

Examining the relationship between object relations, relationship attachment and separation anxiety in adults with depressive tendencies

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ABSTRACT

Aims: This study aims to examine the relationship between object relations and relationship dependence and separation anxiety in depressive-prone adults.

Methods: The sample of the study consisted of 404 people between the ages of 18-60. Out of 404 people, 113 people with moderate to severe depressive tendencies were included in the study. Data were collected from the participants through Beck Depression Inventory, Bell Object Relationships and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI), Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependency Scale (SFIDS), Adult Separation Anxiety Questionnaire and Socio-demographic Information Form prepared by the researcher.

Results: 113 out of 404 individuals showed moderate to severe depressive tendencies. A statistically positive and significant relationship was found between adult separation anxiety and Object Relations and BORTTI (alienation, insecure attachment, egocentrism, distortion of reality, uncertainty of perceptions, delusion hallucination) sub-dimensions. A positive and significant relationship was found between Relationship Dependency and Object Relationships and BORTTI (insecure attachment, egocentrism, social inadequacy) sub-dimensions.

Conclusion: A positive and significant relationship was found between object relations sub-dimensions and adult separation anxiety in depressive adults. A positive and significant relationship was found between object relations and relationship dependence in depressive adults.

Keywords: Depression, object relations, relationship attachment, separation anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Depression has been around since ancient times and is now recognized as a common mental disorder. It is defined as a psychiatric disorder that affects individuals in many different psychological areas such as depressed mood, anhedonia, feeling worthless, and physiological areas such as loss of appetite, sleep problems, fatigue, and lack of concentration.¹

According to Freud, one of the important antecedents of depression is the experience of loss in the early stages of life. This experience of loss can mean the death of an important person or the deprivation of needs during the developmental stages.²

Object Relations Theory within the psychodynamic school is a theory developed by other psychoanalysts to transfer new models of the self due to the inadequacy of the psychoanalysis developed by Sigmund Freud to

explain his personality theory. The theorists focus on the relationship of individuals with their environment and people. The theorists argue that impulses are not the main motive; the main motive is that individuals are in search of relationships and that the individual's personality and attitudes are shaped as a result of interactions with the outside world.³

Human beings grow and develop in relationships from the moment they are born. The relationship with the mother, which is the first relationship established, is expressed as the determinant of the relationships to be formed in the following years. Object relations theorists examine this relationship between mother and baby and the characteristics of this relationship.⁴ According to the Object Relations Theory, the individual is in search of relationships and the main human motivation is

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explained as the need to be in contact with the object.⁴ While the need for a caregiver is greater in the early stages of life, the need for individualization increases in later periods.⁵ As a result of the failure to complete the healthy separation and individuation process in the child, the intense anxiety and clinging that occurs when the child separates and moves away from the parent causes separation anxiety.⁶ Separation anxiety is defined as feeling excessive anxiety in case of separation from parents or caregivers in a period that is not appropriate for the developmental period.⁷ Separation anxiety may have been defined in childhood and continued into adulthood or may have first started in adulthood.⁸ Problems in the individuation process are explained in relation to recurrent self-harming behaviors and depressive disorders.^{9,10}

Relationship addiction was first used to describe the spouses of individuals with alcohol addiction.¹¹ Later, it was interpreted and expanded as a state of being overly interested in an object or person.¹² People with relationship addiction have a focus on others by ignoring their own needs due to excessive fear of abandonment and feelings of guilt directed towards themselves in negative situations.¹³ From a phenomenological point of view, relationship addiction is analogous to mood disorders. While attachment to the object of love manifests itself in euphoria such as hypomania, the individual who is separated from the object may experience a depressive state.¹⁴ Object Relations theory is a theory that explains the understanding of the relationships that individuals establish with other people throughout their lives.¹⁵ According to Object Relations, children internalize the individuals and relationships they relate to and create images. These internalized images shape their relationships in adulthood.¹⁶ In this context, it is thought that it is important to examine the emergence of relationship addiction within the framework of object relations theory.

This study mainly aims to examine the relationship between object relations, relationship dependence and separation anxiety in adults with depressive tendencies. Object Relations Theory deals with the relationship with the primary caregiver. The relationship with the caregiver is important for the quality of the relationship with other people in the future. The goal of this study is to draw attention to object relations in people with depressive tendencies and to raise awareness about relationship addiction and separation anxiety, which are important problems today. In line with these goals, it is thought that there is a significant relationship between object relations, relationship dependence and separation anxiety with the study conducted on depressive prone people and it is planned to examine these relationships.

One of the hypotheses of the study is that there is a statistically significant relationship between object relations and relationship addiction. The other hypothesis of the study is that there is a statistically significant relationship between object relations and separation anxiety.

Although the variables of object relations, relationship dependency and separation anxiety have been the subject of different studies, the sample did not consist of depressive individuals and these three variables were not found together. There are many studies showings that the relationship with the caregiver is important and determinant for the relationships with other people in the future, but there are not many studies that examine separation anxiety and relationship dependency from the object relations theory framework. Since the sample of the study includes individuals with depressive tendencies and there is no other study that addresses the three variables together, it is thought to be important and will contribute to the literature.

METHODS

Permission was received for this study from İstanbul Nişantaşı University Ethics Committee (Date: 04.05.2023, Decision No: 2023/18). All procedures were carried out in accordance with the ethical rules and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. The research is a descriptive study in the relational screening model, which aims to examine the relationship between object relations, relationship dependence and separation anxiety of male and female participants with depressive tendencies in the 18-60 age group on a voluntary basis. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique widely used in social science research, particularly in situations where the researcher seeks to obtain quick and easy access to participants. This method involves selecting individuals who are readily available and accessible to the researcher, often based on their proximity or willingness to participate.¹⁷

The sample consists of adults between the ages of 18 and 60 with depressive tendencies using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). The sample number is 404 people. It consists of 287 women, 116 men and 2 other participants. As exclusion criteria, those under the age of 18, over the age of 60, and those with a diagnosis of psychiatric disorders other than depression were excluded from the study. The study included 113 individuals with moderate and severe depressive tendencies with the Beck Depression Inventory. The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) is a widely used 21-item self-report questionnaire for assessing the severity of depression in both normal and psychiatric populations.¹⁸ It has been validated and found to be a sound tool for detecting depression in

patients with medical conditions.¹⁹ The BDI has been used in various clinical settings, including in psychiatric outpatients with various psychiatric disorders²⁰ and in the assessment of depressive symptoms in clinically depressed patients.²¹ Additionally, it has been used in the assessment and treatment of depressed older adults in primary care.²² BDI can be used for the measurement of depressive tendencies. Depressive tendencies encompass a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns that are indicative of a predisposition towards experiencing depressive symptoms. These tendencies may manifest as cognitive responses to success and failure, cognitive reactivity, and rumination, which are linked to depression.^{23,24}

The Demographic Information Form was used to determine the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants, the Beck Depression Inventory was used to recruit depressive adults, the Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory was used to assess object relations, the Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependency Scale was used to assess relationship dependency, and the Adult Separation Anxiety Scale was used to assess separation anxiety.

Socio-Demographic Information Form

In the study, a Socio-Demographic Information Form consisting of 11 items prepared by the researcher and the thesis advisor, including demographic characteristics of the participants, was used. The form included questions about gender, age, marital status, education level, ongoing romantic relationship or marriage, relationship with mother, relationship with father, caregiver during childhood, whether they were separated from their parents for a long time during childhood, diagnosed psychiatric disorder and whether they had lifelong self-harming behavior.

Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)

Beck Depression Inventory is a 21-item scale developed by Beck and colleagues in 1961 to measure the severity of depression in individuals. It is a 4-point Likert-type scale. The highest score that can be obtained from the scale is 63, with each option receiving a score between 0 and 3. In a study conducted by Nesrin Hisli on the validity and reliability of the Beck Depression Inventory for university students, the correlation coefficient was found to be 0.74.²⁵

Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI)

Bell Object Relations and Reality Testing Inventory (BORRTI) Developed by Morris D. Bell in 1995, the reliability and validity study of the scale in Türkiye was conducted by Sait Uluç, Zeynep Tüzün, Manolya

Haselden, and Serap Piri Erbaş in 2015. The scale consists of 90 items and is answered as true-false. It consists of two sub-dimensions: Object Relations and Reality Appraisal. The current ego functions of individuals and the fact that the characteristics of their established relationships are shaped according to early object relations are evaluated in the scale.²⁶ The internal consistency Cronbach's alpha value of the object relations sub-dimension is between .70 and .80. The internal consistency Cronbach's alpha value of the Reality Assessment sub-dimension is between .54 and .77.²⁷

Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependence Scale (SFRDS)

Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependency Scale (SFRDS) developed by Fischer, Spann and Crawford.²⁸ In Türkiye was conducted by Fuat Tanhan and Gamze Mukba in 2014. It is a 6-point Likert-type scale consisting of 16 questions.²⁹ The maximum score is 96 and the minimum score is 16. In the study, the reliability value was calculated by calculating the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and the internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.65 and a reliable result was obtained.³⁰

Adult Separation Anxiety Scale

Adult Separation Anxiety Scale was developed by Manicavasagar, Silove, Wagner, and Drobny³¹ and the validity and reliability study in Türkiye was conducted by Meliha Diriöz. It is a 4-point Likert-type scale consisting of 27 items.³² Each item is answered as "never", "rarely", "often" and "very often". An increase in the scores obtained from the scale means an increase in the level of adult separation anxiety. The reliability and validity of the test were determined as a result of internal consistency, item analysis and test-retest consistency. In the study, the reliability value was calculated by calculating the Cronbach Alpha coefficient and a reliable result was obtained by determining the internal consistency coefficient as 0.93.³²

Statistical Analysis

SPSS 26.0 software program was used to analyze the data. The severity of depressive symptoms was determined by the Beck Depression Inventory Pearson correlation was applied to examine the relationship between adult separation anxiety, relationship attachment, object relations and reality testing levels in individuals with moderate and severe depression. The significance level was taken at 0.05 and 0.001 levels.

RESULTS

Preliminary analyses regarding the participants' sociodemographic variables and measurement tools are given below (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of sociodemographic variables

Sociodemographic Variables Groups	F	%
Gender		
Male	28	24.8
Female	85	75.2
Age		
18-28	55	48.7
29-39	19	16.8
40-50	18	15.9
51-60	21	18.6
Marital status		
Single	44	38.9
Married	48	42.5
In a relationship	21	18.6
Education level		
Primary school-secondary school	5	4.4
High school	14	12.4
Undergraduate	59	52.2
Master's degree	35	31.0
Romantic relationship		
Yes	72	63.7
No	41	36.3
Relationship with mother		
Very good	42	37.2
Good	46	40.7
Poor	2	1.8
Fair	23	20.4
Relationship with the father		
Very good	29	25.7
Good.	40	35.4
Poor	10	8.8
Fair	34	30.1
Who provided care during childhood		
My mom	28	24.8
Mom and dad	74	65.5
My father	2	1.8
Other	9	8.0
Childhood separation from parents		
Yes	29	25.7
No	84	74.3
Diagnosed psychiatric disorder		
Yes	7	6.2
No	106	93.8
Self-harming behavior		
Yes	16	14.2
No	97	85.8
Depression Level (n=404)		
Minimal	218	53.9
Mild	73	18.0
Moderate	89	22.0
Severe	24	5.9
Total	113	100.0

When the frequency distributions of sociodemographic variables are analyzed in **Table 1**, 24.8% of the 113 participants with moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms were male and 75.2% were female. When the age groups

are analyzed, 18-28 years old 48.7%, 29-39 years old 16.8%, 40-50 years old 15.9% and 51-60 years old 18.6%. According to marital status, 38.9% were single, 42.5% were married and 18.6% were in a relationship. The rate of those with primary education was 4.4%, high school was 12.4%, associate or bachelor's degree was 52.2% and master's degree was 31.0%. The rate of participants who are currently in a romantic relationship is 63.7%. Those who had a very good relationship with their mother were 37.2%, 40.7% had a good relationship, 20.4% had a moderate relationship and 1.8% had a poor relationship. Those whose relationship with the father was very good were 25.7%, good was 35.4%, fair was 30.1% and poor was 8.8%. Those who were cared for by their mother during childhood were 24.8%, those who were cared for by their parents were 65.5%, those who were cared for by their father were 1.8% and those who answered "other" were 8.0%. The rate of participants who were separated from their parents for a long period of time (not less than 1 month) during childhood was 25.7%. The rate of participants who stated that they had a diagnosed psychiatric disorder was 6.2%. The proportion of participants who had self-harm behavior throughout their lives was 14.2%. When the depression levels of all participants were analyzed, minimal depression was 59.3%, mild depression was 18.0%, moderate depression was 22.0% and severe depression was 5.9%.

Descriptive statistics for the mean values of the measurement tools used in the study were given above. For the normality test, skewness and kurtosis values of the mean values were examined (**Table 2**). In line with the values found to be within the range of ± 1.5 recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell, parametric tests were found appropriate for this study.³³ However, the kurtosis values of the BORRTI distortion of reality and BORRTI delusional hallucination sub-dimensions were found to be 3.24 and 2.73. As stated by Kline, kurtosis values up to 10 were considered acceptable.³⁴

As seen in **Table 3**, according to the findings of Pearson correlation to examine the relationship between adult separation anxiety, relationship dependency and object relations scores of depressive-prone individuals, adult separation anxiety and BORRTI alienation ($r=.27$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI insecure attachment ($r=.28$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI egocentrism ($r=.25$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI distortion of reality ($r=.30$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI uncertainty of perceptions ($r=.28$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI delusion hallucination ($r=.29$; $p<0.01$) and BORRTI object relations ($r=.28$; $p<0.01$) dimensions (**Table 3**).

A positive and significant relationship was found between SFBIQ scores and BORRTI insecure attachment ($r=.29$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI egocentrism ($r=.21$; $p<0.01$), BORRTI social inadequacy ($r=.20$; $p<0.01$) and BORRTI object relations ($r=.25$; $p<0.01$) (**Table 3**).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the mean values of the measurement tools used in the study

Variables	N	XX	Ss	Skewness	Kurtosis
BDI total	113	23.78	6.626	1.266	1.019
ASAS	113	38.52	17.036	.226	-.514
SFRDS	113	34.41	16.454	-.415	-.398
BORRTI reality testing	113	11.27	6.948	1.387	1.997
BORRTI alienation	113	8.74	3.807	.160	-.931
BORRTI insecure attachment	113	7.10	2.906	.275	-.445
BORRTI egocentrism	113	5.11	2.674	.461	-.371
BORRTI social incompetence	113	2.16	1.771	.589	-.840
BORRTI distortion of reality	113	5.57	4.476	1.604	3.241
BORRTI the ambiguity of perceptions	113	6.44	2.525	.213	-.368
BORRTI delusion hallucination	113	2.79	3.231	1.764	2.738
BORRTI object relations	113	15.38	6.070	.305	-.395

ASAS=Adult Separation Anxiety Scale, SFRDS=Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependency Scale, BORRTI=Bell Object Relationships and Reality Testing Inventory

DISCUSSION

As explained in the introduction, the aim of this study is to answer the question “Is there a relationship between object relations, relationship dependency and separation anxiety in depressive prone adults?”. In line with the purpose of the study, the findings obtained in this section are interpreted and discussed within the framework of the literature.

As a result of Pearson correlation findings in depressive-prone individuals, a positive and significant relationship was found between adult separation anxiety and BORRTI object relations and BORTTI alienation, insecure attachment, egocentrism, distortion of reality, uncertainty of perceptions, and delusion hallucination sub-dimensions.

In study, the positive and significant relationship between Adult Separation Anxiety and the alienation sub-dimension of BORTTI object relationships is consistent with the literature. When the sub-dimensions of object relations are examined, it is stated that people with high

Table 3. Examining the relationship between participants' adult separation anxiety, relationship dependence and object relations scores

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ASAS	r	1									
	p										
	N	113									
SFRDS	r	-.155	1								
	p	.100									
	N	113	113								
BORRTI alienation	r	.267**	.159	1							
	p	.004	.092								
	N	113	113	113							
BORRTI insecure attachment	r	.278**	.297**	.731**	1						
	p	.003	.001	.000							
	N	113	113	113	113						
BORRTI egocentrism	r	.246**	.214*	.636**	.643**	1					
	p	.009	.023	.000	.000						
	N	113	113	113	113	113					
BORRTI social incompetence	r	.101	.204*	.811**	.571**	.404**	1				
	p	.285	.030	.000	.000	.000					
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113				
BORRTI distortion of reality	r	.304**	.016	.550**	.573**	.631**	.414**	1			
	p	.001	.862	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113			
BORRTI The ambiguity of perceptions	r	.289**	.118	.519**	.559**	.515**	.388**	.625**	1		
	p	.002	.214	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113		
BORRTI delusion	r	.289**	-.114	.417**	.443**	.485**	.315**	.903**	.606**	1	
	p	.002	.228	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000		
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	
BORRTI object relations	r	.284**	.251**	.901**	.878**	.823**	.729**	.666**	.598**	.524**	1
	p	.002	.007	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113

ASAS=Adult Separation Anxiety Scale, SFRDS=Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependency Scale, BORRTI=Bell Object Relationships and Reality Testing Inventory **p<0.01*p<0.05, Pearson Correlation Analysis

scores in the alienation sub-dimension have a lack of trust in their relationships with others. It is stated that there may be difficulties in realizing emotional intimacy, establishing lasting relationships and the satisfaction of these relationships. It is said that there may be situations such as artificiality in social relationships and inability to feel belonging.²⁶ In this context, it is thought that these characteristics seen in individuals affect the separation anxiety they experience in their relationships. As the alienation sub-dimension scores increase, an increase in adult separation anxiety is observed. As a result of the study conducted by Durmaz,³⁵ object relations and the level of adult separation anxiety were found to be directly proportional. As a result of the examination of the relationship between object relations and separation anxiety by Günhan,³⁶ a significant and positive relationship was found in three sub-dimensions (alienation, egocentrism, insecure attachment) except for the "social incompetence" sub-dimension.

In study, the positive and significant relationship between Adult Separation Anxiety and insecure attachment sub-dimension of BORTTI Object Relationships is consistent with the literature. Individuals with high insecure attachment subscale scores emphasize the need for closeness and sensitivity to rejection in their relationships. The fact that these individuals desperately long for the feeling of closeness in their relationships with significant others indicates how important relationships are for them. Their tolerance for separation, loss and loneliness is very low and they are constantly on guard against the possibility that others will abandon them. Feelings such as constant anxiety, intense worry, guilt and jealousy may accompany relationships.²⁶ The diagnostic criteria for adult separation anxiety (DSM-5) such as intense anxiety about losing the people they are attached to, being alone, being reluctant to be alone and having severe fear, having nightmares about separation overlap with the characteristics of individuals with high scores in the insecure attachment sub-dimension. If the parent is insecure and rejecting, the child feels unlovable and worthless. Accordingly, the child acts dependent on the parent and seeks to make sure that the parent is present. As a result of this search, separation anxiety occurs. As the level of insecure attachment increases, anxiety disorder develops.³⁷ When the level of secure attachment decreases, the level of separation anxiety increases.³⁸ It is stated that the loss of the mother, who is the first protector, and the safe space and feelings of attachment she has created are effective in the formation of anxiety and its continuation in adulthood.³⁹

In study, as the scores obtained from the BORRTI sub-dimensions of uncertainty of perceptions, delusion hallucination and distortion of reality increase, adult

separation anxiety scores increase. It is stated that people with high scores in the distortion of reality sub-dimension may have paranoid beliefs such as being punished and being conspired against. High scores from the uncertainty of perceptions sub-dimension indicate that they may have doubts in interpreting events as a result of the mistakes they have made in their relationships with people.²⁶ Looking at the literature, it is stated that adult separation anxiety causes loss of functionality and increases disability when combined with additional diagnoses.^{40,41} As a result of an epidemiologic study, it is stated that 28% of people with adult separation anxiety have significant impairment in personal relationships and 31.5% in social relationships.⁴⁰

In the study, a positive and significant relationship was found between Spann-Fischer Relationship Dependence Scale scores and BORRTI insecure attachment, social inadequacy, egocentrism sub-dimensions and BORRTI object relations dimension.

The finding of a positive and significant relationship between the insecure attachment sub-dimension and relationship dependence scores in the study is consistent with the literature. As a result of the study conducted by Cengiz⁴² with university students, it was found that the relationship addiction scores of participants with insecure attachment were higher than those of participants with secure attachment. As a result of the study conducted by Havaçeliği,⁴³ relationship addiction scores of participants with secure attachment style among relationship addiction and parental attachment styles were found to be lower. The fact that people with secure attachment style have positive perceptions of themselves and others, think that they are worthy of being loved, and that the people they relate to are reliable, supportive and well-intentioned; it shows that they can both establish relationships and manage to be independent.⁴⁴ Harrison and Grey⁴⁵ state that the biggest fear of individuals with relationship addiction is the fear of the end of their relationships.

A significant positive relationship was found between social inadequacy and relationship addiction. It is stated that individuals with high scores on the social inadequacy sub-dimension are timid and tense in their relationships and have difficulty in interacting with the opposite sex and forming friendships. These individuals tend to perceive themselves as socially inadequate and their relationships with other people as overwhelming and unpredictable.²⁶ In individuals with relationship addiction, characteristics such as being too responsible or irresponsible, fearing loss of control, not accepting compliments, not being able to say no, having feelings of worthlessness, making efforts to please others, and anger are expressed.⁴⁶ In this context, it is thought that people

with social inadequacy and relationship addiction have difficulty in establishing healthy relationships, that they are related to lack of self-confidence, and that a cycle may occur in which both affect each other.

When the literature is examined, Gürek⁴⁷ found a significant positive relationship between object relations and relationship addiction. There are also studies in the literature examining the relationship between different variables and relationship addiction. Mukba,⁴⁸ examined relationship addiction in terms of some variables and found a significant difference between relationship addiction and intra-family relationships. As a result of the findings, it was concluded that there was an increase in the levels of relationship dependency in line with the perception of family relationships from "very good" to "bad". Berlin and Dodge⁴⁹ stated that people who were emotionally neglected and abused as children may perceive emotional threat, trauma and relationship addiction in their later relationships. They stated that children who did not receive enough love from their parents and whose needs were not met may have "excessive caregiving" and "controlling tendency" attitudes observed in relationship addiction when they reach adulthood.

As a result of the findings, the effect of object relations on adult separation anxiety and relationship addiction was supported by our study, and the results were found to be compatible with the literature. It is thought that it will contribute to the literature since the studies on relationship addiction and separation anxiety are limited.

Limitations

This research is limited to people with depressive tendencies between the ages of 18-60 in Istanbul. The relevant data in the study are limited to the values measured by the scales. It is thought that collecting data from a larger sample will yield more reliable results. For this reason, more participants can be reached in new studies. The study covers the age range of 18-60 years. In future studies, groups under the age of 18 can also be included in the study.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to examine whether there is a relationship between object relations, relationship dependence and separation anxiety in depressive individuals between the ages of 18-60. According to the results of this study, a positive and significant relationship was found between object relations sub-dimensions and adult separation anxiety in adults with depressive tendencies. A positive and significant relationship was found between object relations and relationship dependence in depressive adults. The results

of the study are consistent with literature, and it is thought that the findings obtained will contribute to similar studies to be conducted in the future and to the literature.

ETHICAL DECLARATIONS

Ethics Committee Approval

The study was carried out with the permission of İstanbul Nişantaşı University Ethics Committee (Date: 04.05.2023, Decision No: 2023/18).

Informed Consent

All participants signed free of charge and informed consent form.

Referee Evaluation Process

Externally peer reviewed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Financial Disclosure

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Author Contributions

All the authors declare that they have all participated in the design, execution, and analysis of the paper, and that they have approved the final version.

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