

Ambivalent Sexism, Submissive Behaviors, and Positive and Negative Affect as Predictor of Marital Adjustment

(Evlilik Uyumunun Yordayıcısı Olarak Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik,
Boyun Eğici Davranışlar ve Pozitif ve Negatif
Duygu Durumu)

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Abstract

In this study, marital adjustment level of individuals was investigated in terms of their ambivalent sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affect. The data was collected with Marital Adjustment Scale, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Submissive Behaviors Scale, and Positive and Negative Affect Scale from 378 married individuals. The relationships between the variables were analyzed by Pearson's correlation coefficient, t-test, and regression analysis. The findings showed that marital adjustment of married individuals was positively correlated with positive affect and negatively correlated with negative affect. On the other hand, marital adjustment was not significantly related to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and submissive behaviors. Furthermore, the findings showed that negative affect positively related to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, submissive behaviors. The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that marital adjustment was positively predicted by positive affect; however, it was negatively predicted by negative affect. Lastly, the present study results showed that marital adjustment and benevolent sexism did not differ significantly between the genders; however, there was a significant difference between genders in terms of hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affects.

Keywords: Marital adjustment, ambivalent sexism, submissive behaviors, positive and negative affect, multiple regression analysis.

Özet

Bu araştırmada, evli bireylerin evlilik uyum düzeyleri, çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik, boyun eğici davranışlar ve pozitif ve negatif duygu durumu açısından incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri Evlilik Uyum Ölçeği, Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik Envanteri, Boyun Eğici Davranışlar Ölçeği ve Pozitif ve Negatif Duygu Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu 378 evli bireyden oluşmaktadır. Verilerin analizinde korelasyon analizi, t-testi ve çoklu regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Korelasyon analizi sonuçları incelendiğinde evlilik uyumunun pozitif duygu durumu ile pozitif ve negatif duygu durumu ile negatif bir ilişkisinin olduğu görülmektedir. Ancak, evlilik uyumunun boyun eğici davranışlar ve düşmanca ve korumacı cinsiyetçilik ile ilişkili olmadığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, negatif duygu durumunun boyun eğici davranışlar ve düşmanca ve korumacı cinsiyetçilik ile pozitif bir ilişkisinin olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çoklu regresyon analizi sonucu evlilik uyumunun pozitif ve negatif duygu durumu tarafından yordandığı görülmüştür. Diğer taraftan, boyun eğici davranışların ve düşmanca ve korumacı cinsiyetçiliğin evlilik uyumunu yordamadığı bulunmuştur. Son olarak araştırma sonucunda, evli bireylerin evlilik uyumu ve korumacı cinsiyetçilik düzeyinin cinsiyete göre önemli bir biçimde farklılaşmadığı, ancak evli bireylerin düşmanca cinsiyetçilik, boyun eğici davranış ve pozitif ve negatif duygu düzeyinin cinsiyete göre önemli bir biçimde farklılaştığı görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Evlilik uyumu, çelişik duygulu cinsiyetçilik, boyun eğici davranışlar, pozitif ve negatif duygu durumu, çoklu regresyon analizi.

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Introduction

Marital Adjustment

Calhoun (1990) defines adjustment as the interaction individuals have with themselves, other people and the external world whereas Guthrie (1968) defines it as individuals' making a change in an undesired behavior of another one in the interaction or of his own by compromising. Briefly, adjustment is the capacity of individuals' maintaining their relationship with people they interact and changing behaviors in a mutually desired way. Adaptable people have better social relationships and experience less conflicts than others (Berry & Hansen, 2000; Cote & Moskowitz, 1998; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Just like an individual in a social environment having to get along with others in order to maintain his life, he should have marital adjustment in order to be happy in his marriage.

Researchers have defined marital adjustment in several ways. Marital adjustment is partners' sharing their interest, goals, values, and perspectives and it is their personal evaluations about their level of relationship satisfaction (Yeşilyaprak, 2003). Another definition claims that marital adjustment is dynamic, not static. Instead of implying one's adjustment to another, it is each partner's attempt to balance the relationship by using their own knowledge and skills for a mutual purpose (Crow, 1967).

Studies have shown that demographic variables affect marital adjustment. It has been found a relationship between marital adjustment and duration of marriage, family life cycle, employment status, education level and number of children (Demiray, 2006; Gürsoy, 2004; Kudiaki, 2002; Storaasli, & Markman, 1990; Ünsaldı, 2004). The studies which investigate the relationship between duration of marriage and marital adjustment (Demiray, 2006; Lucas & Clark, 2003) have demonstrated that as duration of marriage increases, level of marital adjustment decreases. Researches about the relationship between personality and marital adjustment have found out that marital adjustment is positively correlated with openness, tolerance, and conscience but negatively correlated with neurotic and perfectionist personality characteristics (Tuncay, 2006) and that depressed individuals have lower level of marital adjustment (Crowther, 1985; Kastro, 1998).

Sexism

Marital adjustment is related to each partners' perceptions about gender roles. Therefore, sexism is also believed to affect marital adjustment. According to Timisi (1998), any behavior, attitude, or activity which reflects women as minor and inferior and using institutional and ideological means for these purposes is sexism. People have internalized society's stereotyped expectations about men's and women's behaviors during socialization and have maintained these stereotypes, which have positive and negative features, consciously or unconsciously. As a result, because of these stereotypes women have been stuck in a weak position and have been discriminated (Sakallı-Uğurlu, 2003).

There are studies indicating that attitudes towards women become more egalitarian, especially among women, over time, and that feminism and sexual revolution has been effective for this attitude change in America (Twenge, 1997). This research was also supported by findings of a longitudinal study conducted by Spence and Hahn (1997). Despite

the fact that research findings have revealed a positive change in negative attitudes towards women over time, it is also possible to find studies about the ongoing existence of sexist traits in textbooks or media (Helvacioğlu, 1994; Severage, 1998; Asan, 2006; İmamoğlu & Yasak-Gültekin, 1993).

The relationship between ambivalent sexism and marital adjustment (Güçlü-Ergin, 2008), romantic relationship satisfaction (Curun, 2001), gender-role ideology in marriage (Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009), attitudes towards abuse and separation (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Ulu, 2003; Glick, Sakallı-Uğurlu, Ferreira, & Souza, 2002), attachment (Yakushko, 2005), attitudes towards female managers, (Beydoğan, 2001; Özkan, 2006), attitudes towards violence against women (Işık, 2008), sexism in textbooks (Helvacioğlu, 1994; Severage, 1998; Asan, 2006), and attitudes towards sexual abuse have been examined. However, there are few studies about the relationship between ambivalent sexism and marital adjustment.

Submissive Behaviors

Submissive behaviors may also have an effect on marital adjustment. Individuals may act submissively to resist their wishes and to control themselves or to use these acts as a defense mechanism (Gilbert, 2001; Odacı, 2007). Submissive behaviors are preferred in stressful situations where the person gives up and when he has heightened arousal and heightened tension (Gilbert, & Allan, 1994).

The concept of submissiveness in social rank theory is person's perceiving himself as inferior and second-class comparing to others in his social support system. Studies have found out that there is a relationship between submissive behaviors and psychological disorders such as depression and social phobia (Ceyhan, Ceyhan, Kurtyılmaz, 2005; O'Connor, Berry, Weiss, & Gilbert, 2002).

Social rank theory and submissive behaviors have mostly been investigated by Gilbert (2000, 2001). Individuals who usually exhibit submissive behaviors in their relationships find themselves less valuable and important; they cannot behave freely, and their right to speak is limited. They frequently apologize for their mistakes and have difficulties to express their negative emotions to others. They are not able to be in leadership positions and to initiate easily; they have low self-esteem and they avoid taking responsibilities, making changes and making eye contact with others (Gilbert & Allan, 1994).

Studies have showed that submissive behaviors are related with marital satisfaction (Hünler, & Gençöz, 2003), gender (Tekin & Filiz, 2008; Kabasakal, 2007; McCreary & Rhodes, 2001; Odacı, 2007; Öngen, 2006; Yıldırım, 2004), depression (Cheung, Gilbert, & Irons, 2004; Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, & Irons, 2003; O'Connor et al., 2002; Öngen, 2006), violence (Kaya, Gülsen, Kaya, & Pehlivan, 2004; Kabasakal, 2007), self-compassion (Akin, 2009), academic achievements (Yıldırım & Ergene, 2003), hopelessness (Tekin & Filiz, 2008), and suicide (Görgülü, 2009).

Positive and Negative Affect

Emotions experienced as a reaction to several events have an important place in shaping behaviors of individuals. According to some researchers (Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995; Ostir, Smith, Smith, & Ottenbacher, 2005), emotions, which are essential for human

life, and which affect people's life in terms of their behavioral and personal characteristics towards others, especially those in a close relationship, is categorized in two distinctive dimensions. While positive affect is defined as joy and pleasure of living, negative affect is defined as activated unpleasant emotions like stress, fear, and anger (Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982).

It is believed that findings about positive affect and negative affect are significantly influenced by cultural (Yik, 2007) and personal differences (Abdel-Khalek, 2007; Cohen & Pressman, 2006; Gross & Oliver, 2003; Teracciaono, McCrae, Hagemann, & Costa, 2003; Karlsson & Archer, 2007) and these findings indicates that states like happiness, joy, excitement, desire, and satisfaction form positive affect, whereas states like anger, anxiety, stress, and sadness form negative affect (Brennan, Singh, Spencer, & Robert-Thompson, 2006; Cohen & Pressman, 2006; Myers & Diener, 1995).

The Current Study

As described earlier, emotions, which are essential for human life, affect people's life in terms of their behavioral and personal characteristics towards others, especially those in a close relationship (Diener et al., 1995; Ostir et al., 2005). Few studies have connected marital satisfaction with submissive behaviors (Hünler, & Gençöz, 2003), gender (Tekin & Filiz, 2008; Kabasakal, 2007; McCreary & Rhodes, 2001; Odacı, 2007; Öngen, 2006; Yıldırım, 2004), marital adjustment with ambivalent sexism (Güçlü-Ergin, 2008), romantic relationship satisfaction (Curun, 2001), and gender-role ideology in marriage (Chen et al., 2009).

Studies related to marriage have revealed that hostile sexism, both in men and women, is a strong predictor for physical and sexual abuse toward women (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Ulu, 2003; Glick et al., 2002). It is indicated that men's hostile behaviors towards women are related with their fear of intimate relationship (Yakusho, 2005). These hostile behaviors are men's tendency to avoid intimate relationships. When taken into consideration of the fact that in men with high scores in benevolent sexism, benevolent sexism does not affect intimate relationship avoidance, it is stated that men's biased and sexist opinions about gender roles have a negative influence on their possibility to form a satisfactory heterosexual relationships (Yakusho, 2005). Besides, increases in men's hostile sexist attitudes towards women are accompanied with increases women's negative attitudes towards men (Fischer, 2006). Therefore, it is sensible that hostile attitudes towards women have an effect on men's marital adjustment because these hostile attitudes might be related to other variables which have an effect on the quality of marital relationship. It might be interesting that married men's hostile attitudes have a negative influence on their marital adjustment because it is more expected that this negative effect is observed in their wives. However, as partners' marital satisfaction is related with each other (Hasta, 1996), it is inferred that men's hostile attitudes towards women might be related to distortions of thoughts and beliefs about marriage in women and this might lead to a decrease in men's marital satisfaction.

On the other hand, to our knowledge, no research has been conducted investigating relationship between submissive behaviors and marital adjustment, and between marital adjustment and positive and negative affect. Thus, we hypothesized that the ambivalent sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affect predict levels of marital

adjustment. In present research, the marital adjustment have been considered as an outcome, and ambivalent sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affect as the predictors. Another aim of the present study was to investigate whether marital adjustment, ambivalent sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affect significantly differed according to gender.

Method

Participants

378 married individuals participated to the study. 173 participants (46%) were female and 205 of them (54%) were male, and their age ranged from 26 to 63 years ($M = 34.3$).

Instruments

Marital Adjustment Scale. In order to measure the level of marital adjustment, “Marital Adjustmen Scale” was used. It was developed by Locke and Wallace (1959) and Turkish adaptation of and validity and reliability studies were conducted by Tutarel-Kışlak (1999). The scale includes 15 items, which measures both general marital satisfaction and quality and level of agreement and disagreement on several issues, such as family budget, emotion expression, friends, sexuality, societal rules and life philosophy (Tutarel-Kışlak & Çabukça, 2002). The lowest total score is 1 and the highest score is 60, where low scores indicate low level of marital adjustment and high scores indicate high level of marital adjustment. Moreover, the score of 43.5 is the cut score which distinguishes couples with high marital adjustment from those with low marital adjustment. Scores above 43.5 indicate high marital adjustment and scores below 43.5 indicate low marital adjustment (Tutarel-Kışlak, 1999).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. To measure ambivalent sexism, it was used “Ambivalent Sexism Inventory”, developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) and adapted to Turkish culture by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002), was used. In the inventory, there are 22 items; 11 of which measure hostile sexism and 11 of which measure benevolent sexism. None of the items are reversed. Participants indicate their degree of agreement to each item on 6-point-Likert scale, with 1 for “totally disagree” and 6 for “totally agree”. As a result of Glick and Fiske’s study (1996) with collage students, confirmatory factor analysis revealed that two factors, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, represent ambivalent sexism and that benevolent sexism has three second-order factors (protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, heterosexual intimacy). As for the internal consistency, alpha has been found to range between .83 and .92 in total, between .80 and .92 for hostile sexism and between .72 and .85 for benevolent sexism.

Submissive Behaviors Scale. In this study, “Submissive Behaviors Scale”, developed by Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, and Irons (1991) and adapted to Turkish culture by Şahin and Şahin (1992), was used to measure the level of submissive behaviors. There are 16 items on a 5 point Likert scale and higher scores indicate higher level of submissiveness. Reliability and validity studies have revealed that the scale is able to measuresubmissive behaviors (Savaşır&Şahin, 1997).

Positive and Negative Affect Scale. This scale, developed by Watson, Tellegen, and Clark (1988) and adapted to Turkish culture by Gençöz (2000) includes 10 items of positive affect

and 10 items of negative affect, on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being “very slightly or not at all” and 5 being “extremely”. Total scores vary within 10 and 50 for each affect (Gençöz, 2000).

Procedure

Married individuals who volunteered to participate in the study filled out questionnaires, which were distributed and collected back in a closed envelope. Participants answered all the forms in approximately 30-35 minutes. Demographic information form and other scales were prepared as booklets; 520 copies were made and were distributed to target group of participants. Out of 520 booklets, 472 of them were collected back. All booklets were checked by the researcher and 94 booklets were eliminated because of incomplete filling. Therefore, out of 472 booklets which were collected back, 378 of them were used for research purposes.

Data Analysis

In the study, the relationships between the variables were analyzed by Pearson’s correlation coefficient, t-test, and regresyon analysis. The significance level of the differences in mean scores of marital adjustment between two levels of independent variables was calculated with independent samples t-test. The possible relationships of the research variables on the marital adjustment were analyzed using SPSS for Windows.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The results of the relationship between hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, submissive behaviors, positive affect, negative affect and marital adjustment are presented in the Table 1. It has been found that the level of marital adjustment of married individuals was positively correlated with positive affect ($r = .41$) and negatively correlated with negative affect ($r = -.35$). On the other hand, marital adjustment was not significantly related to hostile sexism ($r = -.06$), benevolent sexism ($r = -.01$), and submissive behaviors ($r = .03$). The results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach’s α Coefficients, and Inter-correlations of the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Marital Adjustment	1				
Hostile Sexism	-.06	1			
Benevolent Sexism	-.01	.41**	1		
Submissive Behaviors	-.03	.06	.08	1	
Positive Affect	.41**	-.03	-.02	.10*	1
Negative Affect	-.35**	.11*	.11*	.11*	-.34**
Mean	45,48	39,83	44,44	16,90	15,26
Standard Deviation	7,69	10,77	8,96	4,51	4,16

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Gender Differences

Table 2 shows how gender differences influence the results of the study. According to the findings, marital adjustment and benevolent sexism did not differ significantly between the genders. Conversely, there was a significant difference between genders in terms of hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affects. The results indicated that hostile sexism is more observed in men ($\bar{x} = 42,16$ for men; $\bar{x} = 38,00$ for women, $p < .01$) than women, as well as submissive behaviors ($\bar{x} = 36,27$ for men; $\bar{x} = 33,66$ for women, $p < .01$) and positive affect ($\bar{x} = 33,78$ for men; $\bar{x} = 32,02$ for women, $p < .05$). However, negative affect ($\bar{x} = 18,61$ for men; $\bar{x} = 20,19$ for women, $p < .05$) are more observed in women.

Table 2

Differences in Terms of Gender

Variables	Women (N= 173)		Men (N=205)		t
	\bar{X}	DF	\bar{X}	DF	
Marital Adjustment	44,68	9,05	45,00	8,38	-,27
Hostile Sexism	38,00	10,14	42,16	11,04	-3,86**
Benevolent Sexism	44,25	9,71	42,47	7,80	1,95
Submissive Behaviors	33,66	8,40	36,27	8,86	-2,98**
Positive Affect	32,02	7,37	33,78	7,48	-2,31*
Negative Affect	20,19	7,56	18,61	6,77	2,14*

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis assessed the contributions of hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, benevolent sexism and positive and negative affect to marital adjustment (see Tables 3).

Table 3

Multiple Regression Analyses

Dependent	Predictor	b	Standard Error of b	β	t	p
Marital Adjustment	Hostile Sexism	-.03	.04	-.04	-.80	.42
	Benevolent Sexism	.03	.05	.03	.61	.54
	Submissive Behaviors	.02	.04	.02	.40	.69
	Negative Affect	-.26	.05	-.24	-4.79	.000
	Positive Affect	.33	.05	.32	6.47	.000

As seen Table 3, in the regression model showed that marital adjustment was negatively predicted by negative affect ($\beta = -.26$, $p < .001$); however, it was positively predicted by positive affect ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$). On the other hand, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and submissive behaviors were not predicted marital adjustment. The regression model predicting marital adjustment was significant ($R^2 = .22$, $p < .001$). Finally, positive and negative affect were significant predictors of the marital adjustment.

Discussion

In this study, it was found out that marital adjustment did not differ according to gender, which is supported by similar studies (Demiray, 2006; Engin, 1998; Fidanoglu, 2007; Markowski & Greenwood, 1984; Tutarel-Kışlak & Çabukça, 2002; Gürsoy, 2004). On the other hand, there are also conflicting findings. Studies, which investigate marital adjustment in terms of depression, attachment, locus of control, and demographic variables (Bal, 2007; Crowther, 1985; Gökmen, 2001; Tutarel-Kışlak, 1995; Li & Caldwell, 1987) revealed that marital adjustment differs with gender and gender roles. Furthermore, benevolent sexism did not differ with gender significantly. To the contrary, gender had a significant effect on hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive and negative affects. The results indicated that hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, and positive affect is more common in men, while complementary gender differentiation and negative affect is more common in women. The findings of a study conducted by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2003), which indicated that hostile sexism scores were higher in men than in women, supported current results. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Gilbert et al. (2003), it was emphasized that submissive behaviors are based on fears and prevent individuals' initiation and by this way, they significantly predict depression. In their investigation about the differences dominant and submissive behaviors in terms of gender, McCreary and Rhodes (2001) had supporting findings for the premise that males being more dominant and females being more submissive.

The results of present study indicated that married individuals' marital adjustment was not predicted by hostile sexism, submissive behaviors, and benevolent sexism; however, the positive and negative affect of married individuals predicted marital adjustment. Positive affect is defined as joy and pleasure of living, negative affect is defined as activated unpleasant emotions like stress, fear, and anger (Watson & Tellegen, 1985; Zevon & Tellegen, 1982). In this context, because of joy and pleasure of living, married couples' marital adjustment is positively relate to the positive affect; however, because of unpleasant emotions like stress, individuals' marital adjustment is negatively relate to the negative affect of married couples.

This study, which is about marital adjustment, may encourage the planning and development of future studies. Still, there is a need for new studies in the literature, in order to better understand the concept of marital adjustment and to find out other variables affecting it. In this context, since sample of this study includes married individuals in a large city, there is a limitation in generalizability. Therefore, conducting similar studies with a sample from different cities and with different professionals or individuals with different qualities might increase the generalizability of this study. Additionally, this descriptive study can be replicated with a larger sample of married individuals and by examining the variables together. Marital adjustment may differ with different socioeconomic status and factors affecting marital adjustment among people from different socioeconomic status can be investigated. Furthermore, investigation of mate selection, which is the beginning of marriage procedure, and important issues about it would contribute to marriage and family counseling.

In order to help individuals to enhance their marital relationship and to solve their marital problems effectively, offering programs about communication skills, problem solving

methods, empathy skills to individuals and other individuals and conducting experimental studies to measure level of marital adjustment would contribute greatly to the field. Additionally, in this study, to collect data, “Marital Adjustment Scale” was used. Since this scale includes items of couples’ general assessments about their marriage, data has remained limited. Therefore, it is recommended to use multidimensional scales about marital relationship to better understand couples’ marital life and the variables that affect their marital adjustment.

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