THE EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT AND GENDER ON DEATH– ANXIETY AMONG TURKISH YOUNG ADULTS: A TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT AND GENDER ON DEATH–ANXIETY AMONG TURKISH YOUNG ADULTS: A TERROR MANAGEMENT THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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The aim of this study was to examine whether and how being committed to a close romantic relationship and gender would affect Turkish young adults' death-anxiety. Based on Terror Management Theory (TMT), it was hypothesized that participants who are exposed to separation thoughts from a relationship partner would experience more death–anxiety than participants who are not exposed to separation thoughts from their relationship partners. In this respect, it was also hypothesized that high commitment to the relationship partner would work as a buffer against death-anxiety and those who have higher commitment to their relationship partners would, therefore, experience less death anxiety than those who have lower commitment to their relationship partners. It was also aimed to investigate whether the effects of commitment to

close romantic relationships differ between genders. The effect of neuroticism was also controlled for all participants, so that any difference that is observed between groups would not be due to the effects of neuroticism. One-hundred sixty one participants (age range = 19-38) from Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir, Turkey were included in this study. Results suggested no significant main effects of experimental manipulation (i.e. experimental group, control group), commitment level (i.e. high, low) or gender (i.e. female, male) on death-anxiety. A significant interaction effect between commitment level and experimental manipulation was found. According to that, in the experimental group (those who were asked to imagine a separation from their relationship partners) participants with high commitment level were found to experience less death–anxiety than participants with low commitment level. Also, it was revealed that those who have low commitment to their relationship partners experience more death- anxiety when they were asked to imagine a separation from their relationship partners than when they were not asked to imagine such separation. The same increment in death anxiety was not observed in participants who have high commitment to their relationship partners. The strengths, limitations, and implications of the study were discussed in light of related literature.

Keywords: Close-relationships, commitment, gender, death-anxiety, young adults

ÖZ

İLİŞKİYE BAĞLILIĞIN VE CİNSİYETİN TÜRKİYE'DEKİ GENÇ YETİŞKİNLERDE ÖLÜM KAYGISINA ETKİLERİ: DEHŞET YÖNETİMİ TEORİSİ PERSPEKTİFİ

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, yakın romantik ilişkiye bağlılığın ve cinsiyetin, Türkiye'deki genç yetişkinlerin ölüm kaygılarına olan etkilerini araştırmaktı. Dehşet Yönetimi Teorisi'nden yola çıkılarak, çeşitli hipotezler öne sürülmüştür. Bunlardan ilki, partnerlerinden ayrıldıkları yönünde hayal kurmaları istenen katılımcıların, bu tarz bir durumu hayal etmeleri istenmeyen katılımcılara göre daha fazla ölüm kaygısı yaşayacakları yönündedir. Diğer bir hipoteze göre, ilişkilerine olan bağlılık, kişileri ölüm kaygısından koruyucu bir rol oynamaktadır ve yüksek bağlılık gösteren kişiler düşük bağlılık gösteren kişilere oranla daha az ölüm kaygısı yaşamaktadırlar. Çalışmanın bir diğer amacı da, romantik yakın ilişkiye bağlılıkta cinsiyetin bir fark yaratıp

yaratmadığının araştırılmasıydı. Nevrotizmin etkileri de tüm katılımcılar için kontrol edildi, böylece bulunan herhangi bir anlamlı sonuç nevrotizmden değil, yapılan deneysel manipülasyondan kaynaklı olacaktı. Çalışmada Ankara, İstanbul ve İzmir'den, yaşları 19-38 arasında değişen toplam 161 katılımcı yer aldı. Sonuçlar, deneysel manipülasyonun (deney grubu, kontrol grubu), bağlılık (yüksek, düşük) veya cinsiyetin (kadın, erkek) ölüm kaygısı üzerinde tek başlarına anlamlı temel etkileri olmadığını gösterdi. Bağlılık ve katılımcı grubunun etkileşim etkisi ise anlamlı bulunmuştur. Buna göre, deney grubunda (partnerlerinden ayrıldıklarını hayal etmeleri istenen grup) partnerlerine yüksek bağlılık gösteren kişilerin düşük bağlılık gösteren kişilere göre daha az ölüm kaygısı yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Ayrıca, deney grubundaki düşük bağlılık gösteren kişilerin, kontrol grubundakilere oranla daha fazla ölüm kaygısı yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Çalışmanın bulguları, ilgili literatür çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmanın güçlü/zayıf yönlerine ve gelecek çalışmalar için önerilere de tartışma bölümünde yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yakın ilişkiler, bağlılık, cinsiyet, ölüm kaygısı, genç yetişkinler

To My Family

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INTRODUCTION

Every human being lives his or her life with the knowledge that they will eventually die some day. Despite of its inevitability, death is at the same time totally an obscure territory. This characteristic of death –being a common, inevitable aspect of life- causes ordinary people to have lots of questions on their minds about it; such as, how or when they are going to die, and what will happen to them when they die. The commonality and mystery of the issue has also made it a subject of investigation for researchers. But for social scientists, questions about death are different in nature: Instead of examining "the meaning of death" or "why people die", measurable aspects of death have been investigated in order to make it suitable for scientific purposes and to be able to have more valid and accurate results. One part of these investigations focuses on the *anxiety* that people experience in the face of their own death. Scientific studies about death anxiety deal with questions like; "*What is death anxiety?*" "*Who are more likely to experience death anxiety?"* or "*Why do people express their anxieties differently?"*. There are so many questions like these and of course, there are many different perspectives to investigate their answers.

One of the major contributions has been made by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. According to Freud, death - anxiety was not the "real problem" all the time, but instead, expressing a death - anxiety has been a tool for covering the real problem that the person experiences at a deeper level of his/her conscious (cited in Kastenbaum, 2000). Ernest Becker (1973), on the other hand, viewed death- anxiety as the core of all known anxieties and phobias that people experience throughout their lives. According to him, it is the awareness of their own mortalities that makes people anxious. The consequences of this awareness are enormous, and they reveal themselves in almost every aspect of life. Becker claimed that the "terror" of death is a very powerful emotional experience that forces people to escape from it (cited in Kastenbaum, 2000). Death - anxiety is so powerful that**,** according to Becker, it is the underlying reason of why people experience various fears like the fear of darkness, being alone, etc. (cited in Kastenbaum, 2003). He even claimed that "civilization" is due to the attempts of people to keep their death - anxiety under control. He suggested that in order to be able to live "normally" in everyday life, to deal with the terror, people manage to -at least temporarily- use some kind of a denial of death. By saying that, however, he did not suggest that we should deny death altogether. Instead, for the maturation and healthy growth one must have some sense of death-threat, which helps protecting us from life-threatening situations.

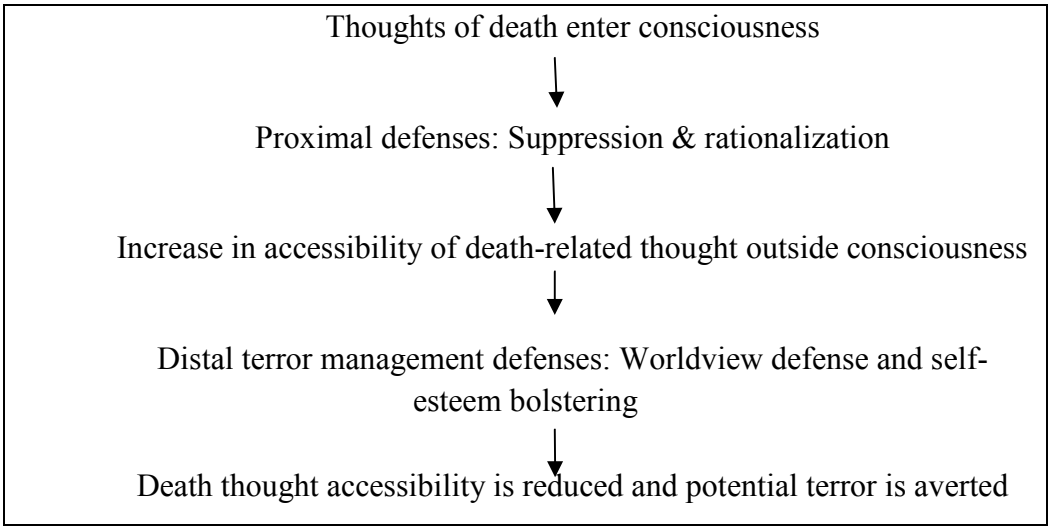
Whether death- anxiety is the basic anxiety of all human beings or not has been argued by many other scholars besides Freud and Becker and it

seems to be very difficult to accept one idea and neglect the others fully. Nevertheless, researchers have been continuously suggesting different theories based on their observations and conducting several experiments in order to validate their ideas. One of the most known and investigated theories examining "death- anxiety" is the Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). Founders of TMT have been influenced by the original work of Ernest Becker on death concerns of people. The theory simply suggests that humans have the instinct for self-preservation but they also have the cognitive ability to see the fact that all living creatures, including themselves have to die. According to TMT, then, this capacity of understanding their inevitable death and giving meaning to this realization bring disadvantages along with them. Because of the awareness of their mortalities, people experience a great deal of terror and anxiety (Mikulincer & Florian, 2007). When considering this knowledge, it is not difficult to realize that this emotional state is too much to handle for an ordinary human being. Due to thinking continuously about death and feeling anxious all the time would no doubtfully interrupt accomplishing even the simplest necessities of everyday life and more generally it would hinder living "normally". According to Becker (1973), because of the inevitable nature of death, mortality is an issue to be dealt with psychologically, not directly. According to him, having some entities providing the ground for the person to feel himself/herself important is crucial and useful in dealing with this psychological problem of death.

At this point, the solution proposed by TMT (see Figure1) for people is to use some "symbolic defense mechanisms" to help them keep death-related thoughts away from consciousness and take their anxiety away (Pyszczynski et al., 1999). One of the defenses that can be used by people for this purpose is "proximal defenses". According to the theory, people use proximal defenses when they consciously think about death at a particular moment and try to draw these death-related thoughts away from their consciousness (i.e. denial of their mortality or thinking that one has a long life ahead before death comes to take him or her). The other defense, "distal defenses", is used when the person is not thinking about death consciously but the access to those thoughts is possible in preconscious mind. One of the distal defenses is *cultural worldview*. Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, and Schimel (2004, pp. 436) explained the concept of cultural worldview as "humanly constructed shared symbolic conceptions of reality that give meaning, order, and permanence to existence; provide a set of standards for what is valuable; and promise some form of either literal or symbolic immortality to those who believe in the cultural worldview and live up to its standards of value". According to them, *literal immortality* is solved by religious aspects of cultural worldviews that promise some sort of afterlife (e.g. heaven, reincarnation) for those who believe in the religious teachings of their culture. *Symbolic immortality* is achieved by feeling connected to larger, immortal entities (e.g. families, nations, ideologies) than their own beings which help them feel significant, useful, and meaningful. The second distal defense is *self-esteem*, which helps buffering death anxiety simply by making the person feel

special and immortal. Becker suggested that worldview of a given society provides a sense of coherence and stability (cited in Kastenbaum, 2000). Consequently, a single person has the comforting feeling of the idea that if he/she is liked and approved by the society, then he/she is protected from death-anxiety by both his/her self-esteem and the belonging to a powerful, stable entity. It has been argued that cultural worldviews and self-esteem are tied to each other in terms of protecting individuals from death-related anxiety. Simply believing in cultural worldviews does not guarantee immortality; the person must also perceive himself/herself as a valuable and significant participant in his/her culture so as to experience relief from anxiety (Pyszynski, Solomon & Greenberg, 2003). Similarly, according to Pyszczynski et al. (2004) these two distal defenses (cultural worldview and self-esteem) are not strictly separate entities**.** TMT posits that self-esteem can only be obtained by believing that the worldview of one's culture is valid and by living his/her life according to the standards of that worldview. For each culture the worldview is different and consequently, the way that self-esteem develops may also change across cultures. However, the claim is that despite of the differences in attaining self-esteem, the need for self-esteem is universal.

Figure1. Defensive processes activated by conscious and unconscious death-related thought



When considering Becker's suggestion (cited in Kastenbaum, 2000) that the mortality is an issue to be dealt with psychologically, not directly, it can be suggested that it is generally the "distal defenses" that help people in dealing with the awareness of their mortalities by providing them a sense of stability, safety, and self-significance.

TMT studies have revealed two hypotheses that help understanding the process of managing the terror of death by ordinary people. The first one, *the mortality salience hypothesis,* suggests that "if a psychological mechanism buffers death related thoughts, death reminders will increase the reliance on that mechanism" (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997; Mikulincer, Florian, Birnbaum, & Malishkevich, 2002). The second one, *anxiety buffer hypothesis***,** on the other hand, suggests that if a psychological mechanism protects people from death anxiety, then when that mechanism is strengthened, the person should

experience less anxiety or anxiety-related threats, and when that mechanism is weakened, the person should experience more anxiety or anxiety-related behavior in the face of threats (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997).

Terror management theory has been testing Becker's theory with empirical assessments and trying to demonstrate that people use their cultural worldviews and also strive to attain cultural standards of value to cope with their mortalities (Hart & Goldenberg, 2007). In these studies, both the *mortality salience hypothesis* and the *anxiety buffer hypothesis* have been tested separately by researchers by creating experimental manipulations for the participants. Mortality salience studies are simply based on subtly reminding people of their own death (*mortality salience*) and then measuring their reactions. The research generally starts with priming participants to their own death by asking them to answer two open-ended questions about how they would feel in the face of their death and what they think would happen to them after they die. This priming could also be achieved by fear of death scales, subliminal death primes, exposure to a film of fatal accidents, or proximity to a funeral home (Mikulincer & Florian, 2007). After the priming, researchers use a delay or a distraction task (i.e. completing a neutral word puzzle or a leisure time activities questionnaire) so that thoughts of death are no longer in focal awareness of the participants during the data collection. (Hart & Goldenberg, 2007).

There are many studies that provided strong support to the assumptions of terror management theory – about the role of cultural worldviews and self-esteem as protectors of people against anxiety (terror) of death. These studies mainly involve examining the validity of two hypotheses of TMT- mortality salience and anxiety buffer hypotheses. Majority of the research has focused on the effects of mortality salience on reactions of individuals to various aspects of life. Inducing mortality thoughts in people by using different tools (open-ended questions, fear of death scales, subliminal death primes, exposure to a film of fatal accidents, or proximity to a funeral home) has been the basis of the experimental manipulation (Mikulincer & Florian, 2007) for researchers. After several experiments and satisfactory results, now it can be suggested that these kinds of manipulations (mortality salience) cause people to be concerned about their own death and they consequently cause some behavioral adjustments. For instance, it was found that after mortality salience, people evaluate in-group members and those who praise one's cultural worldview more positively; whereas they evaluate out-group members and those who threaten one's cultural worldview more negatively (Greenberg et al., 1990). In the same study it was also found that under mortality salience condition people feel less anxious among others, who believe in the same religion. Moreover, mortality salience has made people more reluctant to violate cultural standards (Greenberg, Simon, Harmon-Jones, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1995).

The finding that priming death-related thoughts (mortality salience) lead people to react more favorably to other persons who adhere to their cultural values and more negatively to others who do not (Mikulincer & Florian, 2007) is a proof for the assumption that people use cultural worldviews as a defense against death anxiety. When they are faced with the idea of death, people want to rely on a world which is stable, predictable, and thus, safe. People who share the same worldview with the person would help developing the feeling that the person's values, ideas, and beliefs are accurate, that there are other people thinking like him/her. This realization is comforting and it declines the anxiety experienced by the individual. Therefore, people would naturally react favorably to those who make them feel relaxed and less anxious in the face of life-threatening situations (death-reminders). Also, related to cultural worldview, people tend to judge social transgressions more negatively when they are under mortality salience condition (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997), because they need the world to be safe and organized so as not to experience anxiety. Therefore, when there is threat to their beliefs about social norms, and consequently to their cultural worldviews, they experience more death - anxiety. There are also many studies examining the comforting role of religious beliefs on death-anxiety, relying on the premise that accomplishing the demands of a given religion helps people keep on living after death. For instance, in the study of Hui, Bond, and Ng (2006-2007), it was found that people with lower levels of religiosity experience more death anxiety than the more religious people under mortality salience, due to the belief in a good afterlife. Besides having a spiritual meaning and protecting

role for the afterlife, religion is also considered as a kind of a group membership and it works as a part of the shared cultural worldview.

While these and many other supportive results have been introduced to the literature, it has also been examined whether these reactions of people are unique to death-reminders or not. It has been investigated whether other kinds of negative thoughts could also cause people to feel extreme anxiety and therefore rely on their cultural worldviews and self-esteems in order to get rid of their anxieties. Greenberg et al. (1995) proposed that other anxiety-inducing negative conditions such as intense physical pain or the thought of public speaking do not heighten adherence to one's cultural worldview as mortality salience does. Similarly, providing people with strong scientific evidence supporting life after death diminished the effects of mortality salience on self-esteem striving and worldview defense; providing support for the idea that these defenses are activated to buffer anxiety specifically about death (Dechesne et al., 2003).

According to Florian and Mikulincer (1997) each person has his or her own unique death-related concerns, and when environmental transactions threaten these concerns (e.g., priming thoughts about interpersonal or interpersonal aspects of death), he/she would activate distal defenses in order to manage the threat. This conclusion makes it necessary to think that for each person there may be different mechanisms that protect them from death-related anxieties. Religion studies that were mentioned before support this perspective. Those who have faith in some kind of a religion are able to

protect themselves from the terror of death with the help of the idea that they will continue living after death. However, those who have no such belief would not be able to comfort themselves by relying on religious premises. They, therefore, would need other mechanisms to rely on when confronted with their mortalities.

Studies have been conducted to search for such different mechanisms that people use in order to relieve themselves under the threat of death. Besides religion, there are many other variables affecting whether or how much a person would experience death-anxiety, and also, the means by which they try to reduce this anxiety. For instance, it was revealed that the experience of recent stressful life events increases the possibility of a person to experience death-anxiety (Florian, Mikulincer, & Green, 1993; Mikulincer & Florian, 2007). Similarly, it was shown that death anxiety can temporarily reach to a higher level for people who were exposed to traumatic situations (Kastenbaum, 2003). Attachment style is another variable affecting the attitudes one would have in death-related situations (Mikulincer, Florian, & Tolmacz, 1990). Accordingly, people with "attachment anxiety" experience more intense concerns about the consequences of death to one's social identity; and those with "attachment avoidance" experience more intense transcendental fears of the unknown nature of the hereafter. Another discriminative variable affecting death-anxiety is the personality traits of individuals. In the study of Florian et al. (1993) middle-aged men completed the MMPI and the FPD scale and it was found that specifically the MMPI subscales of paranoia, psychasthenia, and schizophrenia were associated with

higher scores on all the three dimensions (intrapersonal, interpersonal, or transpersonal consequences of death) of the fear of personal death. This, according to Florian et al., (1993), would suggest that having MMPI results that can be interpreted as maladjustment tend to have a non-specific contribution to death-related concerns. Similarly, it was found that people with mental and emotional disorders tend to have higher levels of death anxiety than the general population (Kastenbaum, 2003).

Examples can be expanded as new variables are continued to be tested in terms of their effects on death-anxiety. So far, it has been shown that people have many different characteristics and tools that help them protect themselves from possible negative emotional experiences when confronting with death-related situations or thoughts. Besides all mentioned characteristics (i.e. gender, personality, attachment style etc.), people do also use other means to protect themselves from death-related anxiety. According to TMT researchers, "close relationships" are one of those variables that work as a buffer against death-anxiety. Before examining the literature on the subject, it is necessary and helpful to define the term "close relationships". According to Reis, Collins, and Berscheid (2000), in order to call a relationship a "close relationship", the partners should mutually influence each other's behaviors for a long time and they should both have idiosyncratic mental representation for their relationship. By looking at this definition, a person may have many different close relationships with various people throughout his/her life. Relationships with best friends, family members, and relatives are all different types of close relationships and they affect many areas of an individual's life,

from academic success to psychological health. When examining the nature and mechanism of close relationships from different perspectives, it can basically be summarized that forming and maintaining close relationships are important aspects of life for human beings. More specifically, some psychologists, such as Maslow (1970), considered forming close relationships as a basic motivation for humans. This means that every human being would form close relationships as a need for living. From an evolutionary perspective, close relationships contribute to survival of people's genes by enhancing the survival of their offspring (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). According to that, leaving a part (the offspring) in the world through genes gives people a sense of immortality by denying the threat of their own death. Also, there is an idea that significant others may make the individual feel good or bad about himself/ herself, which affect his/her self-esteem. That is to say, individuals' self-esteem increases if they feel accepted and valued by those with whom they are in close relationship (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995), which is, as explained before, necessary in death-anxiety reduction according to TMT.

When it is about coping with the anxiety of death, the focus of TMT studies is more on the "romantic" close relationships. Those studies have focused on combining the role of close relationships on individuals' lives with their effects in the face of death-related situations and they have tried to find out how people in close relationships would experience those situations. In the study of Florian, Mikulincer, and Hirshberger (2002) it was found that close relationships provide a symbolic shield against the awareness of one's own

mortality. Also, it was reported that when people are reminded of their own death, they tend to be strongly motivated to form close relationships even if they know that they would have to compromise in mate selection and could find a less than ideal partner (Hirschberger, Florian, & Mikulincer, 2002). Also, in another study, Hirschberger, Florian, and Mikulincer (2003) reported that reminders of death led participants to express greater desire for intimate interaction with their romantic partner even after receiving harsh criticism from that partner. According to these researchers this result is an indication for the idea that striving for close relationships represents a defense against death-anxiety separate from the need for self-esteem because interaction with a critical partner would be damaging to self-esteem.

There are other studies examining the effects of close relationships on death-related anxiety from a different perspective. In those studies, participants in the experimental group were asked to imagine either *being separated from their current romantic partners* (Mikulincer et al., 2002) or the *problems experienced with their current relationship partners* (Florian et al., 2002). After these manipulations, participants' death-thought accessibilities have been measured and it was found that in either condition death-thought accessibilities tend to be significantly higher than the control group-those who did not imagine separation from or problems with the current relationship partners. The aim of those studies was to show that if close relationships do protect people from death- anxiety, then problems or termination of that relationship would cause increments in their death-anxiety. This was the assumption of the "anxiety buffer" hypothesis of terror

management theory, which claimed that taking the mechanism that buffers against death-anxiety from the individual would cause the individual to experience death-anxiety. The results of these studies supported the anxiety buffer hypothesis. That is, they managed to show that having problems with the close relationship partner (even hypothetically, by making the person imagine these problems) make death-related thoughts more accessible.

In the literature about close relationships, one of the most frequently encountered aspects of close relationships is "commitment". Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) defined *commitment* as "the psychological construct that directly influences everyday behavior in relationships, including decisions to persist" (p. 359) and the *commitment level* of an individual was defined as "the intent to persist in a relationship, including long-term orientation toward the involvement as well as feelings of psychological attachment" (p. 360). The Investment Model, proposed by Rusbult (1980) examined how some relationships last longer than others, what factors play a role in this process and it was concluded that commitment has a crucial part in stabilizing relationships. That is, if individuals are highly committed to their relationships then it is more likely that they will persist in their relationships. The Investment Model briefly suggests that commitment mediates the relationship between three components of relationship (i.e. satisfaction level, investment and quality of alternatives) and persistence in a relationship. It suggests that as satisfaction of relationship increases (along with increment in investment and decrement of the quality of alternatives) this leads to increment in commitment level, which all together make individual to persist in a relationship. With the

Investment Model, Rusbult introduced the importance of commitment to the close relationship field. Other studies also showed that commitment has various positive contributions to relationships. Basically, "relationship commitment" is associated with healthy functioning in ongoing relationships (Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999). Moreover, in a study conducted with married couples (Impett, Beals, & Peplau, 2001-2002) it was demonstrated that both partners' commitment to their marriage predicts long-term relationship stability. Furthermore, it was found that more committed couple members experience higher levels of satisfaction in their relationships than the less committed ones (Arriaga, Slaughterbeck, , & Hmurovic, 2007). Terror Management Theory (TMT) studies have also focused on whether commitment to relationship is also a factor decreasing death-anxiety. In a study conducted according to the mortality salience hypothesis of TMT (Florian et al., 2002) it was revealed that people tend to report higher commitment to their romantic partner in the mortality salience condition than the participants in the control condition. Moreover, Mikulincer et al. (2002) suggested that people may protect themselves against the terror of their own death by trusting and relying on the commitment, love, and caring of a close relationship partner. These findings show that people tend to seek the comforting effects of their close relationships in the face of terror of death.

TMT literature that was mentioned above concluded that having a close relationship is a good means of reducing death-related anxiety. And that people tend to become more committed to their relationships when they are faced with their own mortality. However, they did not emphasize how much

committed the participants were. The main concern of the current study was to examine whether it is possible to say that the anxiety-reducing effect of close romantic relationships is the same for every individual in a romantic with any commitment level. Since commitment was found to be one of the most predictive components of the relationship maintenance, then the level of an individual's commitment to the current relationship should also be important in examining the effects of close relationships on individuals' lives. Therefore, in this study close relationships' effects on death-anxiety were investigated in terms of participants' commitment levels to their current romantic relationships.

Besides commitment level, there are other characteristics of individuals that affect how they experience their close relationships. For instance, their personality traits have a role in their behaviors to their partners, which eventually affect the nature of their relationships. According to various relationship studies, neuroticism is one of the most influential personality traits affecting individuals' relationships. For instance, it was suggested by Kurdek (1997) that since people who are high in neuroticism set themselves unrealistic standards for every aspect of their lives, they eventually have problems in maintaining a relationship. He stated that these standards lead the individual to have difficulty in committing to relationships because of the dissatisfaction with life in general. Similarly, Florian et al. (2002) have found that some decrement in commitment to relationship partner is seen due to neuroticism. These findings supporting the negative effects of neuroticism on a relationship's well-being makes neuroticism a variable that is worth taking

into consideration while examining how or whether commitment to a relationship influences individuals' death-related anxieties. As explained by Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, Greenberg, McCoy, and Solomon (1999), terror management view on neuroticism suggests that neuroticism, resulting from inadequate terror management, makes people experience problems with their concerns about mortality. As a result, being high in neuroticism may lead to difficulty in maintaining faith in a cultural worldview and sustaining a sense of value within the context of that worldview, which are the core defenses a person should have in order to buffer death - anxiety according to terror management theory. Therefore, the effects of neuroticism will nevertheless be controlled to make sure that any observed difference between groups (experimental vs. control group) is not caused by neuroticism but the experimental manipulations.

So far, the information about death-anxiety, things affecting the level of death-anxiety and characteristics of people that may have an effect on their death-anxiety have been given. In addition to them, effects of gender should also be taken into consideration. There are various studies that have been investigating the possible differences between genders in terms of death-anxiety. Their results mainly show that there are differences between men and women in terms of both *experiencing* and *expressing* death-anxiety. For instance, Yang and Chen (2009) found that women tend to express negative emotions toward death, whereas, men tend to accept the inevitability of death and confront death-related issues when they arise. There are other studies suggesting that women's death anxiety is more than men's (Abdel-Khalek,

2005; Kastenbaum, 2003; Kausar & Akram, 2002; Madnawat & Kachhawa, 2007) and that women express more fear in some domains of death (i.e. fear for significant others and fear of the dead) in the Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale (Power & Smith, 2008). These findings give us clue about the differences between men and women in general population about their death-related concerns. However, when it is about the effects of close relationships on death anxiety, studies could not find any significant gender differences (e.g. Florian et al., 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002). This means that although having a close relationship is known to be a buffer against death-anxiety, studies did not find any results showing that close relationships have higher impact on one of the genders than the other one in terms of buffering death-anxiety.

However, there are findings showing that men and women differ in terms of their commitment levels. For example, in sexual strategies theory (a well-known theory of mating strategies of human beings), Buss and Schmitt (1993) suggested that both men and women seek commitment in their partner in long-term relationships. However, women tend to seek long-term relationships more than men. Therefore, women automatically seek commitment-based relationships more than men do. This leads to the suggestion that although simply being in a relationship does not have different influences on two genders in terms of its influence on death anxiety, it is possible that since commitment levels –and may be the desire to commit- are different for men and women, then there may be differences between genders in terms of death–anxiety due to their commitment levels. This perspective on the effects of close relationships on death– anxiety has not been examined and therefore, in

the current study, gender differences will be examined so as to understand whether men and women in close relationships have differences in terms of death-anxiety and if so, whether this is caused by the differences in their commitment levels.

1.1. Aims and the hypotheses of the current study

1.1.1. Aims of the study

In light of the information given above, the aim of the current study is to examine the effects of close relationships and gender on death-anxiety among Turkish young adults, according to the differences in commitment levels (see Table1). According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, in the "intimacy vs. isolation" stage people begin to engage in close relationships when they are 18 and this is the main motive for them until the ages of 35 (cited in Stevens, 2008; p. 52-53). Those years corresponding to the target age group of the current study are important in maintaining intimate romantic relationships. Therefore, the present study will be conducted with young adults. It was also aimed to examine gender differences in terms of the effects of commitment to romantic relationship on death-anxiety.

1.1.2. Hypotheses of the study

1) Commitment to relationship would have a main effect on death anxiety: Participants with high commitment will report less death- anxiety as compared to participants in low commitment group.

2) Experimental manipulation (answering questions about separation from romantic partner or not) would have a main effect on death- anxiety. That is, participants who imagine being separated from their current romantic partners would report more death anxiety than participants who do not imagine separation.

3) Close relationships have a buffering effect on death-anxiety (Participants who are more committed to their relationship will report lower death -anxiety in the experimental condition than participants with low commitment in the in the same condition)

4) There would be a difference between men and women in terms of death-anxiety under experimental condition due to differences in their commitment levels. That is, men and women are different in terms of their commitment levels to their romantic close relationships. The gender group that has higher commitment to their romantic relationship would have lower death anxiety (gender main effect).

Table1. Summary of the aims and hypotheses of the current study

	Women	**(Hyp 4) ?**	**Men**	
	Control Condition	**(Hyp2) <** **Experimental Condition**	**Control Condition**	**(Hyp2) <** **Experimental Condition**
High Commitment	1	2	3	4
(Hyp 1) Λ		**(Hyp 3) Λ**		**(Hyp 3) Λ**
Low Commitment	5	6	7	8

Note: **IV1:** Commitment to relationship (high, low); **IV2:** Gender (men, women) ; **IV3:** Experimental conditions (Control Group vs Experiment Group); **Covariate:** Neuroticism; **DV:** Death Anxiety

CHAPTER II

STUDY 1

Before conducting the main study, preliminary analyses were done in order to examine whether men and women differ in terms of their trait anxieties. In this study it was hypothesized that men and women do not exhibit significantly different levels of trait anxiety, which in turn would guarantee that any differences between men and women in the main study will be attributed to the experimental manipulation, not to trait anxiety.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

Fourty (*female*=20, *male*=20) young adults from Ankara, İzmir, and İstanbul, whose ages ranged between 22 and 42 participated in this study. While 82.5 % ($N = 33$) of the participants were given the scales in person, the remaining 17.5 % ($N = 7$) received them via e-mail.

2.1.2. Measures

2.1.2.1. State-Trait Anxiety Inventory- Trait Form:

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was originally developed by Spielberger, Gorsuch and Lushene (1970). It consists of two subscales (state

anxiety, trait anxiety) which are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Each subscale has 20 questions. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Öner and LeCompte (1985) with strong reliability and validity coefficients. Trait Anxiety subscale (see Appendix A) of the inventory was used in the present study in order to examine whether men and women differ in terms of their trait anxieties or not. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the subscale for the present sample was .89.

2.1.3. Procedure

Before conducting the study, necessary permission was taken from Middle East Technical University Ethical Committee. Participants who were given the scale face to face gave it back to the researcher after they have finished filling it out. Participants who received the scale via e-mail filled it out and sent it back to the researcher again via e-mail.

2.2. Results

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether men and women differ in terms of their trait anxiety scores. According to the results it was seen that males (m = 1.86) and females (m = 2.04) did not significantly differ from each other in terms of trait anxiety, t (38) = -1.47, n.s.

CHAPTER III

MAIN STUDY

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

In the main study 161 participants (*males; n* = 72, 44.7 %; *females; n* = 89, 55.3 %) aged between 19 and 38 from Ankara, İzmir, and İstanbul were included. Among them 80 participants were involved in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months, and 58 of them were married. Majority of the participants (*N* = 139) were given the questionnaires in person, whereas the remaining (*N* = 22) filled them in via internet. In terms of occupation, participants were mostly placed under one of the three categories; 38 (23.6 %) of them were students, 20 (12.4 %) of them worked in a bank, and 17 (10.6 %) of them were teachers. Remaining participants held different types of jobs. Demographic characteristics of the participants can be seen in Table 2.

Table2. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variables	*M*	*SD*	*N*	%
Age	26.24	4.19		
Gender				
Male			72	44.7
Female			89	55.3
Education Status				
High School			51	31.7
University			92	57.1
Post-Graduate			18	11.2
Income				
Low			13	8.1
Medium			136	84.5
High			3	1.9
Relationship status				
Married			58	36
Dating			80	49.7
Experimental Manipulation				
Experimental condition			81	50.3
Control condition			80	49.7
Relationship Satisfaction				
A little satisfied			1	.6
Fairly satisfied			25	15.5
Very much satisfied			56	34.8
Completely satisfied			79	49.1

3.1.2. Measures

3.1.2.1. Demographic Information Form

This form (see Appendix B) was structured by researcher in order to obtain information about the participants' age, gender, employment status, education level, relationship status, and relationship satisfaction.

3.1.2.2. The Investment Model Scale

This scale (see Appendix C) was originally developed by Rusbult (1980) and it has 4 subscales (investment, satisfaction, alternatives, and commitment). In this study, only the "commitment subscale" was used. This subscale consists of 7 items which are rated on a 9-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 "do not agree at all" to 9 "agree completely" . Higher scores on this subscale indicate higher commitment to the relationship. The commitment subscale of the Investment Model Scale was adapted to Turkish by Büyükşahin and Taluy (2008**)** with a Cronbach alpha of .70. The internal consistency reliability of the scale for the present sample was .93.

3.1.2.3. Türk Kültürü için Temel Kişilik Özellikleri Ölçeği (TKÖ).

TKÖ (see Appendix D) was developed by Gençöz and Öncül (in progress). It was developed to determine the basic dimensions of personality in Turkish culture. It is composed of 47 adjectives loaded under 6 personality factors (extraversion, 8 adjectives; conscientiousness, 9 adjectives; agreeableness, 9 adjectives; neuroticism-emotional stability, 9 adjectives; openness/intellect 6 adjectives, and negative valence, 6 adjectives). The internal-reliability coefficients of the subscales range between .71 and .89. Reliability-validity assessments are still being carried on by Gençöz and Öncül. In the current study the neuroticism subscale of the TKÖ was used in order to use neuroticism as a covariate variable. The internal consistency reliability of the scale for the present sample was .82

3.1.2.4. Thorson–Powell's Death Anxiety Scale.

The Turkish adaptation (Yıldız & Karaca, 2001) of Thorson and Powell's (1994) Death Anxiety scale including 25 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type type scale ranging from 1 (*not true to me*) to 5 (*very true to me*) was used in the current study. Higher scores on this scale reflected less death anxiety. The reliability of the scale in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .84. This scale was used to measure the outcome variable (i.e. death-anxiety). The internal consistency reliability of the scale for the present sample was .88.

3.1.3. Procedure

Before administration of the scales, necessary permission was taken from Middle East Technical University Ethical Committee. After that, announcements were made in two different classes at Middle East Technical University after taking permissions from their lecturers in order to find participants who are suitable for the purpose of this study (those who had been in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months). Those who volunteered were invited via e-mail one by one to take the questionnaires in the "Testing and Observation Room" located in the Social Sciences Building at Middle East Technical University. Remaining participants were recruited through announcements and they were given the questionnaires in their working places. They have been alone while filling out the questionnaires. All participants were given informed consent forms that include instructions and

partially explained purpose of the study. Deception was necessary in order to make sure that participants would not give biased answers to the questions.

Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions (control vs. experimental). All participants filled out the demographic information form first, followed by the commitment scale and TKÖ. In order to accomplish the emotional state of separation the participants in the experimental group were given the following statement "Imagine that you are separated from your relationship partner". Then they were asked to answer two questions that were previously used by Mikulincer et al. (2002) in order to assess the effects of separation thoughts: "What emotions and thoughts does this evoke in you?" and "How do you feel about it? Participants were given enough space to write down their answers to each question (see Appendix E). Then they were given a scale that includes questions about leisure time activities in order to be used as a distracter before applying the death-anxiety scale. Lastly, they filled out the Thorson-Powell Death-Anxiety Scale.

Participants in the control group followed the same procedure except for the statement before the questions. They were given the following statement: "Imagine that you are watching the TV show that you most frequently watch". Then they were asked to answer the same questions with those in the experimental group: "What emotions and thoughts does this evoke in you?" and "How do you feel about it?" (see Appendix F) Remaining of the procedure was the same with those in the experimental group. After they have

finished the process, participants in both groups were debriefed (see Appendix G).

3.2. Data Analyses

Before conducting any statistical procedures 11 participants were eliminated from the study since they indicated that they had been in a relationship for less than 6 months. Since differences of participants' "commitment levels" was a critical variable for the present study, it was important to obtain two distinct groups (high vs. low) in terms of their commitments to their relationships. For this reason, a median split analysis was conducted to split the sample into two in terms of the commitment scores of the participants. As a result of this procedure, another 18 participants, who had the same commitment score which was very close to the median score, were deleted.

Before testing for the hypotheses, some preliminary analyses were conducted. Independent samples t-test and One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted in order to examine the differences among the levels of some demographic variables (gender, relationship status and education level) on measures of the study (i.e. commitment, death- anxiety and relationship satisfaction). Other separate independent samples t- test analyses were conducted in order to examine relationships among the measures of the study. In those t-test analyses, effects of commitment level and experimental conditions were examined on death – anxiety, relationship satisfaction, and neuroticism.

A zero order correlation was carried out among measures of the study (i.e. age, gender, education, relationship status, relationship satisfaction, experimental condition, neuroticism, commitment, and death-anxiety).

Finally, to test the hypotheses of the main study a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted.

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Comparisons of the Levels of Demographic Variables in terms of Commitment, Death-Anxiety, Relationship Satisfaction, and Neuroticism

Separate independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine group comparisons on commitment, death–anxiety, relationship satisfaction, and neuroticism. Gender (female or male), relationship status (married or dating), and education level (high school, university, post-graduate) were used as independent variables, whose effects on commitment, death–anxiety, relationship satisfaction, and neuroticism were examined.

According to the results, gender has a significant effect on death–anxiety. Men (m = 2.10, sd = .58) experienced significantly more death – anxiety than women (m = 1.86, sd = .67); $t(159) = 1.96$, $p = .05$. However, gender has no significant effect on commitment; ($t(159) = .44$, ns.), relationship satisfaction (**$t(159) = .16$**, ns.), or neuroticism (t (159) = .16, ns.) (see Table3).

Table3. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Gender

		N	*M*	*SD*	*t*(159)	*p*
Commitment						
	Men	72	8.21	1.20	.44	.66
	Women	89	8.11	1.45	.44	.66
Death–Anxiety						
	Men	72	2.10	.58	1.96	.05
	Women	89	1.86	.67	1.96	.05
Relationship Satisfaction						
	Men	72	3.33	.79	.16	.88
	Women	89	3.31	.73	.16	.88
Neuroticism						
	Men	72	2.82	.70	-1.04	.30
	Women	89	2.95	.81	-1.04	.30

Regarding to the effects of relationship status on commitment, death–anxiety, and relationship satisfaction, it was found that there was a significant difference between married and dating participants on commitment. Married participants (*m* = 8.59, *sd* .89) were significantly more committed to their partners than dating participants (*m* = 7.89, *sd* = 1.40); *t*(136) = -3.35, p = .001. However, there was no significant effect of relationship status on relationship satisfaction (*t* (136) = -1.69, ns.), death–anxiety (*t* (136) = .28, n.s.), or neuroticism (*t*(136) = .82 , n.s.) (see Table 4).

Table4. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Relationship Status

		N	M	SD	t(136)	p
Commitment						
	Dating	80	7.89	1.40	-3.35	.001
	Married	58	8.59	.89	-3.35	.001
Death–Anxiety						
	Dating	80	1.91	.65	-1.09	.28
	Married	58	2.03	.62	-1.09	.28
Relationship Satisfaction						
	Dating	80	3.24	.73	-1.69	.09
	Married	58	3.45	.71	-1.69	.09
Neuroticism						
	Dating	80	2.94	.77	.82	.42
	Married	58	2.83	.75	.82	.42

Effects of education level (high school, university, or post graduate) on commitment, death–anxiety, neuroticism and relationship satisfaction were examined by one-way ANOVA. Results showed that education level had a significant effect on commitment. Post-hoc comparisons revealed that university graduates (m = 8.41, sd = .10) were significantly more committed to their partners than high-school graduates (m = 7.88, sd = 1.52); $F(2, 158)$ = 4.34, $p < .05$. Results showed that there was no significant differences among the levels of education status in terms of relationship satisfaction ($F(2, 158)$ = 1.41, n.s.), death-anxiety ($F(2, 158)$ = .54, n.s.) and neuroticism ($F(2,158)$ = .67, n.s.) (see Table 5).

Table5. Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Results for Education Level

	High school		University		Post-Graduate		One-way ANOVA		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*(2,158)	*p*
Commitment	7.88_{a}	1.52	8.41_{b}	.10	7.63_{ab}	1.99	2	4.34	.02
Death-anxiety	1.88_{a}	.66	1.99_{a}	.63	1.95_{a}	.61	2	.54	.58
Relationship Satisfaction	3.18_{a}	.82	3.39_{a}	.71	3.39_{a}	.78	2	1.41	.25
Neuroticsm	2.98_{a}	.73	2.83a	.77	2.96a	.82	2	.67	.52

Note: The mean scores that do not share the same subscript on the same row are significantly different from each other at .05 alpha level of Tukey's HSD test.

3.3.2. Analyses on Commitment Level

Several independent samples t- test analyses were conducted in order to find out whether commitment level has an effect on the measures of the study (death–anxiety, relationship satisfaction, and neuroticism).

Results indicated that commitment has significant effects on relationship satisfaction and neuroticism. Participants with high commitment level (m = 3.74, sd =.49) experienced significantly more relationship satisfaction than participants with low commitment level (m = 2.86, sd = .72); t (159) = -9.19, p < .001. Low committed participants (m = 3.02, sd = .75) had significantly higher levels of neuroticism than highly committed participants (m = 2.78, sd = .76); t(159) = 2.01, p < .05. Commitment level has no significant effect on death–anxiety; t(159) = -.38, n.s. (see Table 6).

Table6. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Commitment Level

	N	*M*	*SD*	*t* (159)	*p*
Death–Anxiety					
Low commitment	76	1.93	.65	.38	.70
High commitment	85	1.97	.63	-.38	.70
Relationship Satisfaction					
Low commitment	76	2.86	.72	-9.16	.00
High commitment	85	3.74	.49	-9.16	.00
Neuroticism					
Low commitment	76	3.02	.75	2.01	.05
High commitment	85	2.78	.76	2.01	.05

3.3.3. Analyses on Experimental Manipulation

Separate independent samples t- test analyses were conducted in order to find out whether experimental manipulation have an effect on measures of the study (death–anxiety, relationship satisfaction, and neuroticism).

Results revealed that experimental manipulation did not significantly affect death-anxiety ($t(159) = -1.3$, n.s.), commitment ($t(159) = .74$, n.s.), or relationship satisfaction ($t(159) = 1.22$, n.s.) (see Table 7).

Table7. Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Experimental Manipulation

	N	*M*	*SD*	*t* (159)	*p*
Death – Anxiety					
Experimental group	81	2.11	.53	1.30	.20
Control group	80	1.98	.72	1.30	.20
Relationship Satisfaction					
Experimental group	81	3.40	.66	1.22	.22
Control group	80	3.25	.83	1.22	.22
Neuroticism					
Experimental group	81	2.84	.70	-.90	.37
Control group	80	2.95	.81	-.90	.37

3.3.4. Correlation Coefficients among Measures of the Study

In order to investigate the relationships among demographic variables (i.e. age, gender, education, relationship status and relationship satisfaction) and the measures of the study (neuroticism, commitment, and death –anxiety) a zero order correlation analysis was conducted. The details of these correlations and also the internal consistency reliability scores of the scales of this study (neuroticism, death- anxiety, and commitment) can be seen in Table 8.

Among demographic variables, age had a significant positive correlations with education ($r = .43$, $p < .01$), relationship status ($r = .72$, $p < .01$), relationship satisfaction ($r = .20$, $p < .05$), and commitment ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Age did also have significant negative correlations with gender ($r = -.22$, $p < .01$) and death- anxiety ($r = .17$, $p < .05$). Gender was negatively and significantly correlated with relationship status ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$). Education was positively and significantly correlated with relationship status ($r = .33$, $p < .01$). Relationship status did also have significant positive correlation with commitment ($r = .28$, $p < .01$). The last demographic variable, relationship satisfaction, was found to have significant positive correlation with commitment ($r = .66$, $p < .01$) and a significant negative correlation with neuroticism ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$). Finally, neuroticism was found to have a significant and positive correlation with death-anxiety ($r = .31$, $p < .01$)

Table8. Correlation Coefficients among the Measures

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Age	26.24	4.19	-	-.22**	.43**	.72**	20*	.11	-.08	.16*	-.17*
2.Gender				-	-.02	-.21*	-.01	-.06	.08	-.04	.15
3.Education					-	.33**	.12	.05	-.04	.04	-.06
4.Relationship Status						-	.14	.14	-.07	.28**	-.09
5.Relationship Satisfaction	3.32	.76					-	-.10	-.20*	.66**	-. 04
6.Experimental Manipulation								-	.07	-.06	-.10
7.Neuroticism	2.89	.76							***.82***	-.08	.31**
8.Commitment	8.16	1.34								***.93***	.06
9.Death-Anxiety	2.05	.64									***.88***

Note1: ** p< .01; *p<.05

Note2: Internal consistency reliabilities of the scales are presented at the diagonal

3.3.5. Testing Hypotheses

In the correlation analysis (see Table 3) it was seen that neuroticism was significantly related to the dependent variable (death–anxiety) and not correlated to any of the independent variables (gender, commitment level, and experimental manipulation). Therefore, it was decided to be used as a covariate variable in the main study.

Before conducting an analysis of covariance with neuroticism as the covariate variable, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with gender (female vs male), commitment level (low vs high), and experimental manipulation (experimental group vs control group) as the independent variables, and with death anxiety as the dependent variable in order to see how results would change with and without controlling for the neuroticism.

Results of ANOVA revealed no significant main effects for either commitment level ($F(1,153) = .08$, n.s.), experimental manipulation($F\ (1,153) = 2.04$, n.s.), or gender ($F\ (1,153) = 3.72$, n.s.) on death–anxiety. In terms of two-way interaction effects, only the interaction between commitment level and experimental manipulation was found to be significant; $F\ (1,153) = 4.27$, $p = .05$). In order to find out which groups differentiated from each other data selection for experimental manipulation was conducted. Firts data selection was conducted for experimental manipulation. Both conditions (experimental condition and control condition) were selected seperately and for each selected data, a seperate t-test analysis was conducted between commitment level and

death-anxiety. The results (see Table9) revealed that this interaction effect (interaction between commitment level and experimental manipulation) was only significant for the experimental condition; $t(79) = 2.2$, $p <. .05$, but not for control condition; $t\ (78) = -.93$, n.s. According to the results, among participants who were asked to imagine being separated from their relationship parters (experimental condition), participants with higher commitment level ($m = 2.00$, $sd = .55$) showed less death–anxiety than participants with lower commitment level ($m = 2.26$ $sd = .48$).

Table9. T-test results for experimental manipulation in seperate commitment levels

	N	*M*	*SD*		*p*
Low commitment				$t(74) = 2.43$	.02
Experimental condition	34	2.26	.48		
Control condition	42	1.91	.73		
High commitment				$t(83) = -.41$	.68
Experimental condition	47	2.00	.55		
Control condition	38	2.06	.72		

Second data selection was conducted for commitment groups. Both groups (high commitment and low commitment) were selected selected seperately and for each selected data, a seperate t-test analysis was conducted between experimental manipulation and death-anxiety. The results (see Table10) revealed that the significant effect was seen only in low commitment

group; $t(74) = 2.43$, $p < .05$, but not in high commitment group; $t(83) = -.41$, n.s. According to that, among participants who have lower commitment to his/her relationship partner, those who were asked to imagine being seperated from their romantic relationship partner (experimental condition) ($m = 2.26$, $sd = .48$) experienced more death anxiety than those who were not asked to imagine such seperation (control condition) ($m = 1.91$, $sd = .73$).

There was no significant interaction effect between gender and experimental condition ($F(1,153) = .56$, n.s.) or gender and commitment level ($F(1,153) = .58$, n.s.). There was also no significant three-way interaction effect between gender, commitment level, and experimental manipulation; $F(1,153) = .00$, n.s.

Table10. T-test results for commitment goups in seperate experimental conditions

	N	*M*	*SD*		*p*
Experimental conditi				*t*(79) = 2.2	.03
High commitment	34	2.00	.55		
Low commitment	47	2.26	.48		
Control condition				*t*(78) = -.93	.36
High commitment	38	2.06	.72		
Low commitment	42	1.91	.73		

After conducting the analysis without the covariate variable (neuroticism), an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with neuroticism as the

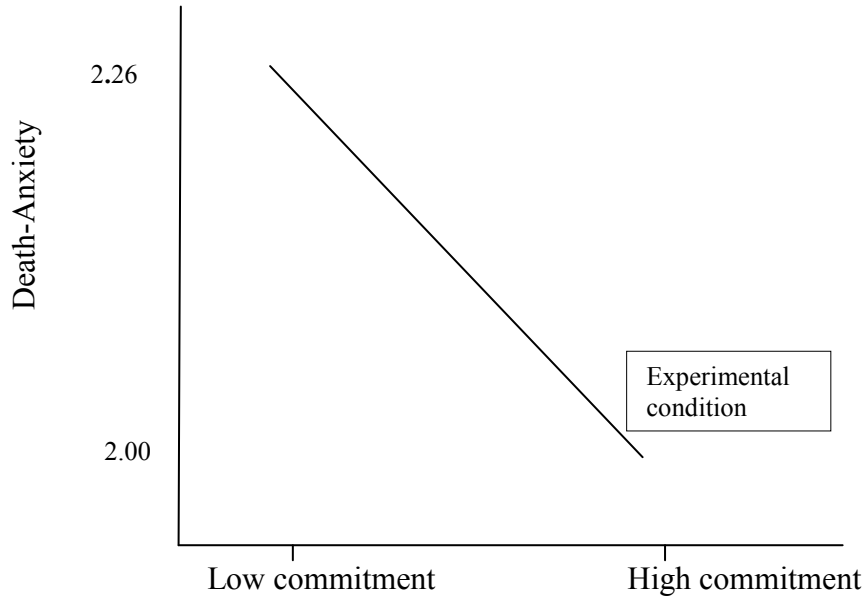
covariate variable, was conducted in order to test the hypotheses of the main study. Independent variables were again gender (female vs. male), commitment level (low vs. high) and experimental manipulation (experimental group vs. control group). Death–anxiety was used as the dependent variable.

Results of ANCOVA analysis did not reveal any significant main effects for commitment level ($F(1,153) = .10$, n.s.), experimental manipulation ($F(1,153) = 2.89$, n.s.), and gender ($F(1,153) = 3.03$, n.s.) on death–anxiety. After the inclusion of covariate variable i.e. neuroticism into the analysis, the interaction effect between commitment level and experimental manipulation was again found to be significant; ($F(1,153) = 5.13$, $p = .02$), and the effect was strengthened compared to the results of ANOVA. The increment in the effect of this interaction, as well as the summary of the results of ANOVA and ANCOVA, can be seen in Table 11.

Like in ANOVA, in order to find out which groups differentiated from each other data selection for experimental manipulation was conducted. Firts data selection was conducted for experimental manipulation. Both conditions (experimental condition and control condition) were selected seperately and for each selected data, a seperate t-test analysis was conducted between commitment level and death-anxiety. The results (see Table9) revealed that this interaction effect (interaction between commitment level and experimental manipulation) was only significant for the experimental condition; $t(79) = 2.2$, $p <. .05$, but not for control condition; $t\ (78) = -.93$, n.s. According to the results, among participants who were asked to imagine being seperated from

their relationship parters (experimental condition), participants with higher commitment level (m = 2.00, sd = .55) showed less death–anxiety than participants with lower commitment level (m = 2.26 sd = .48). The significant interaction can be seen in Figure 2.

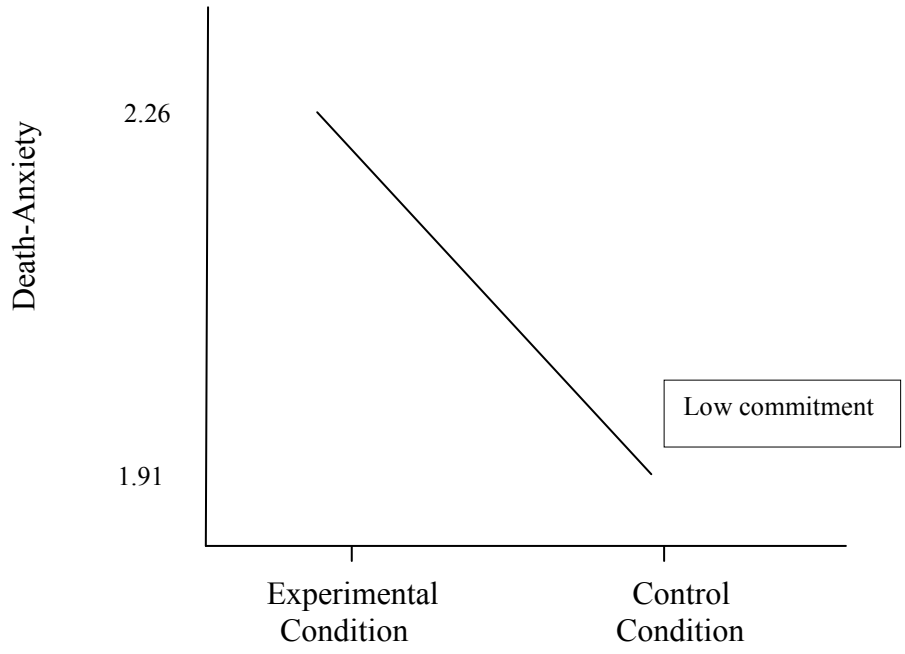
Figure2. Comparison of commitment groups on death - anxiety for experimental condition



Second data selection was conducted for commitment groups. Both groups (high commitment and low commitment) were selected selected seperately and for each selected data, a seperate t-test analysis was conducted between experimental manipulation and death-anxiety. The results (see Table10) revealed that the significant effect was seen only in low commitment

group; $t(74) = 2.43$, $p < .05$, but not in high commitment group; $t(83) = -.41$, n.s. According to that, among participants who have lower commitment to his/her relationship partner, those experimental condition ($m = 2.26$, $sd = .48$) experienced more death anxiety than those who were not asked to imagine such seperation ($m = 1.91$, $sd = .73$). The significant interaction can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure3. Comparison of experimental conditions on death - anxiety for low commitment group



The interaction between gender and experimental manipulation ($F(1,153) = .17$, n.s.), gender and commitment level ($F(1,153) = .69$, ns) were still not significant after including the covariate variable (neuroticism) to the analysis. There was also no significant three-way interaction effect between gender, commitment level, and experimental manipulation; $F(1,153) = .04$, n.s.

Table11. Results of ANOVA and ANCOVA on Death- Anxiety

					ANOVA		ANCOVA	
		N	*M*	*SD*	*F*(1,153)	*p*	*F*(1,153)	*p*
Neuroticism (covariate variable)					-	-	17.18	.00
Gender (IV_1)	Men	72	1.94	.58	3.72	.06	3.03	.08
	Women	89	2.14	.67				
Commitment Groups (IV_2)					.08	.78	.10	.75
	High	85	2.03	.63				
	Low	76	2.07	.65				
Experimental Manipulation (IV_3)					2.04	.16	2.89	.09
	Exp condition	81	2.11	.53				
	Control condition	80	1.98	.72				
Gender x Commitment					.58	.45	.69	.41
Gender x Exp Manipulation					.56	.45	.17	.68
Commitment Level x Experimental Manipulation					4.27	**.04***	5.13	**.03***

Note 1: Exp Condition: Experimental condition; Exp Manipulation: Experimental manipulation

Note 2: *The increment in the interaction effect between commitment level and experimental condition after including covariate variable

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

In this study, death- anxiety was examined within the perspective of Terror Management Theory (TMT) (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999). As explained in the introduction chapter (pp 2), the theory suggested that awareness of their mortality leads people to terror and anxiety; therefore, they need some means to use as a buffer against these intense, negative feelings. Proximal defenses are used when "death" is in the consciousness. People try to get rid of the death-related thoughts, as well as the anxiety caused by it by using *proximal defenses* (i.e. trying to think about something else or thinking that one has a long life ahead and there is nothing to worry about). There are also distal defenses, cultural worldview and self–esteem, people use when death–anxiety is not at the conscious level. Cultural worldview and self-esteem work in cooperation (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Feeling oneself as a part of a greater, solid whole (i.e. culture) gives the person a sense of security and immunity from negative events. Moreover, the person knows that there are many other people who are also a part of this great union, and this knowledge works as a proof that his/her worldview should be the right one. Self–esteem does also

work as a buffer in a way that it makes people perceive themselves as unique, immortal, capable of doing anything, and yet will not get hurt. These feelings take place in the given cultural worldview. TMT states that these useful tools - distal defenses- are not consciously generated by people. They are in their preconscious minds and whenever there is a threat of death or even a reminder of that threat, they come to the surface of the consciousness and calm people down, thus decrease their anxiety. According to the theory, each individual has his/her own unique concerns related to death (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997) and there is variety of means to use against those negative feelings associated with death-related thoughts. There are many different characteristics of people, some of which promote death-anxiety and some of which help reducing it. Recent stressful life events (Florian et al., 1993; Mikulincer & Florian, 2007), being exposed to a traumatic event (Kastenbaum, 2003), having an anxious attachment style (Mikulincer, Florian, & Tolmacz, 1990), and having mental or emotional disorders (Kastenbaum, 2003) are some of the characteristics that increase death-anxiety. On the other hand, situations or events that promote one's self–esteem and also believing in global, meaningful entities are the necessary means to reduce death–anxiety.

In this study, "romantic close relationships" was chosen to be investigated, which was also suggested to be a buffer against death–related anxiety by TMT in different studies (e.g., Florian, Mikulincer, & Hirshberger, 2002; Hirschberger, Florian, & Mikulincer, 2003). Specifically, it was aimed to investigate whether effects of close relationships and gender on death-

anxiety would change depending on the commitment level of the individuals to the current relationship.

Along with gender and commitment to romantic relationships, information about some other characteristics of participants (i.e. age, education level, relationship status–whether they are married or dating-, relationship satisfaction) was also gathered through demographic form (see Appendix B). This information was used in the correlation analyses, independent samples t-test analyses, and one way ANOVA in order to find out whether they were related to the independent variables (gender, commitment level and experimental manipulation), neuroticism, and death–anxiety.

Conducting correlation analyses before the main analyses was useful; because in order to use neuroticism as a covariate variable, it was necessary to show that there was a significant relationship between neuroticism and the dependent variable, i.e. death-anxiety. It was necessary to find no relationship between neuroticism and any of the independent variables (gender, experimental manipulation, and commitment level), which was also a necessary condition for using neuroticism as a covariate variable. In the correlation analyses, neuroticism was found to be correlated with death-anxiety, but not with independent variables.

4.1. Findings Related to Hypotheses

In this study, several hypotheses were suggested (detailed demonstration of hypotheses was included in Table1, Chapter1). First of all, it was hypothesized that there is a main effect of relationship commitment on death–

anxiety. That is, participants with higher levels of commitment will report less death-anxiety as compared to the participants with lower levels of commitment. In Terror Management literature, commitment to close relationships were revealed as a factor reducing death–anxiety (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2002; Florian et al., 2002); however, in those studies the main concern was to show the effect of close relationships in general. In this study, it was aimed to assess the differences between participants who have different levels of commitment to their romantic relationships. In order to assess the differences between levels of commitment, participants were divided into two groups (low commitment and high commitment).The reason for this division was to see whether simply having a close relationship would be enough to protect oneself from death– anxiety or was it necessary to have a relationship to which one has high commitment to be protected from death–anxiety.

The findings revealed that there was no main effect for commitment level on death-anxiety, which suggested that having high commitment or low commitment to romantic relationship partner does not change participants' level of death anxiety. This finding was against the hypothesis. One possible explanation to this result was the ceiling effect. As explained before, the division of two separate commitment level groups was computed by median split analysis. After the division it was seen that many participants ($N = 84$) had the maximum score and the majority of the remaining participants ($N = 69$) got considerably high scores. Only very few participants ($N = 8$) got a score that can be considered as low scores. Therefore, most of those who were

grouped as “low commitment” by median split had actually a score which could be considered as moderate or quite high commitment levels. Consequently, there was not a very sharp distinction between commitment groups (low commitment group and high commitment group) in terms of their commitment scores; and it was not very unexpected for this sample not to have the difference that the hypothesis was seeking for. This lack of variability for commitment, therefore, may be one reason of why the main effect of commitment was not observed.

The second hypothesis suggested that there is a main effect of experimental manipulation on death–anxiety. That is, participants who imagined being separated from their current romantic partners would report more death-anxiety than participants who do not imagine separation. This hypothesis was based on the *anxiety-buffer hypothesis* of TMT, claiming that if a psychological mechanism protects people from death anxiety, then when that mechanism is strengthened, the person should experience less anxiety or anxiety-related threats, and when that mechanism is weakened, the person should experience more anxiety or anxiety-related behavior in the face of threats (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997). However, this second hypothesis was not confirmed, either. Participants in both groups did not significantly differ in terms of death–anxiety. A possible reason of why this analysis revealed insignificant results could be the essence of the manipulation. Subjects in the experimental group were asked to “imagine” being separated from their partners (see Appendix F) and then their thoughts and feelings were gathered about it. Although in

literature this method has been used with the same purpose of this study (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2002; Florian et al., 2002), the fact that the actual separation and imaginative separation would have different effects on people was disregarded. It should be considered that this imaginative separation might not have evoked as negative feelings as a real separation. Therefore, the insignificant difference between experimental group and control group might be due to the inadequacy of the questions in leading to negative feelings, not due to the sample characteristics.

In the first two hypotheses, main effects of commitment and experimental manipulation were examined and it was revealed that neither of them had a significant effect on death–anxiety. The third hypothesis was about the interaction effect of commitment and experimental manipulation. It was suggested that those who have high commitment to their partners would be protected from death–anxiety more than those who have lower level of commitment to their partners when they are asked to answer questions about being separated from their partners (experimental group). According to the findings, if the individuals are highly committed to their current romantic relationships, then the possible interruption to that relationship (separation thoughts) causes less death-anxiety for them than those who have low commitment to their current romantic relationships. That is, being highly committed to the relationship protected participants from increments of death–anxiety when that relationship was thought to be in danger. This finding was parallel to the third hypothesis. Literature findings suggested such direction,

by stressing the importance of commitment to relationship (e.g., Rusbult, 1980; Drigotas et al., 1999). However, this finding does only show the direction of the relationship, not the mechanism underlying this difference between commitment levels. The role of having high commitment to their romantic close relationships in protecting participants from increment in their death–anxiety should be further investigated.

This interaction effect did reveal another significant result, too. Accordingly, participants who had low commitment to their romantic relationship partners showed more death– anxiety when they were asked to imagine being separated from their current romantic relationship partners than not being asked to imagine such separation. This was a result which was expected to be found as a main effect for experimental manipulation for all participants. That is, according to the anxiety buffer hypothesis (Harmon-Jones, Simon, Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & McGregor, 1997), all participants should have experienced more death-anxiety in the condition in which they were asked to imagine a separation from their romantic partner. However, as can be seen in Table 12, it was only valid for participants who had low commitment to their current romantic relationships. This suggests that having low commitment to the relationship partner is a factor increasing death– anxiety when there is a threat to the relationship's well-being (separation thoughts). When the relationship is intact, their death–anxiety is not more than highly committed group. However, when there is a threat to the relationship, those who have low commitment experience a significant increment in their death–anxiety.

The findings related to the third hypothesis can be summarized as following. The participants who had low commitment are in fact dependent on the maintenance of the relationship in order to be protected from death-anxiety. It is an interesting finding that even they do not commit themselves to their relationships, they experience intense levels of death-anxiety when the relationship ends (or is imagined as ended). This finding should be investigated in detail with the introduction of different variables that may affect the outcome. High commitment, on the other hand, seems to protect participants from increments in death–anxiety even in the situations that the relationship is somehow in danger. These differences between high committed participants and low committed participants support the assumption that simply having a close romantic relationship is not enough for being protected from death- anxiety; the characteristics of that relationship (i.e. the commitment level of partners to that relationship) influences the outcome. Therefore, in order to reach a conclusion about the role of close relationships on death-anxiety, every possible aspect of relationships should be examined.

Table12. The interaction effect between commitment and experimental manipulation on death–anxiety

	Control Condition (No separation thoughts from romantic relationship partner)	Experimental Condition (Separation thoughts from romantic relationship partner)
High Commitment	=	Λ
Low Commitment	=	<

Note: The sign "=" indicates that there is no significant difference between groups on death– anxiety

Gender was earlier mentioned to have a role on death– anxiety. Several studies have showed that women in general experience more death– anxiety than men (e.g. Abdel-Khalek, 2005; Kastenbaum, 2003; Kausar & Akram, 2002; Madnawat & Kachhawa, 2007). In terms of commitment to relationships, women tend to seek long-term relationships more than men (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), which is an indicator of commitment. Related to the first hypothesis (participants with higher levels of commitment will report less death-anxiety as compared to the participants with lower levels of commitment), it was assumed that if there is a difference between men and women in terms of commitment level, then their death- anxiety levels would

also be different based on the differences in their commitment levels. The final hypothesis, therefore, suggested that there would be a main effect of gender. That is, the gender group that has higher commitment to their romantic relationship would have lower death- anxiety. As mentioned before, when it is about the effects of close relationships on death- anxiety, studies could not find any significant gender differences (e.g. Florian et al., 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002). However, those studies did not compare participants in terms of their commitment levels. Therefore, although literature did not find any significant effect of close relationships on the relationship between gender and death- anxiety, a new variable (i.e. commitment level) might have had an effect. Accordingly, the final hypothesis was based on the confirmation of two assumptions. The first one was that men and women would differ significantly in terms of their commitment levels to their current romantic relationship partners. The second one was that due to this difference in their commitment level, their death– anxiety scores would be different.

The findings revealed that neither the first nor the second assumptions related to the final hypothesis was supported. In terms of commitment levels, although in the t-test analysis there was a tendency of women to have a slightly higher commitment level than men, it was not a significant difference; therefore, it cannot be suggested that men and women differ in terms of their commitment levels to their current romantic relationship partners. Also, in the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) there was no main effect of gender or an interaction effect of gender and commitment level on death– anxiety, which disconfirmed the assumption that gender, along with the differences in

commitment level, would have an effect on death– anxiety. In short, commitment levels of men and women were not found to be different; therefore, the assumption that their death-anxieties would be different due to the differences in their commitment levels was not confirmed, either.

Moreover, in terms of the relationship between gender and death–anxiety, t-test analysis revealed a result opposite to the literature. In this study, men were found to experience more death- anxiety than women. This finding was unexpected, because as mentioned above, the literature (e.g., Madnawat & Kachhawa, 2007; Kausar & Akram, 2002; Abdel-Khalek, 2005; Kastenbaum, 2003) suggested that women do experience and express more death–anxiety than men.

4.2. Findings Related to Demographic Variables

Analyses revealed some important results related to the interests of this study. First of all, correlation analysis revealed that the demographic variable relationship satisfaction is positively and significantly related to commitment. As the participants' satisfaction level from their relationship increased, so did their commitment to that relationship. This was an expected result according to close relationships literature. Specifically, this finding is consistent with the assumptions of Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980). This model examined how some relationships last longer than others, and the factors that play a role in this process. According to Investment Model, commitment has a crucial role in stabilizing relationships. That is, if individuals are highly committed to their relationships then it is more likely that they will persist in their relationships.

The Investment Model briefly suggested that commitment mediates the relationship between satisfaction level (along with investment and quality of alternatives) and persistence in a relationship. Therefore, as relationship satisfaction increases (along with increment in investment and decrement of the quality of alternatives) the level of commitment increases, which all together make individual to persist in a relationship. This finding was supported by another study (Drigotas et al., 1999), suggesting that in both dating relationships and marital relationships, commitment is associated with healthy functioning in relationships. The Investment Model's assumptions supported the findings of this study related to relationship satisfaction.

Again consistent with the related literature, correlations analyses did also reveal that relationship satisfaction was negatively correlated with neuroticism in this study. That is, people who have higher levels of neuroticism was found to be less satisfied with their relationships than those who have lower levels of neuroticism. This finding is important since earlier it was mentioned that relationship satisfaction is necessary for an individual to be committed to the relationship partner. Although in the correlation analysis neuroticism and commitment were not found to be correlated with each other, it is known that relationship satisfaction and commitment to relationship are related. Therefore, the influence of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction would consequently affect individuals' commitment to their relationships. This is supported by the previously mentioned literature findings. For instance, Florian et al. (2002) have found that commitment to relationship partner decreases due to neuroticism. Kurdek (1997) did also suggest that people who

are high in neuroticism set themselves unrealistic standards for every aspect of their lives and they eventually have problems in maintaining a relationship. Studies showed that besides individual's own neuroticism level, the spouse's neuroticism level does also influence the relationship's well-being. According to the study of Botwin (1997), it was revealed that both men and women who had spouses low in neuroticism level were generally more satisfied with their relationships and reported that they like spending time with their spouse. Buss (1991) has also reported that both husbands and wives complain about their spouse if that spouse is high in neuroticism. His study also stated that neuroticism increases individual's perception of conflict in the relationship. All these findings, along with the findings of the present study, indicate that if one of the partners has high levels of neuroticism, the relationship satisfaction would decrease for one or both of the partners. And this decrement in satisfaction would affect their commitments to their relationships.

In this study all participants were in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months. Some of them were married ($N = 58$) and others were dating ($N = 80$). The remaining participants did not specify to which group they belong. In analyses, married participants and dating participants were compared with each other on other demographic variables and scales of the study, in order to see whether being married would have different effects on any of those variables than dating. According to the findings, it was seen that married participants (who were also in the relationship for a longer time than dating participants) were more committed to their relationship partners than dating participants. This difference between married and dating participants was also

an expected outcome when examining literature related to close relationships. For instance, as Impett et al. (2001-2002) stated, unlike dating couples, married couples promise each other to stay together for a lifetime when they agree to get married. This promise –that the relationship lasts for a lifetime- requires being committed to that person. Also, Sternberg (1997), suggested a Triangular Theory of Love, which stated that each component of love (i.e. intimacy, passion and commitment) manifests a different aspect of love. Sternberg stated that each component of love is expressed through actions, and the actions which express commitment include sexual fidelity, engagement and marriage. This suggests that marriage is a manifestation of being committed to the relationship partner, which supports the finding of correlation analysis that married participants would have more commitment to their relationship partners than dating participants.

4.3. The Contributions and Implications of the Study

There is a large amount of research related to TMT; however, in Turkey the number of research on TMT is very limited and none of these studies examined the role of close relationships on death–anxiety. Moreover, in the TMT literature, studies generally focused on the role of close relationships and commitment in general, they did not examine the differences between low commitment and high commitment to the relationship partner. In these aspects, this study contributes to both Turkish literature and TMT literature in general.

Moreover, this study contributes to the close relationships literature, as it proves the importance of being in a committed relationship with a partner. Results showed that having a long-term (more than 12 months) relationship to which one commits himself/herself has positive outcomes for the person.

Besides the contribution to the literature, the findings of this study could also be considered for their use in clinical psychology field. The crucial role of commitment had already been stated in literature by different researchers (e.g. Rusbult, 1980). The observed effects of commitment in this study could give practitioners a different perspective when dealing with conflicts, dissatisfaction or other interrelationship problems between couples. For instance, since it was shown that low commitment leads to death-anxiety increment in relationship crises, reasons of why some people have low commitment to their relationship partners and ways to improve their commitment could be investigated with the help of different theories and studies.

4.4. Limitations and Future Directions

One major limitation of this study was the small sample size and the lack of variety in the background of the sample. Participants were recruited only from Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir, in Turkey, all of which were well educated (of minimum high school level). Therefore, with a sample like this, generalization of the results to whole population is not possible. A larger sample would also be useful in terms of having sufficient number of participants for each comparison group. As mentioned above, commitment

groups did not reveal significantly difference on death– anxiety. Perhaps a larger sample would include more participants who would score low on commitment scale, so that the division between high commitment group and low commitment group would be more accurate and comparison would reveal significant differences between those groups.

Besides sample size, the unexpected results could be due to the features of the tools that were used or methodological flaws of the study. For instance, in literature, studies (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2002) measured death–anxiety with implicit measures, like the Hebrew version of Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Simon, and Breus's (1994) word completion task, which measures death-thought accessibility by asking participants to complete some incomplete words after exposing them to mortality salience condition. In that task, participants did not know that their death–anxieties were being measured. They just focus on finding letters that would fit in the blanks. However, in my study I have used an explicit measurement tool, the Thorson–Powell Death Anxiety scale (Yıldız & Karaca, 2001), which directly asks questions about death–anxiety. This might have caused participants to give socially desirable answers instead of their true feelings. Therefore, in the future studies, some implicit measures for Turkish samples could be generated and used in order to make sure that results are not biased. This difference between tools could be a reason of why groups did not have significantly different levels of death–anxiety.

Being married or dating with someone was not found to make a difference in terms of death–anxiety in this study. Maybe a third group of participants (single young adults) should be included into the study and differences between having a relationship partner and not having a relationship partner can be examined on death–anxiety with a different experiment design. That way, it would be more clearly understood whether romantic relationships do make a difference on death–anxiety.

As mentioned before, the findings of this study related to gender differences on death-anxiety are not in the same direction with the literature. The result that men experience more death-anxiety than women is worth examining deeply. One possible explanation of the discrepancy between literature and this study could be the impact of culture. Future studies should focus on answering the question "Are there any contributions of traditional gender roles in our culture which favor women in terms of death-related anxiety?" The results could be examined in terms of "the gender differences between *individualistic* and *collectivistic* cultures". In our culture, besides romantic relationships, women also engage in many different interpersonal relationships (i.e. neighborhood, motherhood) that might provide them an additional social support. This support and affection women get from their environment, in turn, could be giving them a sense of security and safety, strengthening reliance on these relationships. As a result, having several individuals to commit, women might feel accepted by their society, leading to the protection against death-anxiety. Although in literature women seem to

experience more death-anxiety than men in general, this *cultural characteristic* of women could be surpassing the usual pattern of death-anxiety, providing a shelter for women. Men in Turkish culture, on the other hand, are generally expected not exchange much affection with others as much as women. This might be leading them experience more death-anxiety than women, as opposed to other cultures. This cultural aspect of gender differences, along with other possible explanations should be regarded by future studies when trying to explain women's having less death-anxiety than men in this study.

Examination of age in terms of independent and dependent variables was not aimed in the current study and no hypothesis was formed including age. Therefore, the findings related to age differences were not discussed in the scope of this study. However, age was nevertheless included in correlation analysis with all other demographic variables and it was found that it had significant correlations with almost all other demographic variables. As mentioned before in this study age ranged between 19 and 38. The reason of why only these ages were included in this study was the work of Erikson, which proposed that relationships and intimacy are core aspects throughout the "young adulthood" (cited in Stevens, 2008; p. 52-53). This phase of life (young adulthood) would therefore be the most appropriate time span to examine effects of relationships on individuals. Correlation analysis revealed that from early adulthood years (ages around 18-19) to late adulthood years (ages around 38-39), participants experience some changes in their lives in

terms of some demographic variables. For instance, as they move to later young adulthood ages their commitment and relationship satisfaction increases. Also, it was revealed that, in later ages of young adulthood, participants tend to be more married than dating with people. In correlation analysis it was also revealed that age and death–anxiety were negatively correlated with each other. That is, from early young adulthood to the later periods of young adulthood participants' death–anxiety increased. Therefore, a comparison between early young adulthood and late young adulthood in terms of death-anxiety could be studied. Since significant correlations were found between age and some other variables of this study, future studies could consider investigating the possible reasons of these relationships, or they may form different research questions based on how young adults act towards death–related issues, what other characteristics have role in that relationship, etc.

In literature there are studies examining the differences between age groups in terms of level of death–anxiety (e.g. Maxfield, Pyszczynski, Kluck, Cox, Greenberg, Solomon, & Weise, 2007). They generally examine differences between two separate age groups, adolescents and older adults, on death–anxiety in terms of various variables and factors. For instance, in a study comparing young adults and older adults, Jackson (2008) have demonstrated that older adults experienced lower death-anxiety than young adults. In the current study, results failed to demonstrate that close relationships, by themselves, were enough to protect participants from death-

anxiety. This failure might be due to the wrong choice of age group. The fact that intimacy / love issues are in the focus of young adults does not necessarily mean that the protector role of them against death-anxiety occur during those ages. Studies could be conducted to examine whether commitment to romantic relationships have an influence on the older adults' lower levels of death-anxiety.

Finally, the assumption of Terror Management Theory (TMT) related to close relationships was that being in a close romantic relationship works as a buffer against death-anxiety. However, in light of the findings of this study, it was seen that the effect of close relationships on death-anxiety are conditional. That is, close relationships works as a buffer against death-anxiety for only those who have low commitment to their relationships. Considering the findings of previous close relationships literature, besides commitment there are many other factors influencing the nature of the relationship. For instance, satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives (Rusbult, 1980); passion, intimacy (Sternberg, 1997) are some of those factors. Therefore, simply having a close romantic relationship is not enough to protect people from death-anxiety. As this study showed, how much the individual is committed to the relationship is one of the determinants of this process. Only after the examination of other possible components of the relationships it can be understood whether/under which circumstances a close romantic relationship works as a buffer against death-anxiety. Further studies should consider this.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TRAIT ANXIETY INVENTORY/ SÜREKLİ KAYGI ÖLÇEĞİ

Yönerge: Aşağıda, kişilerin kendilerine ait duygularını anlatmada kullandıkları birtakım ifadeler verilmiştir. Her ifadeyi dikkatlice okuyun, 74onar da **genel olarak** nasıl hissettiğinizi, ifadelerin sağ tarafındaki rakamlardan uygun olanını işaretlemek suretiyle belirtin. Doğru ya da yanlış cevap yoktur. Herhangi bir ifadenin üzerinde fazla zaman sarf etmeksizin, **genel olarak** nasıl hissettiğinizi gösteren cevabı işaretleyin.

	Hemen hiç bir zaman	Bazen	Çok zaman	Hemen her zaman
1. Genellikle keyfim yerindedir.	1	2	3	4
2. Genellikle çabuk yorulurum.	1	2	3	4
3. Genellikle kolay ağlarım.	1	2	3	4
4. Başkaları kadar mutlu olmak isterim.	1	2	3	4
5. Çabuk karar veremediğim için fırsatları kaçırırım.	1	2	3	4
6. Kendimi dinlenmiş hissederim.	1	2	3	4
7. Genellikle sakin, kendime hakim ve soğukkanlıyım.	1	2	3	4
8. Güçlüklerin yenemeyeceğim kadar biriktiğini hissederim.	1	2	3	4
9.Önemsiz şeyler hakkında endişelenirim.	1	2	3	4
10. Genellikle mutluyum.	1	2	3	4
11. Her şeyi ciddiye alır ve etkilenirim.	1	2	3	4
12. Genellikle kendime güvenim yoktur.	1	2	3	4
13. Genellikle kendimi emniyette hissederim.	1	2	3	4
14. Sıkıntılı ve güç durumlarla karşılaşmaktan kaçınırım.	1	2	3	4

15. Genellikle kendimi hüzünlü hissederim.	1	2	3	4
16. Genellikle hayatımdan memnunum.	1	2	3	4
17. Olur olmaz düşünceler beni rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4
18. Hayal kırıklıklarını öylesine ciddiye alırım ki hiç unutmam.	1	2	3	4
19. Aklı başında ve kararlı bir insanım.	1	2	3	4
20. Son zamanlarda kafama takılan konular beni tedirgin eder.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM / DEMOGRAFİK BİLGİ FORMU

Katılımcı kodu (Bu kısmı boş bırakınız. Uygulayıcı tarafından doldurulacaktır):

Yaşınız ….....

Cinsiyetiniz: K …..... E …......

Eğitim durumunuz (en son bitirdiğiniz okulu işaretleyiniz):

Okur-Yazar Degil ( )
İlköğretim ( )
Lise ( )

Üniversite ( )
Yüksek Lisans/Doktora ( )

Gelir Düzeyiniz: Düşük ( ) Orta ( ) Yüksek ( )

Şu anda bir sevgiliniz/eşiniz var mı? Evet ( ) Hayır ( )

Evetse, kaç zamandır birliktesiniz/evlisiniz?

6 aydan az ( ) 6-12 ay ( ) 12 aydan çok ( )

İçinde bulunduğunuz ilişkiden ne derece memnunsunuz?

Hiç	Biraz	Orta	Epey	Tamamen
0	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX C

THE INVESTMENT MODEL SCALE – COMMITMENT SUBSCALE / İLİŞKİ İSTİKRARI ÖLÇEĞİ- BAĞLANIM ALT BOYUTU

Yönerge: Aşağıdaki cümleleri dikkatlice okuyun şu andaki ilişkinizi göz önüne alarak, aşağıdaki ifadelerin her birine ne derecede katıldığınızı belirtiniz.

1. İlişkimizin çok uzun bir süre devam etmesini istiyorum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

2. Birlikte olduğum kişiyle olan ilişkime bağlıyım.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

3. İlişkimiz çok yakın bir zamanda bitecek olsa çok büyük üzüntü hissetmezdim.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

4. Önümüzdeki yıl muhtemelen başka biriyle flört ediyor olacağım.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

5. Birlikte olduğum kişiye ve ilişkimize çok bağlanmış hissediyorum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

6. İlişkimizin sonsuza kadar sürmesini istiyorum.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

7. İlişkimizin gelecekte de devam edecek bir ilişki olmasını istiyorum (örn., birlikte olduğum kişiyle yıllarca beraber olmayı hayal ediyorum).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Tamamen yanlış								Tamamıyla doğru

APPENDIX D

TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNDE GELİŞTİRİLMİŞ TEMEL KİŞİLİK ÖZELLİKLERİ ÖLÇEĞİ

YÖNERGE:

Aşağıda size uyan ya da uymayan pek çok kişilik özelliği bulunmaktadır. Bu özelliklerden herbirinin 79onar79 için ne kadar uygun olduğunu ilgili rakamı daire içine alarak belirtiniz.

Örneğin;

Kendimi …..... biri olarak görüyorum.

Hiç uygun değil **Uygun değil** **Kararsızım** **Uygun** **Çok uygun**

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**

		Hiç uygun değil		Uygun değil		Kararsızım			Hiç uygun değil		Uygun değil		Kararsızım
1	Aceleci	1	2	3	4	5	28	Canayakın	1	2	3	4	5
2	Yapmacık	1	2	3	4	5	29	Kızgın	1	2	3	4	5
3	Duyarlı	1	2	3	4	5	30	Sabit fikirli	1	2	3	4	5
4	Konuşkan	1	2	3	4	5	31	Görgüsüz	1	2	3	4	5
5	Kendine güvenen	1	2	3	4	5	32	Durgun	1	2	3	4	5
6	Soğuk	1	2	3	4	5	33	Kaygılı	1	2	3	4	5
7	Utangaç	1	2	3	4	5	34	Terbiyesiz	1	2	3	4	5
8	Paylaşımcı	1	2	3	4	5	35	Sabırsız	1	2	3	4	5

9	Geniş-rahat	1	2	3	4	5	36	yaratıcı	1	2	3	4	5
10	Cesur	1	2	3	4	5	37	Kaprisli	1	2	3	4	5
11	Agresif	1	2	3	4	5	38	İçine kapanık	1	2	3	4	5
12	Çalışkan	1	2	3	4	5	39	Çekingen	1	2	3	4	5
13	İçten pazarlıklı	1	2	3	4	5	40	Alıngan	1	2	3	4	5
14	Girişken	1	2	3	4	5	41	Hoşgörülü	1	2	3	4	5
15	İyi niyetli	1	2	3	4	5	42	Düzenli	1	2	3	4	5
16	İçten	1	2	3	4	5	43	Titiz	1	2	3	4	5
17	Kendinden emin	1	2	3	4	5	44	Tedbirli	1	2	3	4	5
18	Huysuz	1	2	3	4	5	45	Azimli	1	2	3	4	5
19	Yardımsever	1	2	3	4	5							
20	kabiliyetli	1	2	3	4	5							
21	Üşengeç	1	2	3	4	5							
22	Sorumsuz	1	2	3	4	5							
23	Sevecen	1	2	3	4	5							
24	Pasif	1	2	3	4	5							
25	Disiplinli	1	2	3	4	5							
26	Açgözlü	1	2	3	4	5							
27	Sinirli	1	2	3	4	5							

APPENDIX E

MANIPULATION QUESTIONS FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP / DENEY GRUBU MANİPÜLASYON SORULARI

Yönerge: Aşağıdaki soruları dikkatle okuyup her birinin altındaki boşluğa o sorunun cevabını yazınız.

Lütfen şu anki sevgilinizden/eşinizden ayrıldığınızı düşünün.

a) Bu durum sizde ne gibi hisler ve düşünceler uyandırdı?

b) Bu durum hakkında nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

APPENDIX F

MANIPULATION QUESTIONS FOR CONTROL GROUP / KONTROL GRUBU MANİPÜLASYON SORULARI

Yönerge: Aşağıdaki soruları dikkatle okuyup her birinin altındaki boşluğa o sorunun cevabını yazınız.

Lütfen televizyonda en sık izlediğiniz programı izlemekte olduğunuzu farz edin.

a) Bu durum sizde ne gibi hisler ve düşünceler uyandırdı?

b) Bu durum hakkında nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

APPENDIX G

DEBRIEFING FORM / KATILIM SONRASI BİLGİLENDİRME FORMU

Katılmış olduğunuz bu çalışmanın asıl amacı, genç yetişkinlerin yakın ilişkilerine duydukları bağlılığın ve cinsiyetlerinin, ölüm kaygısı üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Uygulama sırasında vereceğiniz cevapların etkilenmemesi, tamamen objektif olabilmesi adına, araştırmanın amacı önceden tam olarak belirtilmemiştir. Başta da belirtildiği üzere, kişisel bilgileriniz araştırmanın hiçbir aşamasında kullanılmayacaktır. Katılımınız için teşekkür ederim.

Başak DALDA