

6th World Congress on

Addiction Disorder & Addiction Therapy

August 29-31, 2017 | Prague, Czech Republic

Associations between separation anxiety and emotion dysregulation in a substance use disorder population

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Substance use and addiction are responsible for numerous social and psychological problems worldwide. Children with separation anxiety disorder demonstrate greater intensity and frequency of negative emotional responses. These children had less ability in evaluating negative emotional situations and more reliance in emotion regulation strategies, in turn increasing the risk of functional impairment. Individuals with difficulty in emotion regulation can engage in addictive behaviors in order to avoid or regulate negative feelings and emotions. The aim of this study is to evaluate separation anxiety and emotional dysregulation and their interaction in patients with substance use disorder. 65 male patients, who were referred to Substance Abuse Research and Treatment Center, with substance use disorders were included. Sociodemographic and substance use characteristics were collected. They also fulfilled drug use disorder identification test, separation anxiety symptoms inventory and difficulties of emotion regulation scale. The mean age was 27.6 ± 7.6 . 73.8% ($n=48$) of the patients were single, and 20% ($n=13$) were married. The onset of regular substance use was at the age of 20.6 ± 5.5 . The most frequently used substance was cannabis ($n=36$, 55.4%), followed by synthetic cannabinoids ($n=13$, 20%). Of all the participants, 11 (16.9%) had early parental loss and 7 (10.8%) had a history of suicidal attempt. There was a moderate positive correlation between severity of substance use and difficulties in emotion regulation ($p < 0.0001$, $r = 0.437$). Separation anxiety was moderately correlated with difficulties in emotion regulation ($p < 0.0001$, $r = 0.424$). Additionally, separation anxiety was correlated with all sub-scales of difficulties in emotion regulation (goals, strategies, non-acceptance, impulse, clarity, awareness). Regarding the results, addiction related treatment programs should contain more specific emotion regulation and separation anxiety components.

Biography

Betül Akyel has been a Psychologist for five years. She completed her Master's Degree Program on Substance Addiction and has been a PhD Student on Substance Addiction Program at Ege University Institute on Drug Abuse, Toxicology and Pharmaceutical Science, Turkey. Her research interests are Addictive Disorders, Neurocognitive Assessment and Cognitive Behavioral Therapies.

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