

DEFENSE MECHANISMS USED BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO COPE WITH STRESS

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ABSTRACT

People learn how to behave in a specific situation. But it's always possible to encounter new or unwanted situations which our previous experiences couldn't be enough to overcome. Tension and pressure people feels as a result of the changes in the environment is called stress, and in today's world stress is regarded as a part of the daily life. Avoiding exposure to environmental stressors and avoiding or minimizing other changes during periods of time require significant adaptation or readjustment.

This study is about university students' stress sources. Although there are tens of defense mechanisms, in this study, 10 best-known, or most commonly used defense mechanisms, are investigated. The research was conducted with the students taking the course of "psychology" thought by the researcher. After the researcher taught the subject of "defense mechanisms" found in the scope of this course, the students were asked to note down the defense mechanisms them "constantly", "occasionally" and "never" used. In order to help the students remember the 10 defense mechanisms investigated, they were provided with an informative booklet explaining these defense mechanisms briefly. A total of 587 students participated in the study.

The mechanisms the most frequently used especially by the female participants were "repression", "denial" and "displacement". The male participants' use of the mechanism of "projection" was twice higher than the female participants' use of the same mechanism. As for the mechanism of "sublimation", the female participants used this mechanism with rate twice higher than the male participants. With respect to the mechanisms most frequently used, the difference between the female and male participants was found significant only for the mechanisms of "projection" and "regression".

Key Words: Stress, defense mechanism, university students.

INTRODUCTION

On Saturday morning, you wake up, and it is almost ten o'clock. However, you have actually set up the alarm clock for eight o'clock. Didn't it ring? Or if so, didn't you hear it? Anyway, it is not the right time to think about it; you will have guests for the lunch at home. You rapidly think about what you could do to make the most of the limited time... You want to go to the toilet, but you see that the electricity has gone out. You can not take a shower as the water-heater is electrically driven. All the appliances in the kitchen are electrical. This means you will not be able to cook the foods you bought for the meal. However, you can still save the day. You can buy ready-made foods from a shopping center. It will not be perfect but better than nothing. You immediately dress up, go to the garage and run the car. At that time, you remember that the garage gate is electrical.

You go out of the car and try to open it manually, but it does not work. While you try to open the door, your clothes get stained with the rust and dirt on the door... What would you feel in such a case? If you are a common type of person like most of us, you will say you are "under stress".

People learn how to behave in a specific situation. However, when you encounter a new situation, it could not be possible to cope with that situation with the help of your previous experiences. However, we want to overcome any problem in one way or another, but we meet several obstacles in the process (Bandura and Walters, 1963).

PROBLEM

The changes that occur in the environment where individuals live are known as stress that they experience due to the desires and expectations requiring adaptation. Therefore, stress is the pressure and tension that individuals feel and could be regarded as a part of the daily life. Most of us think that stress results from such external factors as school, family, friends and illness (Dyson and Renk, 2006). However, these factors are not themselves stressful events. What makes them stressful is our interpretations and internal responses (Deniz and Yilmaz, 2005; Kaya et.al, 2007). I mean what determines stress is not just that external factor but its interaction with the individual.

University students have a number of sources of stress. These sources range from attempts to meet the academic expectations to financial problems, from adaptation to new environments to the problems experienced in establishing new friendships (Dyson and Renk, 2006). There are a number of symptoms of stress: physical, behavioral, emotional, spiritual and psychological (<http://www.burem.boun.edu.tr>).

Low level of stress could be considered positive as it provides the energy to activate the individual. However, when the level of stress is high, both productivity and the pleasure with life could decrease and problems in the relationships with the environment could occur (Morris, 2002).

Within the context above, the stress experienced by the students is important since it causes defection in memory and learning due to the energy spent by the brain in reaction to the stress (Ardıç, 2009). Therefore, awareness of the stressors for university students and of how frequently and which methods they use to cope with these stressors is important for students' success and their welfare (Köknel, 1987; Lundin, 1974; Saroson, 1972).

Coping with Stress

Whatever its source is, stress requires harmony. Psychologists discriminate between two types of harmony: direct and defensive (Fehr, 2000). Direct coping refers to any behavior demonstrated to change a disturbing situation. For example, when our needs or desires are hindered, we either try to remove the obstacle between our goal and ourselves or give up. Similarly, when we are threatened, we try to avoid the danger either by attacking or by escaping. Overcoming stress involves the behavior and thoughts of individuals to manage the results of stressful events (Folkman, 2010; Lundin, 1974; Saroson, 1972).

Defensive coping is known as ego-defense mechanisms or as subconscious efforts for adaptation. Ways for defensive coping are sub-conscious efforts to protect the self, to avoid any damage to ego or to decrease anxiety and tension (Fehr, 2000). Defensive coping includes internal and mostly subconscious conflicts that occur when we can not emotionally tolerate either bringing an intensely threatening problem to the level of consciousness or dealing directly with that situation. Defensive coping, a kind of self-deception, refers to different ways of convincing yourself of the fact that you are not really threatened or that you do not really want something that you can not get.

Freud described the typical attitudes demonstrated by individuals to decrease or avoid anxiety. He called them defense mechanisms. According to Freud, human tends to decrease tension for the purpose of decreasing anxiety and uses defense mechanisms for this purpose. Therefore, defense mechanisms serve the function of protecting individuals from anxiety. These mechanisms could be psychologically healthy or unhealthy, yet in either case, the basic purpose is to decrease the tension (Allen, 2000; Allport, 1961).

Freud defined three main types of anxiety: reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety. Reality anxiety occurs due to the real situations likely to be encountered in the environment. For example, a dog attacks as a result of a certain situation. Reality anxiety occurs due to the ego. In this type of anxiety, the most popular method for decreasing the tension is to leave the environment which could lead to damage.

Neurotic anxiety refers to subconscious fears that occur when especially subconscious sexual desires take control over ego. This type of anxiety results from the fear that might occur when subconscious desires are not met appropriately. As for moral anxiety, it occurs as a result of the fear for violating the current moral or social values. Moral anxiety occurs in the form of feeling oneself guilty and embarrassed. A comprehensive list of defense mechanisms was prepared by Anna Freud, the daughter of Freud (Fehr, 2000; Allen, 2000; Allport, 1961).

Use of Defense Mechanisms

As mentioned above, in case of any type of stress, human mind reacts in two ways. The first one involves increasing the problem-solving efforts, which is called direct coping. The second involves putting the defense mechanisms into effect. Freud's concepts and defense mechanisms are tactics developed by ego to cope with the sub-consciousness and superego. All defense mechanisms have two common characteristics. As the first one, the individual is not aware of the fact that he or she uses these mechanisms. As for the second, these somehow damage, transform or ignore the reality. It would be beneficial here to remember that the function of defense mechanisms is to change the perceived reality for the purpose of decreasing the psychological tension experienced by the individual.

Defense mechanisms are not worth focusing on when they are used unimportant conflicts and unless they damage others. They comfort us as long as they decrease the tension and thus allow us to approach to important problems in better harmony. However, when they are overused, these defensive attempts which are regarded as a way of coping with problems become harmful. They can not solve the real problem but merely decrease our anxiety regarding the problem. If specific situations make us anxious, we may encounter them from time to time and may have to face one of them sooner or later. In such a case, the level of anxiety increases, and the situation of anxiety-attack is inevitably experienced (Köknel, 1987; Morris, 2002).

Efforts made to cope with stress are called "harmony". Any factor that ruins the balance of harmony is perceived by the organism as a danger and leads to anxiety. As a result, the preventive and adaptive mechanisms of people are activated.

Today, there are tens of defense mechanisms defined by scientist (Karan et. al., 1981; Morgan, 2004). Of all the defense mechanisms, 10 best-known, or most commonly used, defense mechanisms are briefly explained below.

Denial

The most common defense mechanism is the denial or refusal of accepting a painful or threatening reality. Denial is a positive attitude in some cases, while it is not in others. For example, students who deny their need for studying and go to the cinema for a couple of times instead of studying will fail their exams. The fact that a mother who lost her son during a war refuses this reality and expects him to come back one day is a typical example for denial. As another example, a student receiving a low mark from an exam attributes this low mark to an assessment-related mistake made by the teacher.

Similarly, alcohol addicts or drug addicts deny their problems obvious to all people around them and claim that they do not have any problems. The functioning of denial mechanism gradually faces increasing difficulty when the ego matures and understands the reality better, and the individual spends more energy for denial.

Repression

Repression is the mechanism which is most common for wiping our painful feelings and memories and which removes distressing thoughts from the mind in a way not to remember them again. Soldiers demoralized in the battle field mostly try to forget their memories that cause them to collapse psychologically (Grinker and Spiegel, 1945). According to many psychologists, repression is an indicator of a person's struggle against internal

reactions (such as offensiveness) that conflict with feelings of repression. For example, as children, most of us are taught that violence and offensiveness are wrong attitudes.

This conflict between our emotions and values could lead to stress and a way of coping with this stress in a defensive manner means suppressing our emotions – in other words, it means deleting any awareness of underlying anger and hostility completely. To sum up, thanks to repression, inappropriate subconscious motives do not turn into behavior; disturbing thoughts come to the level of consciousness; and memories regarding what we did wrong in the past do not revive. What to repress depends mainly on cultural expectations and on the superego of the individual.

Denial and repression are the most basic mechanisms. In denial, we delete the situations that we fail to cope with, while in repression, we delete our internal reactions or our thoughts that we can not acknowledge. These psychological strategies constitute the bases of coping in other defensive forms.

Projection

If the problem can not be denied or repressed completely, we ruin the nature of the problem to solve it more easily. An example that could be given for this situation is reflection, in which individuals pass their repressed motives, thoughts and feelings to others. We pass our own emotions to others that we have not been able to acknowledge. Suppose you love someone, but think that your parents have always told you to behave well to others and to get along with them.

These recommendations of your parents have penetrated into your superego. When you discover that you do not actually like that person, this will cause you to feel guilty and anxious in moral aspect. The reflection mechanism will take the control and, without leading to any anxiety, create the thought of “this person does not like me”. In this way, we place the source of the conflict away from us. A director of a company who feels guilty of the way in which that company has become stronger could reflect his/her own relentless passion onto his/her colleagues. In addition, the director could also believe that his/her colleagues are relentlessly passionate and they use their power and that they only do their job.

Identification

The opposite of reflection is identification. We save ourselves from unwanted qualifications that we have repressed by passing them to others via reflection. We take the qualifications of a person via identification and share the achievements of that person in the same way. In this way, we avoid feeling ourselves inefficient. In other words, we adopt and then demonstrate the attitudes of a person whom we admire. A father who has not been able to achieve his goals in his profession shares the professional achievements of his son emotionally. Some prisoners gradually identify themselves with their guardians to cope with intolerable and inevitable stress in a defensive manner.

Regression

People under severe stress could demonstrate childish attitudes in a process called regression. Why do people demonstrate regression? According to some psychologists, an adult with the feeling of helplessness can not stand on their own legs. However, children feel themselves helpless and dependent every day. Thus, behaving like a child could make dependence or helplessness more tolerable. Although regression is not developed or appropriate, it could sometimes be used as a strategy for controlling as well. An adult having a crying jag when his/her views and thoughts are defeated could expect others to understand him/her as his/her parents did when s/he was a child.

Intellectualisation

In the defense mechanisms known as intellectualisation, a latent form of denial, we analyze our problems as an abstract level and cope with these problems as if they were of all people. In this way, we keep ourselves away from our emotions related to problems. Parents who, with the intention of argument, start talking about the difficulties experienced by their children at their new school intellectualise this saddening situation when they

later find themselves in a high level of discussion regarding educational philosophy. They seem to struggle for solving the problem, but, in fact, it is not. The reason is that they save themselves from these emotions.

Reaction-formation

This term of developing reaction refers to the behavioral form of denial that people express by exaggerating their thoughts and emotions which are totally opposite to their own feelings. Exaggeration is a clue for this behavior. A woman praising her opponent excessively might conceal her jealousy of that person's achievement. Developing a reaction could be a way of convincing oneself that his/her motives are sincere. A father with opposite feelings regarding becoming a parent could devote most of his time to his children in an effort to prove himself that he is quite a good father.

Displacement

Repressed motives and emotions refer to directing them from the actual objects to other objects that will replace the actual objects. When a person who wants a lot to become a father learns that it is impossible for him to have a child, he may then feel himself inefficient. As a result, he could attach himself excessively to his cousin or to a pet. Another example for displacement could be a woman who has to behave her manager in a friendly and obedient manner all day at work yet who shouts at her husband or child at home.

Sublimation

Sublimation refers to transformation of repressed motives or emotions into more acceptable forms in social terms. Offensiveness may push a person into competitiveness in the business environment or in sports. A strong and insistent desire for attracting others' attention may push a person to get interested in politics or performing arts. It is a clear fact that people who can transform their incentives of sexuality and offensiveness into more acceptable forms in social terms are in a better condition.

The reason is that they could satisfy their instinctive motives with feelings of little anxiety and guilt. Moreover, the society will benefit from the efforts and energy of such people that they spend in useful social activities related to fine arts, literature and science. We see that there are a number of different ways of coping with stress in a defensive manner. Could defensive coping be a clear sign for the fact that a person is not matured or consistent and that he is on the verge of "dissociation"? There will be no answer to this question in any way. The effects of everlasting stress could be so severe that in some cases, defensive coping not only contributes to our whole adaptation skill but also become a necessity to survive. Even in not much excessive cases, people could apply defense mechanisms to cope with stress and problems in daily life. As pointed out by Coleman and colleagues (1987), defense mechanisms are "necessary to soften failure, to soothe tension and anxiety, to fix the emotional damage and to maintain our feelings of efficacy and valuableness." Any defense mechanism could be considered to be incongruous when it hinders a person's functional capacity or when it leads to problems rather than solving them.

Fantasy-formation- day dreaming

Sweet imagination, or fantasy formation, is a way of relaxation for a person who tries to overcome the conflicts via imagination. In fantasy formation, people do not regard the events as they but imagine them as what they want them to be. People not only give up thinking about the real situation that could lead them to anxiety or frustration but also satisfy the frustrated motives at least for a certain period of time. A boy who is not respected by girls but who wants a lot to be respected could develop the fantasy of Don Juan.

A young girl who feel ashamed in a social environment and who remembers this with pain could satisfy herself by imagining wonderful things that she could have done. Fantasy formation is seen especially among adults. Studies conducted demonstrate that almost all university students allocate a majority of their time to imagination rather than studying their lessons. To a certain extent, imagination is a harmless way of avoiding realities temporarily. However, constructive activities are quite rare.

There are several other ways to cope with stress in defensive manner. Is defensive coping an obvious sign of the fact that the person has not matured enough yet and that he or she is not consistent and on the verge of

“dissociation”? The answer to this question is absolutely not “No”. There could be extremely severe effects of long-term stress. In some cases, defensive coping not only contributes to our adaptation skills but also could become necessary to go on living. In moderate cases, people could put into practice defense mechanisms to cope with daily life problems and stress.

As pointed out by Coleman and colleagues (1987), “defense is necessary to soothe failure, to decrease tension and anxiety, to fix the emotional damage, and to maintain our feelings of being valuable and efficient.” Any defense mechanism can be regarded as inadaptability only when it hinders the individual’s ability to become functional or leads to new problems rather than solving the current ones.

The present study aimed at examining the extent to which university students use 10 defense mechanisms mentioned above.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the present study was to determine which psychological defense mechanisms and how frequently university students attending communication sciences use. For this purpose, the following questions were directed:

- What are the defense mechanisms most frequently used by students?
- What are the defense mechanisms occasionally used by students?
- What are the defense mechanisms never used by students?

METHOD

The present study was conducted with students taking the course of “Psychology” taught by the researcher at the Faculty of Communication Sciences at Anadolu University in the academic year of 2007-2008. After the researcher taught the subject of “defense mechanisms” found in the scope of this course, the students were asked to note down the defense mechanisms they “constantly”, “occasionally” and “never” used. In order to help the students remember the 10 defense mechanisms investigated, they were provided with an informative booklet explaining these defense mechanisms briefly.

A total of 587 students, 235 of whom were female and 352 of whom were male, participated in the study. However, the number of the students responding to the questions remained under fifty percent of the total number of participating students. As the ages and education levels of the students were the same, the only independent variable was taken as gender, and the students’ responses were evaluated with respect to gender. The responses given to each question were organized depending on the number and percentage of the female and male participants. In addition, Independent Samples t-test was conducted to see whether there was a significant difference between the female and male participants in their responses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained via the participating students’ responses regarding which of the 10 defense mechanisms the students “most frequently”, “occasionally” and “never” used.

According to Table 1, there was no difference between the mechanisms that the female and male students “most frequently” used. The mechanisms the most frequently used especially by the female participants were “repression”, “denial” and “displacement”. On the other hand, the male participants’ use of the mechanism of “projection” was twice higher than the female participants’ use of the same mechanism. As for the mechanism of “sublimation”, the female participants used this mechanism with rate twice higher than the male participants.

Table 1: Distribution of the Responses to the most frequently used defense mechanisms with respect to gender

	Gender	Female		Male		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Denial	15	17.5	20	13.4	35	14.9
2	Repression	16	18.6	25	16.8	41	17.5
3	Projection	4	4.7	16	10.8	20	8.5
4	Identification	7	8.1	10	6.7	17	7.2
5	Regression	6	7.0	10	6.7	16	6.8
6	Intellectualism	8	9.3	13	8.7	21	9.0
7	Reaction formation	5	5.8	16	10.8	21	8.9
8	Displacement	13	15.1	21	14.1	34	14.5
9	Sublimation	7	8.1	6	4.0	13	5.5
10	Imagination	5	5.8	12	8.0	17	7.2
	TOTAL	86	100	149	100	235	100

The higher levels of such mechanisms as denial and repression both for male and female participants are regarded as a general feature of raising a child in traditional and conservative societies. In these societies, as the problems experienced by the male and female children are solved by the family members at home and by the representatives of the authority at school, it is believed that children can not develop their problem solving skills efficiently. Depending on this, when children encounter a problem, they either ignore - "deny" - that problem or delay - "repress" it to solve in the future - mostly because they are ugly events. In addition, the mechanisms of denial and repression are those frequently used together (<http://www.cerezforum.com/>).

Another defense mechanism most frequently used by the female and male participants was that of displacement. In patriarchal and traditional societies, anger, which generally occurs as a result of conflict and frustration, can not always be directed to the authority to find a solution. Thus, anger is directed from the actual object or person towards other objects or people that will show less or no reaction. In other words, the mechanism of "displacement" is used. When the defense mechanisms least frequently used were examined, it was seen that the mechanism of sublimation was in the first place. In terms of the way of child rearing, in conservative societies, the child can neither discover nor use his or her innate skills. There are a number of reasons for this as follows.

- The parents impose their own wishes instead of making the child free in his or her preferences in education
- Low level of welfare
- Inefficient individualization of education
- Inefficient services of guidance
- Lack of educational environments in which children can discover their skills
- Failure to apply the credit system as desired at universities

Due to the factors mentioned above and to other possible ones, children can not recognize their own skills and may develop a feeling of inferiority. This situation makes it possible for them to use the defense mechanism of sublimation successfully.

Depending on the clear differences between the female and male participants, the fact that the male participants' level of use of the mechanism of projection was twice higher than the female participants' level of use of the same mechanism could be explained with the principle feature of traditional societies. It is thought that most of the responsibilities of a man are carried out by his mother and sisters when he is a child and by his girlfriend or wife when he becomes an adult. As a result, a man thinks that a fault or a difficulty in a situation always results from other people. This situation could explain why the male participants used the mechanism of projection twice as much as the female participants.

Table 2: Significance levels regarding the responses to the defense mechanisms most frequently used by the research universe

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
3.Defense Mechanism	49.543	.000*	-3.438	585	.001	-.065	.019	-.102	-.028
			-3.104	335.963	.002*	-.065	.021	-.107	-.024
4.Defense Mechanism	1.162	.282	-.540	585	.590	-.010	.018	-.046	.026
			-.530	468.950	.597	-.010	.019	-.046	.027
5.Defense Mechanism	23.296	.000*	-2.384	585	.017	-.033*	.014	-.059	-.006

Women are more extravert than men thanks to the feature of their gender and use their oral communication skills better than men. As a natural result of this, they can establish more relationships with both sexes than men can. Women can also discover their skills at an earlier age with the support of their friends than men. This allows women to use their different qualifications that they think are better rather than those qualifications that they think they should improve (the defense mechanism of sublimation). With respect to the mechanisms most frequently used, the difference between the female and male participants was found significant only for the mechanisms of "projection" and "regression" (see Table 2).

Table 3: Distribution of the responses regarding the defense mechanisms occasionally used with respect to gender

	Defence Mechanism	Female		Male		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Denial	29	13.1	33	14.0	62	13.6
2	Repression	52	23.4	60	25.5	112	24.5
3	Projection	22	9.9	10	4.3	32	7.0
4	Identification	13	5.8	16	6.8	29	6.3
5	Regression	11	4.9	5	2.1	16	3.5
6	Intellectualism	25	11.3	38	16.2	63	13.8
7	Reaction formation	9	4.1	8	3.4	17	3.7
8	Displacement	26	11.7	27	11.5	53	11.6
9	Sublimation	12	5.4	7	23.0	19	4.2
10	Imagination	23	10.4	31	13.3	54	11.8
	TOTAL	222	100	235	100	457	100

According to Table 3, the mechanisms occasionally used by the female and male participants were "repression", "intellectualization" and "denial". In addition, the mechanisms of "imagination" and "displacement" were rarely used. The most striking finding in the Table was the fact that the rare use of the mechanism of "sublimation" was almost four times higher for the male participants. The fact that the

occasionally-used mechanisms were quite similar to those frequently used could be explained with the fact that the female and male students used the same frequently-used mechanisms when they needed. The use of the defense mechanism of sublimation was four times higher for the male participants than it was for the female participants. The fact that the male participants occasionally used this mechanism supports the view that women are better than men in using the communication skills mentioned in Table 1. In other words, women always use the defense mechanism of sublimation, while men occasionally use it.

Table 4: The significance levels of the responses regarding the defense mechanisms occasionally used by the research universe

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
2.Defense Mechanism	Equal variances assumed	.563	.212	.609	585	.543	.014	.023	-.032	.060
	Equal variances Not assumed			.628	550.552	.530	.014	.023	-.030	.059
3.Defense Mechanism	Equal variances assumed	6.535	.000	2.009	585	.045	.037	.018	.001	.073
	Equal variances not assumed			2.268	546.109	.024	.037	.016	.005	.069
4.Defense Mechanism	Equal variances assumed	.038	.846	-.097	585	.922	-.001	.014	-.029	.026
	Equal variances not assumed			-.097	493.479	.923	-.001	.014	-.029	.027

According to the results of the t-test conducted (Table 4) to see whether the difference between the female and male participants was significant in terms of the occasionally-used mechanisms, the difference in the use of the mechanism of "projection" was found significant at the significance level of .05. This result supports the previous view that "men use the mechanism of project more than women."

Table 5 presents the defense mechanisms that the students did not ever want to use. According to the Table, the mechanisms that were avoided by the students were found to be "denial", "reaction formation" and "displacement".

Table 5: Distribution of the responses given to the defense mechanisms avoided by the students

	Defence Mechanism	Female		Male		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Denial	15	17.7	30	18.3	45	17.7
2	Repression	4	4.4	11	6.7	15	5.9
3	Projection	15	16.7	17	10.4	32	12.6
4	Identification	10	11.1	13	7.9	23	9.1
5	Regression	10	11.1	18	11.0	28	11.0
6	Intellectualism	3	3.3	4	2.4	7	2.7
7	Reaction formation	13	14.5	21	12.8	34	13.4
8	Displacement	14	15.6	19	11.6	33	13.0
9	Sublimation	3	3.3	14	8.5	17	6.7
10	Imagination	3	3.3	17	10.4	20	7.9
	TOTAL	90	100	164	100	254	100

It is seen that the students did not complain much about the mechanism of “repression” although it was one of the two most frequently used mechanisms (see Table 1).

The mechanisms of “denial”, “reaction formation” and “displacement” are frequently seen together with psychological problems and pathologies. These are the mechanisms which are claimed by psychologists to be the unsuccessful one among the defense mechanisms and to result in mental disorders (Öztürk, 1981) and which are found significant in terms of communication problems and difficulties. In this respect, it could be stated that the female and male participants in the present study have health tendencies.

Although it seems to be a contradictory result that the mechanism of denial is both the most frequently used mechanism and the one avoided, it indicates ambivalence, one of the most frequent cases experienced by adults who are in the period of adolescence (Öztürk, 1981).

As intellectualism, the last one among the defense mechanisms avoided most, is a beneficial and successful defense mechanism in terms of its use (Öztürk, 1981), the female and male subjects in the present study could be said to make psychologically healthy selections.

The analysis conducted to see whether the difference between the responses regarding the defense mechanisms avoided was significant or not (Table 6) revealed that the difference between the female and male participants was found significant at the significance level of .05 in terms of the use of such mechanisms as “sublimation” and “imagination”.

Table 6: Significance levels of the responses regarding the defense mechanisms avoided by the research universe

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means									
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower			
9.Defense Mechanism	Equal variances assumed	15.202	.000	1.914	585	.056	.027	.014					
	Equal variances not assumed			2.118	573.654	.035	.027	.013	.002	.052			
10.Defense Mechanism	Equal variances assumed	22.912	.000	2.332	585	.020	.036	.015	.006	.065			
	Equal variances not assumed			2.614	557.614	.009	.036	.014	.009	.062			

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