

The Predictive Role Of Self-Control and Interpersonal Relationship Style in Explaining Relationship Satisfaction in Emerging Adulthood¹

Beliren Yetişkinlikte İlişki Doyumunun Açıklanmasında Öz-Denetimin ve Kişilerarası İlişki Tarzının Yordayıcı Rolü

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine whether the romantic relationship satisfaction of emerging adults is predicted by their self-control levels and interpersonal relationship styles. The study group consisted of 293 individuals between the ages of 18-30 years. The Romantic Relationship Satisfaction Scale was used to measure relationship satisfaction, the Self-Control Scale was used to measure self-control behaviors patterns, and the Interpersonal Style Scale was used to measure negative communication styles. Findings revealed that romantic relationship satisfaction is predicted by self-control and interpersonal style. Positive and significant relationships were found between the reformative and experiential sub-dimensions of the Self-Control Scale and relationship satisfaction. A negative significant relationship was found between the avoidant style sub-dimension of the Interpersonal Style Scale and relationship satisfaction. The findings are discussed in the context of the current literature and various suggestions are presented.

Keywords: Emerging adulthood, relationship satisfaction, self-control, interpersonal style.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, beliren yetişkinlerin romantik ilişki doyumlarının özdenetim düzeyleri ve kişilerarası ilişki tarzları tarafından yordanıp yordamadığını incelemektir. Çalışma grubu 18-30 yaş arası 293 kişiden oluşmaktadır. İlişki doyumunu ölçmek için Romantik İlişki Doyumu Ölçeği, özdenetim davranışları örüntülerini ölçmek için Kendini Kontrol Ölçeği ve olumsuz iletişim biçimlerini ölçmek için Kişilerarası Tarz Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, romantik ilişki doyumunun özdenetim ve kişilerarası tarz tarafından yordandığını ortaya koymuştur. Öz-denetimin iyileştirici ve deneyimsel alt boyutları ile ilişki doyumunu arasında pozitif yönde ve anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Kişilerarası tarzın kaçınan tarz alt boyutu ile ilişki doyumunu arasında negatif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Bulgular mevcut alanyazın doğrultusunda tartışılmış ve çeşitli öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beliren yetişkinlik, ilişki doyumunu, öz-denetim, kişilerarası tarz.

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INTRODUCTION

In the last half century, changes have begun in the roles of young people during the transition to adulthood. Increasing age of marriage and becoming parents, widening participation in education, and prolonging the education period have extended into adulthood. For most young people, from the late teens to the late twenties is a period when they discover opportunities in love and work and slowly move towards making permanent choices (Arnett, 2009). This period, which corresponds to the age range of 18-29 years, was named emerging adulthood by Arnett (2000, 2009).

Emerging adulthood is a time when young people are willing to explore as many options as possible. This gives them the opportunity to enter different social environments and develop new relationships. Romantic relationships have an important effect on the development of the individual in emerging adulthood, where identity exploration is experienced in love and rapid cognitive, social and emotional changes occur (Eryılmaz & Ercan, 2010).

When the literature is reviewed, one of the most important reasons emerging adults apply to university psychological counseling centers is the difficulties they experience in romantic relationships (Eryılmaz & Ercan, 2010; Creasey, Kershaw & Boston, 1999). Studies show that romantic relationship satisfaction has positive relationships with happiness, subjective well-being and life satisfaction. This information shows that it is important to study romantic relationship satisfaction and the factors affecting it for the psychological health of the individual (Korkut-Owen, Demirbaş-Çelik, Doğan, 2017).

Interpersonal relationship styles are important for romantic relationships as they affect communication that is established with the partner positively and negatively. To effectively resolve conflicts that spoil romantic relationships, it is necessary to communicate effectively, to express feelings and thoughts appropriately and consistently, to have constructive discussions; that is, to have a positive interpersonal style (Atak & Taştan, 2012). The fact that positive interpersonal style is necessary for happy and satisfying relationships reveals the importance of studies about interpersonal style (Gottman, 2011 as cited in Atak & Taştan, 2012). Also, interpersonal relationships have a very important place in matters such as the level of satisfaction and happiness individuals receive from life, as well as establishing friendships and loving relationships. The interpersonal styles learned through early life experiences enable people to live their lives more sincerely and effectively in every developmental period (Koç, 2014).

Self-control refers to the capacity of the individual to change and control their own reactions. It is the ability to adjust one's reactions in a way that is beneficial to ideals, values, social expectations and future long-term goals (Baumeister et. al, 2007). In other words, lack of self-control increases the tendency to behave inappropriately for one's goals and well-being. There are many studies that show that the level of self-control has a broadly positive relationship with well-being and functionality of romantic relationships (Zuo et al., 2020). Due to this information, it was determined to be important to investigate the effect of self-control on relationship satisfaction.

In this context, analyzing whether romantic relationship satisfaction of emerging adults

is predicted by their self-control levels and interpersonal relationship styles will be an important source of information for theoretical studies about romantic relationships. The aim of this study is to examine how the romantic relationship satisfaction of emerging adults is predicted by their self-control levels and interpersonal relationship styles. Accordingly, the purpose of the study the main research question is determined as; “Is the romantic relationship satisfaction of emerging adults predicted by their self-control levels and interpersonal relationship styles?”

METHOD

The design of the study, study group, instruments, data collection process, and data analysis are presented in this section.

Design

In this study, correlational design was used to investigate the relationships between relationship satisfaction, self-control and interpersonal styles of emerging adults. The dependent variable in this research is relationship satisfaction, while the independent variables are self-control and interpersonal relationship styles.

Study Group

The study group consisted of emerging adults whose ages ranged from 18 to 30. A total of 334 participants were reached via online sampling. Since 41 individuals did not meet the criterion of being in the 18-30 age range and were not included in the study group, the number of participants was determined as 293. The demographics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
	Male	Female					
Gender	<i>n</i> 94	199					293
	% 32,1	67,9					100
	Married	Single					
Marital Status	<i>n</i> 69	224					293
	% 23,5	76,5					100
	In a Relation	Not					
RS for Single	<i>n</i> 139	85					224
	% 61,8	38,2					100
	Secondary sch.	High sch.	Pre-undergraduate	Undergraduate	Master	Doctoral	
Educational St.	<i>n</i> 1	20	25	200	46	1	293
	% 0,3	6,8	8,5	68,3	15,8	0,3	100

When the demographics are examined, participants consists 199 females (67.9%) and 94 males (32.1%). The mean age was found to be 25 years. Among participants, 224 stated that they were single (76.5%) and 69 were married (23.5%). A total of 139 out of 224 participants who were single stated that they were currently in a relationship (61.8%). Marital duration of married participants was found to be minimum 1 month to maximum 8 years, and the mean marital duration was 4 years. Relationship duration of single participants currently in a romantic relationship was minimum 1 month and maximum 8 years, and the mean was found to be 1 year. With regard to the variable of educational level, 1 participant (0.3%) had graduated

secondary school, 20 (6.8%) had graduated high school, 25 (8.5%) were studying associate degrees, 200 (68.3%) were undergraduates and 47 (16.1%) had graduated.

Instruments

In this study, the Demographics Form, which was prepared by the researchers, was used to obtain demographic information of participants. The Relationship Satisfaction Scale was used to measure the romantic relationship satisfaction level, the Self-Control Scale was used to measure the structures and behavior patterns of self-control behaviors and the Interpersonal Style Scale was used to measure negative communication styles between individuals in interpersonal relationships.

Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The Relationship Satisfaction Scale was developed by Hendrick (1988). The scale is a 7-point Likert-type scale consisting of 7 items in total. The items on the scale are scored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 7 and the highest score is 49. Items 4 and 7 are reverse-scored. As the scores obtained from the scale increase, the romantic relationship satisfaction also increases. The adaptation study for the Relationship Satisfaction Scale into Turkish was conducted by Curun (2001) with 140 university students who were in romantic relationships. According to factor analysis, the scale had a one-factor structure and this factor was found to explain 52% of the total variance. The internal consistency coefficient of the adapted scale was determined as .86. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was found to be .92 in this study.

Self-Control Scale. The Self-Control Scale was developed by Rosenbaum (1980) to measure individual self-control behaviors and their tendency to use these behaviors when encountering problems in daily life. The scale consists of 36 items and three different dimensions; experiential self-control, reformative self-control, and redressive self-control. Redressive self-control includes behaviors that affect individuals' feelings and thoughts about their goals. These behaviors help individuals to balance and ensure redress. Reformative self-control includes behaviors of individuals about change processes. Experiential self-control includes behaviors that enable individuals to favor enjoyable activities (Rosenbaum, 1993). Items 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 29 and 35 are reverse items on the scale. The total score that can be obtained from the Experiential Self-Control and Redressive Self-Control subscales are between -33 and +33. The total score that can be obtained from the Reformative Self-Control subscale varies between -42 and +42, and the total score that can be obtained from the whole Self-Control Scale varies between -108 and +108. High scores from the scale indicate higher self-control level; low scores mean that the level of self-control is low.

The Turkish validity and reliability study for the self-control scale was conducted by Duyan, Gülden, and Gelbal (2012) with 1796 university students. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the whole self-control scale was found to be .81. For the Experiential Self-Control sub-scale, Reformative Self-Control sub-scale and Redressive Self-Control sub-scale, the Cronbach alpha values were .84; .76 and .73, respectively. The Cronbach alpha value for the whole scale was found to be .77 in this study, while it was calculated as .64, .74 and .74 for the sub-scales of the scale, respectively.

Interpersonal Style Scale. The Interpersonal Style Scale was developed by Şahin et al. (2007) in order to determine the negative communication styles and communication barriers that individuals use in interpersonal relationships. The scale is a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 60 items. The items are answered according to the question "How much does it describe you?". 0% is 1 point; 25% 2 points; 50% 3 points; 75% is evaluated with 4 points and 100% with 5 points. Accordingly, the lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is 60 and the highest score is 300. Higher scores on the scale and sub-factors indicate that the individuals use the relevant negative relationship style more. As a result of investigating the factor structure of the scale and the validity and reliability study, 6 factors were found. These are: dominant style, avoidant style, angry style, emotion avoiding/insensitive style, manipulative style, and sarcastic/sardonic style. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .93. The reliability coefficients obtained for the factor subscales were .88 for the dominant style sub-scale (number of items: 14); .79 for the avoidant style sub-scale (number of items: 11); .79 for the angry style subscale (number of items: 9); .77 for the emotion-avoiding style sub-scale (number of items: 11); .74 for the manipulative style sub-scale (number of items: 10); and .67 for the sardonic style sub-scale (number of items: 5) (Şahin et al. 2007).

In this study, the Cronbach alpha value for the whole scale was .95. For the dominant style sub-scale, this value was .91; for the avoidant style sub-scale .83; for the angry style sub-scale .83; for the emotion-avoiding style sub-scale .79; for the manipulative style sub-scale, .79; and for the sardonic style sub-scale .70.

Data Collection Process

Ethics committee approval was obtained from Yeditepe University Social Sciences Ethics Committee before data collection process. The scales and demographics were transferred to online platforms and the data were collected through e-mail sampling. In the online data collection form, individuals were informed about the purpose of the research. Volunteers were asked to fill the scales which were shared on various online social platforms. It took about 15 minutes to fill out the data forms and was filled in without any time limit.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the data, the data set was checked, and the participants who did not meet the 18-30 age range criteria were not included in the analysis. The reverse items were inverted. Normality test was conducted to determine whether the data were normally distributed. As a result, it was concluded that the data showed normal distribution according to the kurtosis and skewness values. Parametric tests were used in the analysis due to the normal distribution of the data set. Descriptive statistical values and variables of age, gender, marital status, romantic relationship status, relationship and duration of marriage, and income level were analyzed. In order to answer the main question of the study, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the romantic relationship satisfaction was predicted by self-control, interpersonal style and the sub-dimensions of these scales.

RESULTS

Correlations

Correlations between variables in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1-Relationship Satisfaction	1											
2-Self-control	.27**	1										
3-Experiential self-control	.29**	.55**	1									
4-Reformative self-control	.16**	.77**	.10	1								
5-Redressive self-control	.10	.74**	.05	.50**	1							
6-Interpersonal style	-.05	-.25**	-.25**	-.18**	-.07	1						
7-Dominant style	-.03	-.23**	-.22**	-.18**	-.07	.91**	1					
8-Avoidant style	-.12*	-.20**	-.26**	-.14*	-.02	.86**	.67**	1				
9-Angry style	-.02	-.28**	-.27**	-.14*	-.18**	.82**	.73**	.61**	1			
10- Emotion avoiding style	-.01	-.10	-.17**	-.10	-.07	.70**	.55**	.61**	.39**	1		
11-Manipulative	-.06	-.21**	-.21**	-.18**	-.04	.84**	.71**	.71**	.60**	.51**	1	
12-Sarcastic style	-.02	-.15**	-.03	-.19**	-.08	.71**	.64**	.52**	.61**	.35**	.52	1

n=293, *p<.05, **p<.01

Regression Findings

Regression findings about relationship satisfaction and self-control are presented in Table 3 and regression findings about interpersonal style are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. Regression findings of relationship satisfaction to self-control

Relationship satisfaction (Constant)	B	SE	β	t	p
Relationship satisfaction (Constant)	2,29	.64		3,57	.00
Experiential Self Control	.50	.09	.28	5,09	.00
Reformative Self Control	.30	.12	.14	2,44	.02

n=293, R=.325, R²=.105, F=17.09, p<.05

As seen in Table 3, experiential self-control (B=.50, p=.00) and reformative self-control (B=.30, p=.01) significantly predicted relationship satisfaction in positive way. These two variables explained 11% of the variance in total relationship satisfaction (R²=.11, p<.05).

Table 4. Regression findings about relationship satisfaction with interpersonal style

Interpersonal Style Scale (Constant)	B	SE	β	t	p
Interpersonal Style Scale (Constant)	5,97	.26		22,92	.00
Avoidant Style	-.25	.12	-.12	-2,09	.04

n=293, R=.121, R²=.15, F=4.35, p<.05

As seen in Table 4, avoidant style (B= -.25, p=.04) negatively and significantly predicted relationship satisfaction. This variable explained 15% of the variance in total relationship satisfaction (R²=.15, p<.05).

DISCUSSION

According to the current findings and previous research, reformative self-control and experiential self-control have positive and significant effects on relationship satisfaction. The reason for this may be that experiential self-control enables people to acquire new life repertoires that support their individual development. This process includes skills that guide

people to perform enjoyable activities by diminishing the intervention of cognitive control processes (Rosenbaum, 1993). Experiential self-control skills ensure spouses to stay in the moment and enjoy being companions with each other. On the other hand, reformative self-control involves behaviors that guide the individual's change process in a rational manner. Instead of a behavior that is more attractive, the individual performs a new behavior that is more appropriate but less likely to occur (Rosenbaum, 1993). For example, when spouses are in conflict, their ability to control their anger and other emotions can be included in reformative self-control. As a result, since it is known that romantic relationships are directly related to psychological and physical well-being and engaging in and enjoying activities conducted with a partner, it is thought that reformative self-control and experiential self-control skills will increase relationship satisfaction.

When the regression findings for relationship satisfaction with interpersonal style are considered, the avoidant sub-dimension significantly but negatively predicted relationship satisfaction. In other words, the regression analysis predicted that as the avoidant style scores of the participants increase, their relationship satisfaction will decrease. Considering the relevant literature, positive interpersonal communication has a positive correlation with areas that are directly related to romantic relationship satisfaction, such as life satisfaction and well-being. Interpersonal style refers to the behaviors and interaction patterns that the individual exhibits in general in various relationships and situations (Batıgün & Şahin, 2009). Also, many issues such as happiness, personal success and making new friendships depend on relationships with others (Hasta & Güler, 2013). Therefore when the individual has success in interpersonal style, it is predicted that their romantic relationship satisfaction will also increase. Talking about their romantic relationships is an opportunity for partners to solve their problems together. Having an avoidant style prevents expressing emotions in the relationship and overcoming the problems experienced. This situation is thought to reduce relationship satisfaction, as is the result of this study.

Limitations and Suggestions

The number of participants in this study was 293. Of these, 199 were female and 94 were male. The distribution according to marital status was 69 married and 224 single. At this point, it is thought that closer female-male and married-single ratios may give more accurate results for future studies. In addition, 225 of the participants (76.8%) were university graduates in terms of education level; it is recommended to study a larger group that is more diverse in the future.

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