilerin olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Kendini affetmenin bilişsel esnekliği yordadığı, bilişsel esnekliğin psikolojik iyi oluşu yordadığı ve kendini affetmenin psikolojik iyi oluşu yordadığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca kendini affetme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasında bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolü olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular benzer çalışmalarla birlikte tartışılmış, araştırmacılara ve uygulayıcılara önerilerde bulunulmuştur. Tüm bu bulgular pozitif psikolojiyle ilgili literatürü genişletmekte ve literatüre yeni bulgular kazandırmaktadır. Psikolojik iyi oluşa odaklanan çalışmalarda araştırmacıların sadece bir değişkene odaklanmak yerine kendini affetme ve bilişsel esneklik değişkenlerini de dikkate alarak bütünsel bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşımları ruh sağlığı uzmanlarına katkı sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kendini affetme, Bilişsel esneklik, Psikolojik iyi oluş, Affetme



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Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Geçmişten günümüze birçok farklı kültürde temelinde insan sevgisinin yer aldığı kabul edilen affetme davranışı erdemli bir davranış olarak kabul edilmiştir (Enright ve Fitzgibbons, 2000). En yaygın tanıma göre affetme, bireyin kendisini haksız olarak inciten diğer kişiye karşı hissettiği kızgınlık, öfke vb. gibi rahatsızlık verici duygulardan vazgeçerek, bunun yerine o kişiye karşı olumlu duygular geliştirmesi, sevgi duymaya başlaması olarak açıklanmaktadır (Enright, 1996). Kendini affetme ile ilgili ilk çalışmayı ortaya koyan Hall and Fincham (2008) kendini affetmeyi "suç veya hatayla ilişkili uyarıcılardan kaçınmaya ve kendine karşı misilleme yapmaya yönelik motivasyonun azalması ve kendine karşı iyimser davranmaya yönelik motivasyonun artması yoluyla oluşan bir takım motivasyon değişiklikleri" olarak tanımlamıştır. Başkasını affetmede kişi kendisine yapılan ve istenmeyen bir davranışı affetmeye odaklanırken; kendini affetmede ise kendisine yönelik yaptığı bir davranışı veya kendisinin bir başkasına karşı yaptığı istenmeyen, olumsuz veya hatalı davranışını affetmeye odaklanmaktadır (Hall ve Fincham, 2005). Webb ve diğerleri (2017) ise kendini affetmeyi, bireyin bireysel hatalarından dolayı hissettiği olumsuz duyguların sonucunda hatasının sorumluluğunu aldığı ve kendisine yönelttiği duygularda değişikliğin zamanla gerçekleştiği bir süreç olarak ifade etmiştir.

Kendini affetme üç aşamada gerçekleşmektedir (Hall ve Fincham, 2005). İlk aşama kişinin kendisine karşı yaptığı hatalı davranışın farkına varması ve sorumluluğunu kabul etmesidir. İkinci aşama bu duruma bağlı olarak suçluluk ve pişmanlık duygularını hissetmesidir. Üçüncü aşama ise, kişinin bu olumsuz duygularının üstesinden gelmesi, kendini cezalandırma düşüncesi yerine kendini kabul etmesi yönündeki düşünsel değişimdir. Araştırma sonuçları (Bono & McCullough, 2006; Halisdemir, 2013; Lawler-Row ve Piferi, 2006; Thompson vd., 2005) affetme ile iyi oluş arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğunu göstermektedir. Affetme iyi oluşu artırırken, affetmeme ise ruh sağlığını olumsuz yönde etkileyen ve gelişimi engelleyen bir yapı olarak görülmektedir (Akhtar, Dolan ve Barlow, 2017). Kendini affedememe durumu ise diğer affetme türlerine göre çok daha olumsuz sonuçlara yol açmaktadır (Enright vd., 1996; Hall ve Fincham, 2005). Kendini affetme kavramı ile ilgili yapılan çalışmalarda (Barber vd., 2005; Brown, 2003; Maltby vd., 2001; Ross vd., 2004; Thompson vd., 2005) bu kavramın psikolojik sağlık ile yakından ilişkili olduğu yönünde sonuçlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Affetme negatif duyguların azalmasına, pozitif duyguların artmasına, kişilerarası ilişkiler geliştirmeye, bireysel gelişime ve kendini yeterli hissetmeye imkan tanıyarak bireyin iyi oluşunu arttırmaktadır (Akhtar, Dolan ve Barlow, 2017). Affetme süreci bir alternatif çözüm üretme süreci olup, affetme öncesi olumsuz durumlara alternatif olumlu çözümler oluşturma ve uygulamayı içermektedir (Thompson ve Shahen, 2001). Bu nedenle affetme süreci farklı düşüncelere açık olmayı gerektirmektedir. Aynı zamanda kendi affetme psikolojik iyi oluşla olumlu yönde anlamlı ilişkilere sahiptir (Hanna, 2012). Yüksek düzeydeki bilişsel esneklik ise psikolojik iyi oluş ile ilişkilendirilmektedir (Johnson 2016). Ancak bu iki kavram arasındaki ilişkide bilişsel esneklik kavramının nasıl bir rolü olduğu bilinmemektedir. Bu nedenle bu araştırmanın amacı yetişkinlerin kendini affetme düzeyi ile psikolojik iyi oluş düzeyleri arasındaki ilişkide bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolünü incelemektir.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma nicel araştırma modellerinden korelasyonel desene göre tasarlanmıştır. Korelasyonel desen, mevcutta var olan değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri ortaya çıkarmak ve herhangi bir müdahalede bulunmadan bu değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri ortaya çıkarmak için kullanılan desendir (Büyüköztürk vd., 2016). Örneklem yöntemlerinden kolay ulaşılabilir durum örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Kolay ulaşılabilir durum örnekleme yöntemi araştırmacıların nispeten kolay ulaşılabilir bir gruptan verileri toplamasıdır (Büyüköztürk vd., 2016). Araştırmada veri toplama araçları olarak 'Heartland Affetme Ölçeği', 'Bilişsel Esneklik Envanteri' ve 'Psikolojik İyi Oluş Ölçeği' ve katılımcıların demografik bilgilerini belirlemek için 'Kişisel Bilgi Formu' kullanılmıştır. Veri toplama araçları Google Forms aracılığıyla katılımcılara ulaştırılmıştır. Araştırma 215 kadın (%55.0) ve 176 erkek (%45.0) katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların yaşları 23-61 yaş aralığında değişmekte olup yaş ortalaması 37,19'dur.

Google Forms aracılığıyla toplanan veriler SPSS 25.0 ve Hayes'in PROCESS uzantısı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Pearson korelasyon analiziyle değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler ortaya koyulmuş ardından aracılık analizlerine geçilmiştir. Araştırmacının amacı doğrultusunda kendini affetme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkide bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolünün olup olmadığı Hayes'in PROCESS makrosunda Model 4 kullanılarak tespit edilmiştir. Bootstrap tekniği ile 5000 yeniden örneklem seçeneği kullanılmış ve elde edilen etkilerin %95 sapma düzeltmeli güven aralıkları (bias-corrected confidence intervals) üretilmiştir.

Aracılık etkisinin anlamlılığı bu güven aralığının sıfır içermemesi olarak kabul edilmiştir (Hayes, 2013). Verilerin analizine geçmeden önce ölçeklerden elde edilen puanların normal dağılım gösterip göstermediğini belirlemek amacıyla normallik testi yapılmıştır.

Sonuçlar: Analizler sonucunda kendini affetme ile bilişsel esneklik arasında, bilişsel esneklik ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasında ve kendini affetme ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasında pozitif yönde anlamlı ilişkiler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Kendini affetmenin bilişsel esnekliği yordadığı, bilişsel esnekliğin psikolojik iyi oluşu yordadığı ve kendini affetmenin psikolojik iyi oluşu yordadığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca kendini affetme ve psikolojik iyi oluş arasında bilişsel esnekliğin aracı rolü olduğu belirlenmiştir. Hall ve Fincham (2005) bireyin kendisine yönelttiği olumsuz duyguların ve bunların neden olduğu fiziksel ve psikolojik etkilerin kendini affetme yoluyla değişebileceğini belirtmektedir. Bu araştırma sonucuna benzer şekilde kendini affeden kişilerde yaşamdan doyum alma ve psikolojik iyi olma hali artarken, depresyon ve ölüm korkusunun azaldığı belirlenmiştir (Krause ve Ellison, 2003). Halisdemir (2013) çalışmasında kendini affetme ve psikolojik iyi oluşun olumlu yönde ve anlamlı ilişkilere sahip olduğunu belirtmektedir. Affetme arttıkça depresyon belirtileri, öfke, pişmanlık ve utanç duyguları kaybolmaktadır (Chung, 2016). Tüm bu nedenlerle kendini affetme düzeyi artan bireylerin psikolojik iyi oluşlarının da artacağı söylenebilir. Fu ve Chow (2017) bilişsel esneklik düzeyi yüksek kişilerin bilişsel esneklik düzeyi düşük kişilere göre daha yüksek düzeyde psikolojik iyi oluşa sahip olduklarını belirlemiştir. Bilişsel esnekliğin ruh sağlığı olan etkisi farklı araştırmacılar Davis ve Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000; Whitmer ve Banich, 2007) tarafından araştırılmış ve bilişsel esneklik iyi oluşun temellerinden biri olarak görülmüştür. Bilişsel esnekliğin yüksek olması psikolojik iyi oluşun da yüksek olmasıyla olumlu yönde ilişkili bulunurken, düşük seviyedeki bilişsel esneklik psikopatolojiyle ilişkili bulunmuştur (Johnson, 2016). Kendini affetme suçluluk duygusunu, kendini suçlamayı ve kendine içerlemeyi azaltıp öz değer ve öz şefkati beslemektedir (Wohl ve McLaughlin, 2014). Affetme kişinin öz saygısını ve öz değerini kendisine tekrardan kazandırmaktadır (McLernon vd., 2004). Bu çerçevede değerlendirildiğinde kendini affeden kişilerin kendilerine karşı daha anlayışlı davranmaya başladıkları söylenebilir. Webb (2021) kendini affetme sürecinde bireyin kendini kabul etme, yaptıklarının sorumluluğunu alma, insanlarla yeniden iletişime geçme ve değişmek için gerçekten çaba sarf etme gibi yapılardan oluştuğunu ifade etmektedir. Maltby ve Day (2004) kendini affetme sürecinin bilişlerde değişiklik meydana getirdiğini belirtmektedir. Dolayısıyla kendini affetme sürecinde kişi yaşadığı olaya yönelik farklı açıklamalarda bulunmaktadır. Esnek düşünen insanlar da alternatif gerekçeler kullanırlar, zihin yapılarını olumlu bir şekilde yeniden yapılandırır ve zorlayıcı durumları kabul ederler (Burton, Pakenham ve Brown, 2010). Pierce vd. (2006)'e göre bilişsel esneklik kişinin değişken ve kararlı olmayan yaşam olaylarında zorluklarla baş edebilmesi ve değişen durumlara bilişsel olarak uyum sağlayabilmesi açısından önemli bir özelliktir. Bilişsel esnekliği yüksek olan bireylerin olaylara uygun yaklaşımlar sergileyebildikleri, değişen çevre koşullarına göre düşüncelerini değiştirebildikleri ve stresli yaşam olaylarıyla daha iyi bir şekilde başa çıkabildikleri çünkü çok sayıda çözüm üretebildikleri görülmüştür (Dennis ve Vander Wal, 2010). Tüm bu özellikler bireyin psikolojik iyi oluşunu artırmaya hizmet etmektedir. Araştırmacılar (Canas, Quesada, Antolí ve Fajardo, 2003) bilişsel esneklik düzeyi yüksek olan kişilerin psikolojik iyi oluşlarının yüksek olduğunu belirtmektedir.

Öneriler: Bu çalışmada kendini affetmenin bilişsel esnekliği artırdığı, bilişsel esnekliğinde psikolojik iyi oluşu artırdığı tespit edilmiştir. Tüm bu bilgiler pozitif psikolojiyle ilgili literatürü genişletmekte ve literatüre yeni bulgular kazandırmaktadır. Uygulama açısından değerlendirildiğinde psikolojik iyi oluşu artırmaya yönelik programlara kendini affetme ve bilişsel esneklik konuları eklenebilir ayrıca bu programlar kendini affetmeyi ve bilişsel esnekliği artıracak etkinliklerle desteklenebilir. Psikolojik iyi oluşa odaklanan çalışmalarda sadece bir değişkene odaklanmak yerine kendini affetme ve bilişsel esneklik değişkenlerini de dikkate alarak bütünsel bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşımları ruh sağlığı uzmanlarına katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu araştırmanın bazı sınırlılıkları da bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, araştırma değişkenleri arasındaki ilişkide sadece bilişsel esnekliğin aracı etkisi incelenmiştir. Ancak kendini affetme ile psikolojik iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkide aracı olabilecek başka değişkenler olabilir. Bu çalışmada kesitsel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Boylamsal araştırma deseni ya da deneysel desenler kullanılarak yeni çalışmalar yapılabilir. Veri toplama süreci online olarak gerçekleştiğinden internet erişimi olmayan kişilere ulaşılamamıştır. Bu araştırma bu nedenle verilerin genellenebilirliği açısından sınırlılığa sahiptir.

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