

EXPLORING DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND RELATIONSHIP HAPPINESS IN  
NEWLY MARRIED WOMEN: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ATTACHMENT STYLES  
AND ATTACHMENT BEHAVIORS

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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Bülend Özbilgin and Hülya Özbilgin, and to my grandparents Aysel Özbilgin, Osman Nuri Özbilgin, Bediha Öztürk, and Mahmut Öztürk. Thank you for such strong roots you provide me with. You keep me grounded, so I can bloom.*

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to investigate the direct and indirect contributions of differentiation of self, attachment styles, and attachment behaviors, on relationship happiness. The sample consisted of 194 Turkish women. Eligibility criteria included being a woman, being above the age of 25, being married for the first time and for a maximum of 5 years. The participation was online via Qualtrics. The survey set included demographic form, Differentiation of Self Inventory – Revised (DSI-R), Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECRR), Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, Engagement Scale (BARE) and Relationship Happiness Questionnaire (RHQ) (Işık & Bulduk, 2015; Saydam et al., 2020; Sümer, 2006; Tuterel-Kışlak, 2002). Bivariate correlations and path analysis were run to test the hypotheses. The serial mediation model revealed that DoS predicted attachment behaviors through attachment avoidance, and attachment avoidance predicted relationship happiness through attachment behaviors. Overall, the ability to self-regulate and to remain both autonomous and connected in intimate relationships decreased the individual's discomfort with intimacy, and in turn, enabled the person to remain accessible, responsive, and engaged with their partner, which in turn improved their relationship happiness. These findings suggest that the ability to self-regulate is a prerequisite for avoidantly attached individuals to be able to coregulate with their partners, which will in turn enhance their relationship happiness. Findings are discussed in light of the previous literature considering clinical implications, limitations and future directions.

*Keywords:* relationship happiness, differentiation of self, attachment behaviors, attachment styles, newlywed women

## ÖZET

Mevcut çalışmanın amacı, benliğin ayrımlaşmasının, bağlanma stillerinin ve bağlanma davranışlarının ilişki mutluluğu üzerindeki doğrudan ve dolaylı etkilerini incelemektir. Örneklem 194 Türk kadınından oluşmaktadır. Katılım için uygunluk kriterleri kadın olmayı, 25 yaşından büyük olmayı, bir kez evlenmiş ve en fazla 5 senedir evli olmayı içermektedir. Araştırmaya katılım Qualtrics üzerinden online olarak gerçekleşmiştir. Demografik form, Benliğin Ayrımlaşması Ölçeği (BAÖ), Yakın İlişkilerde Yaşantılar Envanteri (YİYE), Duyarlılık, Ulaşılabilirlik, Yakınlık Ölçeği (DUY) ve İlişkilerde Mutluluk Ölçeği (İMÖ)'nden oluşan bir anket paketi oluşturulmuştur (Işık & Bulduk, 2015; Saydam et al., 2020; Sümer, 2006; Tuterel-Kışlak, 2002). İki değişkenli korelasyonlar ve yolak çözümlemesi hipotezleri test etmek için çalıştırılmıştır. Seri aracı modeli benliğin ayrımlaşmasının kaçınan bağlanma üzerinden bağlanma davranışlarını yordadığını ve kaçınan bağlanmanın bağlanma davranışları üzerinden ilişki mutluluğunu yordadığını ortaya koymuştur. Genel olarak, özdüzenleme becerisi ve samimi ilişkilerde özerk ve aynı zamanda ilişkili kalabilmenin kişinin yakınlığa dair rahatsızlığını azalttığı, azalan rahatsızlığın kişinin partnerine duyarlı, ulaşılabilir ve yakın kalmasını sağladığı, bunun da ilişki mutluluğunu arttırdığı anlaşılmıştır. Bu bulgular, kaçınan bağlanan kişilerin partnerleriyle ortak düzenleme yapabilmeleri ve bunun etkisiyle ilişki mutluluklarını arttırabilmeleri için özdüzenleme becerisinin önşart olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Önceki çalışmalar ışığında klinik uygulamalar, sınırlılıklar ve ileriki yönler dikkate alınarak bulgular tartışılmıştır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* ilişki mutluluğu, benliğin ayrımlaşması, bağlanma davranışları, bağlanma stilleri, yeni evli kadınlar

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Relationship happiness in marital relationships constitute a global health issue owing to its implications on physical health, mental health, and individual well-being (Bradbury et al., 2000). In a longitudinal study, Lawrence et al. (2019) found that individuals who were not too happy in their marriage reported worse health and mortality risk compared to individuals who were happily married, were never married, divorced or separated, or widowed. Another longitudinal study by Beach et al. (2003) revealed that an individual's own marital satisfaction predicted own depressive symptoms a year later for both husbands and wives. Moreover, while controlling for the individual's own initial marital satisfaction, spouse's marital satisfaction predicted individual's own depressive symptoms a year later for both husbands and wives. In line with these findings, another longitudinal study by Miller et al. (2013) reported that marital happiness was found to be predictive of better concurrent physical health, whereas marital problems were found to be predictive of worse concurrent physical health. Additionally, increase in marital happiness and decrease in marital problems over 20 years were found to be predictive of improvement in physical health over time. Taken together, these findings point to the importance of relationship happiness in marital relationships.

Various couples therapy approaches aim to improve relationship happiness (Davoodvandi & Shokouh Navabi Nejad, 2018; Doss et al., 2005; Johnson, 2019; Roddy et al., 2020; Wiebe et al., 2017). Yet, these approaches focus on different constructs and emphasize different mechanisms of change. Differentiation of self (DoS) and attachment behaviors are two constructs that have been linked to relationship happiness (Alder et al., 2018; Calatrava et al., 2021; Hee et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2004; Sandberg et al., 2017).

Consequently, both have been the focus of clinical attention (Karkhaneh et al, 2016; Novak et al., 2017) and both constructs center around the ability to balance two opposing needs, namely intimacy and autonomy (Hardy & Fisher, 2018; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998).

A period in which balancing these opposing needs becomes salient is the transition to marriage, where couples need to handle boundary issues -both within their relationship and with their families and friends-, maintain a healthy work-life balance, and regulate relations with in-laws (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989, as cited in Hall & Adams, 2011; Schramm et al., 2008). According to TURKSTAT (2021), in 2020, majority of divorces (35.3%) occur in the first 5 years of marriage. This finding points to transition into marriage period as a particularly critical time for married couples. Hence, the present study will employ a newly married sample, with a cap of 5 years (see Chapter 3).

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between DoS and relationship happiness in marital relationships in relation to attachment styles and attachment behaviors. Specifically, the present study focuses on the mediating role of attachment styles and attachment behaviors on the association between DoS and relationship happiness. To our knowledge, the present study is the first one to examine DoS and attachment behaviors jointly.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Relationship Happiness

Relationship happiness is a global construct that aims to capture individuals' global perceptions of love, happiness, relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment, relationship stability, and seriousness of relationship problems (Tuterel-Kışlak, 2002). In the literature, relationship happiness is used interchangeably with terms such as relationship satisfaction, dyadic adjustment, and marital adjustment.

#### 2.2 Differentiation of Self

Differentiation of self is the central concept in Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST), otherwise known as Intergenerational Therapy (Miller et al, 2004). DoS is a multidimensional construct which refers to the ability to separate intrapsychic and interpersonal distress (Gehart, 2014). It is characterized by an ability to balance emotion and logic, as well as an ability to balance autonomy and intimacy in relationships (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). The intrapsychic dimension comprises the ability to separate thoughts from feelings so that the individual is able to respond instead of reacting (Gehart, 2014). This dimension involves the subdimensions of emotional reactivity and difficulty in taking an I-position (Işık & Bulduk, 2015; Lampis & Cataudella, 2019). Emotional reactivity is the tendency to be overwhelmed by emotions and to react with intense anxiety and discomfort. I-position is the ability to maintain a clear sense of self in the face of conflict and pressure from others (Lampis et al., 2017; Lampis et al., 2021; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). The interpersonal dimension encompasses the ability to understand where oneself ends and another begins without experiencing a loss of self (Gehart, 2014). This dimension involves the subdimensions of fusion with others and emotional cutoff. Fusion with others is the tendency

to adopt the values of the other and to fulfill the needs of the other at the expense of own needs, in the face of relational difficulties. Emotional cutoff is the tendency to resolve relational difficulties by establishing a physical or emotional distance from others (Lampis et al., 2017; Lampis et al., 2021; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Together, intrapsychic, and interpersonal dimensions make up the construct of DoS.

### **2.2.1 DoS and Relationship Happiness**

In BFST, Bowen (1978) proposes that the level of DoS is developed in individual's family-of-origin, and it becomes a stable trait in emerging adulthood which individuals later bring into marriages with themselves. As hypothesized by Bowen (1978), DoS is conceptualized on a continuum where individuals with higher levels of DoS are better able to manage the anxiety experienced in interpersonal relations. DoS is relevant whenever there is a context of a shared relationship with others, however, it becomes the most salient in marriages where emotional interdependency reaches its greatest intensity (Bowen, 1978). According to Bowen (1978), undifferentiation results in one of three symptoms in families which are marital conflict, dysfunction in a spouse, or projection to children. BFST posits that marital conflict serves to absorb the anxiety created by undifferentiation (Bowen, 1978). Hence, Bowen suggests that lower levels of DoS is associated with lower relationship happiness.

Several studies have examined the association between differentiation of self and relationship happiness. A review article by Calatrava et al. (2021) reported that majority of the studies (39 out of 56) under review demonstrated evidence for greater levels of DoS being associated with better couple relationships. Another review article by Miller et al. (2004) reported similar findings with studies under review indicating a strong positive relationship between DoS and marital quality. In a cross-sectional study, Skowron (2000) revealed that DoS, measured by Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-R), predicted marital adjustment, which was measured by Dyadic Adjustment Scale, in a sample of married



heterosexual couples. Another cross-sectional study by Aryamanesh et al. (2012) showed that individuals who were satisfied with their relationship had significantly higher levels of DoS, measured by DSI-R, than those who were not satisfied with their relationship where relationship satisfaction was assessed with the Hudson Index of Marital Satisfaction. Examining a mediation model, Cepukiene (2021) reported that higher levels of DoS, measured by DSI-R, predicted higher psychosocial functioning through higher satisfaction with couple relationship, assessed by Couple Relationship Satisfaction Scale. Another cross-sectional study investigating a mediation model with a sample of Turkish heterosexual married adults revealed that greater DoS, measured by DSI-R, predicted higher marital satisfaction, measured by Marital Adjustment Scale, which in turn predicted higher life satisfaction (Işık et al., 2020). A cross-sectional study which explored the mediating role of DoS in the association between attachment style and relationship satisfaction with a sample of LGBT adults in a committed relationship demonstrated that there was a strong positive correlation between DoS and relationship satisfaction (Somantico et al., 2021). This study utilized DSI-R to assess DoS and, Gay and Lesbian Relationship Satisfaction Scale to assess relationship satisfaction. Moreover, it was found that DoS mediated the relationship between attachment style and relationship satisfaction. Another cross-sectional study with heterosexual adults in committed relationships revealed that DoS, measured by DSI-R, predicted relationship satisfaction which was assessed with the Scale for the Evaluation of Satisfaction in areas of Couple Life (Ferreira, 2014). Additionally, it was reported that sexual desire partially mediated this association. Timm and Keiley (2011) investigated the mediating role of sexual communication in relation to the association between DoS and marital satisfaction with a sample of heterosexual married adults in a cross-sectional study, and found that DoS, assessed by DSI-R, predicted marital satisfaction which was measured by Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale. Moreover, it was revealed that sexual communication fully mediated this

association. Research by Mohammadi and Alibakhshi (2021) conducted a randomized control trial with a pre/post-test design to test the effectiveness of a self-differentiation training program with a sample of married women and found that the training was effective in increasing marital satisfaction, which was measured by Enrich Marital Satisfaction Scale, in the experimental group compared to the control group.

Studies have also explored the relationship between subdimensions of DoS and relationship happiness. A cross-sectional study by Lampis (2016) found that subdimensions of high I-position, low emotional reactivity, and low emotional cutoff predicted dyadic adjustment, which was measured by Dyadic Adjustment Scale, in a sample of heterosexual adults who were in a relationship. Moreover, emotional cutoff was found to be the strongest predictor of dyadic adjustment. On the other hand, fusion with others subdimension was found to be associated with high dyadic adjustment, which conflicted with earlier studies. This conflict was interpreted as evidence of a cultural difference. Another cross-sectional study which utilized dyadic data by Lampis et al. (2019) demonstrated that personal I-position (measured by Dyadic Adjustment Scale) predicted dyadic adjustment for men, whereas both personal and partner's I-position and emotional cutoff predicted dyadic adjustment for women. Moreover, emotional reactivity and fusion with others subdimensions were not associated with dyadic adjustment. Collectively, these research studies point to a close link between DoS and relationship happiness.

### **2.3 Attachment Theory**

Attachment theory, outlined by Bowlby (1969), proposes that attachment is an enduring emotional bond that is formed between a child and their primary caregiver who is also referred to as an "attachment figure". According to Bowlby, children desire proximity, comfort, and security from the attachment figure. Research by Ainsworth et al. (1978) built on this work and further proposed that the consistency and the quality of the responses by the

attachment figure determine children's attachment styles, which involve internal working models regarding the self and the world. Securely attached children believe that they are worthy of love and that the world is a safe place, therefore other people can be trusted (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Conversely, insecurely attached children don't believe that they are worthy of love, and they believe that the world is a dangerous place, hence other people cannot be trusted (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Research on attachment styles revealed two critical dimensions on which security and insecurity of attachment can be discerned, which are attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance.

### **2.3.1 Attachment Anxiety**

Caregivers of anxiously attached children are inconsistently responsive, and the children display high-intensity attachment behaviors (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Thus, attachment anxiety results in hyper-activation of the attachment system (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Anxiously attached individuals tend to employ a heightening style of emotion regulation (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They are preoccupied with the availability of attachment figures, and they experience intense fear of abandonment (Lopez & Brennan, 2000).

### **2.3.2 Attachment Avoidance**

Caregivers of avoidantly attached children are rejecting of the child, and the children try to soothe themselves when distressed instead of seeking out the caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Hence, attachment avoidance results in suppression of the attachment system (Lopez & Brennan, 2000). Avoidantly attached individuals tend to employ an inhibiting style of emotion regulation (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They avoid intimacy with others, and maintain a *façade* of self-reliance (Lopez & Brennan, 2000; Mikulincer, 1998).

### **2.3.3 Attachment Styles and Relationship Happiness**

Hazan and Shaver (1987) applied attachment theory to adult romantic relationships and suggested that romantic partners serve as attachment figures. With this influential research, they found that individuals with different attachment styles experience love differently. Following this finding, several research studies explored the relationship between relationship happiness and attachment styles and demonstrated that secure attachment style is positively associated with relationship happiness, whereas insecure attachment styles are negatively associated with it (Feeney, 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). However, categorizing individuals according to their attachment styles provides limited help when developing clinical interventions (Sandberg et al., 2012; Treboux et al., 2004). Furthermore, attachment styles seem to be relatively stable over time (Chris Fraley, 2002). Thus, recent literature proposes that attachment behaviors are a potential point of intervention since behaviors are malleable (Bradford et al., 2020; Novak et al., 2017).

### **2.3.4 Attachment Behaviors**

Attachment styles refer to the working models of the individual, which are feelings or beliefs regarding romantic relationships, whereas attachment behaviors refer to specific actions that shape attachment security (Sandberg et al., 2017). Together, accessibility, responsiveness and engagement in romantic relationships make up the construct of attachment behaviors (Sandberg et al., 2012). Accessibility is the ability to stay emotionally available when feeling insecure (Bowlby, 1973). Responsiveness is the ability to respond and comfort a spouse who is emotionally distressed, and it involves tuning into partner's emotions. Finally, engagement describes bonding moments where closeness requests from one partner are met with soothing responses from the other partner.

### **2.3.5 Attachment Styles and Attachment Behaviors**

Research studies that have explored the association between attachment styles and attachment behaviors point to a negative association between attachment behaviors and attachment insecurity. Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al. (2020) found that attachment behaviors, assessed by the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, Engagement Scale (BARE), were negatively associated with attachment avoidance and with attachment anxiety in a sample of Turkish adults in committed relationships with a cross-sectional design. Similarly, Sandberg et al. (2012) reported that attachment behaviors, measured by BARE, were negatively associated with both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance with a sample of adults in committed relationships. Another cross-sectional study revealed that the engagement dimension of attachment behaviors, assessed by BARE, was negatively correlated with both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance with a sample of clinical couples (Sandberg et al., 2016).

### **2.3.6 Attachment Behaviors and Relationship Happiness**

As stated before, the association between attachment styles and relationship happiness has been established (Mikulincer et al., 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). A number of research studies have also explored the association between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness. A cross-sectional study by Sandberg et al. (2017) reported that both attachment styles and attachment behaviors predicted marital quality in a sample of heterosexual married couples. In this study, attachment styles were measured by the Adult Attachment Questionnaire, attachment behaviors were measured by the BARE, and marital quality was assessed with the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. Moreover, it was revealed that attachment behaviors explained greater variance than did attachment styles in predicting marital quality. Brimhall et al. (2018) revealed that both own and partner's attachment behaviors assessed by BARE, were positively associated with marital satisfaction which was

measured with the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale, in a sample of law enforcement officers and their partners in a cross-sectional design. Another cross-sectional study investigated the moderating role of attachment behaviors, measured by BARE, in relation to the association between conflict styles and relationship quality (Hee et al., 2019). It was found that higher levels of attachment behaviors were associated with higher relationship quality. Additionally, attachment behaviors moderated the relationship between conflict styles and relationship quality for women (Hee et al., 2019). Another cross-sectional study exploring the moderating role of attachment behaviors in relation to the relationship between perception of parents' marriage and marital satisfaction reported similar results, showing that both own and partner's attachment behaviors were positively associated with increased marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Alder et al., 2018). This study utilized the BARE to assess attachment behaviors, the Relationship Satisfaction Scale to assess marital satisfaction. It was also reported that attachment behaviors moderated the relationship between perception of parents' marriage and marital satisfaction such that high levels of attachment behaviors buffered the effects of having a negative view of parents' marriage on marital satisfaction. A cross-sectional research study investigating the moderating role of attachment behaviors in relation to the relationship between social disapproval of relationship and marital relationship quality found that higher levels of attachment behaviors were associated with higher relationship quality (Bradford et al., 2020). Furthermore, attachment behaviors assessed by the BARE moderated the association between social disapproval of relationship and marital relationship quality which was measured by the Relationship Satisfaction Scale.

The link between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness has been investigated with clinical couples as well. A cross-sectional study revealed that women's relationship satisfaction measured by the Relationship Satisfaction Scale was positively associated with both own and partner's perception of partner's attachment behaviors which

was measured by the BARE, whereas men's relationship satisfaction was positively associated with only own perception of partner's attachment behaviors (Novak et al., 2017). The validation study of the BARE for clinical couples by Sandberg et al. (2016) demonstrated that clinical couples had lower levels of attachment behaviors compared to community couples in a cross-sectional design. In addition to that, BARE scale accurately predicted and classified whether clinical couples would score in a high or low relationship satisfaction group, as well as whether a couple would belong to the clinical or community group. Altogether, research studies exploring the association between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness reveal a positive association between the two constructs.

## **2.4 DoS and Attachment**

Attachment and DoS are both developmental constructs that come from different theoretical approaches, yet they also seem to have overlapping and intertwining aspects (Hardy & Fisher, 2018; Scigala et al., 2021). Both constructs acknowledge and highlight the importance of emotionally significant relationships with others and their impact on how the individual relates to others and regulates their emotion. Both focus on maintaining a balance between intimacy and autonomy as a foundation for healthy interdependence and acknowledge the central role emotions play in close relationships (Hardy & Fisher, 2018). Both propose the continuity of relationship quality across generations and the integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal processes (Hardy & Fisher, 2018; Lampis & Cataudella, 2019; Ng & Smith, 2006). Additionally, as mentioned above, both constructs have been linked to relationship happiness (Alder et al., 2018; Calatrava et al., 2021; Hee et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2004; Sandberg et al., 2017).

Several studies have explored the relationship between DoS and attachment styles and found significant associations between higher levels of DoS and higher levels of attachment security (Allsop, 2021; Scigala et al., 2021). Hainlen et al. (2016) investigated the association

between attachment, measured by the Experiences in Close Relationships Revised scale (ECRR), and well-being while exploring the mediating role of DoS, which was measured by the DSI-R, with a sample of master's students in a cross-sectional design. The researchers found that both increased attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance was related with lower levels of DoS. Another cross-sectional study exploring the association between attachment and DoS with a sample consisting of individuals with anxiety-related disorders revealed that attachment anxiety, measured by ECRR, was negatively associated with DoS which was measured by the DSI-R, and especially with the subdimensions of emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff (Xue et al., 2018). A cross-sectional study by Ross et al. (2016) explored the mediating role of experiential avoidance in relation to the association between insecure attachment styles, measured by ECR, and subdimensions of DoS, measured by DSI-R, in a sample of university students. Results of the study revealed similar findings such that DoS and attachment anxiety as well as DoS and attachment avoidance were negatively related. Additionally, experiential avoidance was found to partially mediate the relationship between avoidant attachment and emotional cutoff, as well as between anxious attachment and I-position. Another study with clients undergoing treatment for substance disorder problems also showed that DoS was negatively associated with insecure attachment, and positively associated with secure attachment (Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006). Consistent with these findings, a study investigating the relationship between alexithymia and DoS while exploring the mediating role of attachment with adult participants who were in a relationship and self identified as gay or lesbian found that there was a positive correlation between DoS and secure attachment (Scigala, 2021). In addition to these, study by Timm and Keiley (2011) reported that DoS and secure attachment were positively associated. Another study exploring the association between attachment and relationship satisfaction while exploring the mediating role of DoS with adult participants who were in a relationship and self identified as



gay or lesbian showed that securely attached individuals reported significantly higher levels of DoS and higher relationship satisfaction. Moreover, DoS mediated the relationship between attachment and relationship satisfaction (Sommanico et al., 2021).

Researchers have also investigated the associations between subdimensions of DoS and attachment styles. Research by Skowron & Dendy (2016) revealed that DoS predicted 40% of the variability in attachment anxiety and 62% of the variability in attachment avoidance with an adult sample. Moreover, attachment avoidance was found to be most closely associated with emotional cutoff, whereas attachment anxiety was most closely associated with emotional reactivity. In line with this finding, a study by Lampis and Cataudella (2019) reported that the strongest predictor of avoidant attachment was emotional cutoff subdimension, and the strongest predictor of anxious attachment was emotional reactivity in a sample of adults in a romantic relationship. A longitudinal and dyadic study by Allsop et al. (2021) revealed that wives' emotional cutoff predicted own increased avoidant attachment and husbands' avoidant attachment predicted decreased wives' emotional cutoff a year later.

Literature findings point to a positive association between DoS and attachment security, and a negative association between DoS and attachment insecurity. Nonetheless, the association between DoS and attachment behaviors is not established in the literature due to a lack of studies examining these constructs jointly. Thus, one of the purposes of the present study is to explore the role of attachment behaviors in relation to DoS.

## **2.5 Newly Married Couples**

The family life cycle, put forward by Duvall (1957) and Hill and Rodgers (1964), is a developmental framework that divides the life of families into discrete stages with specific tasks (as cited in Nichols, 2010). According to this framework, families do not progress

steadily and continuously, but rather progress in periods of transition that demand change and growth, followed by periods of stability that consolidate these changes (Nichols, 2010). The significance of the family life cycle framework comes from acknowledging that families will face problems in transitioning from one stage to another and will need to adjust to their new stages. The second stage of the family life cycle is “the new couple” stage which is characterized by the tasks of forming a marital system that spouses commit to and realigning relationships with extended families and friends in a way that will include the spouse (Nichols, 2010).

In line with this framework, research studies have revealed various stressors that are related with forming a new marital system. In a cross-sectional study with newlywed individuals, Schramm et al. (2008) identified maintaining a balance between work and marriage, dealing with debt and financial decision making, relationships with in-laws, and expectations regarding house chores and regarding frequency of sexual relations as the most problematic areas in new marriages. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) further proposed that couples need to deal with boundary issues during this transition period, regarding both their own relationship and their other relationships (as cited in Hall & Adams, 2011). As evidenced in research studies, transitioning from single adulthood into life as a married couple inherently brings forth the ability to maintain a balance between autonomy and intimacy, an issue central to both DoS and attachment.

There are studies that explore attachment styles and marital happiness with newlywed samples. Senchak and Leonard (1992) reported that securely attached newlywed couples scored higher on marital adjustment than insecurely attached or mixed (one partner secure, one partner insecure) couples. However, studies that employ a newlywed sample and investigate DoS or attachment behaviors are scarce. Thus, the present study will utilize a

newlywed sample both because the constructs that are being explored in the current study become salient in this life stage and because there seems to be a gap in the literature.

## **2.6 Women and Marriage**

Findings in the literature suggest that women experience lower marital happiness in comparison to men (Fowers, 1991; Jose & Alfons, 2007; Rostami et al., 2014; Shek, 1995). Fowers (1991) found that husbands had higher marital satisfaction than wives. Similarly, Rostami et al. (2014) reported that marital satisfaction was significantly higher in men than women. Additionally, in a research study where Jose and Alfons (2007) investigated the effect of demographic variables on marital satisfaction, they revealed that women experienced significantly lower marital satisfaction than men. Along the same lines, findings of Shek (1995) and Ng et al. (2008) also indicated that women scored significantly lower on marital satisfaction than men.

Building on the findings regarding the effect of gender on relationship happiness, the literature further indicates that marital happiness is closely linked to women's health (Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton, 2001). Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton (2001) reviewed 64 articles to examine the association between marital relationships and physical health and revealed that lower marital satisfaction has a greater negative impact on women's health than that of men's. In conjunction with this finding, findings in the literature show that women's display of attachment behaviors significantly influences their health practices whereas men's does not (Davis et al., 2016). Davis et al. (2016) found that there was a significant negative association between engaging in attachment behaviors and employing a healthy diet or being physically active. Therefore, the present study utilized a women sample since the literature points to women being a higher risk group with regard to health concerns due to women experiencing lower relationship happiness compared to men, and women's health being more impacted by both relationship happiness and display of attachment behaviors.

## 2.7 Control Variables

Contextual variables that are linked to marital happiness include participant age, income, education, duration of marriage, and number of children (Alder et al., 2018; Sorokowski et al., 2017). Mixed results have been reported regarding the association between age and marital happiness. Jose and Alfons (2007) found a significant negative association between age and marital adjustment for adults in their first marriage. Conversely, Heaton (2002) reported that there was a positive association between age at first marriage and marital stability. Furthermore, research by Alder (2010) found no association between age at time of marriage and marital happiness.

With regard to the effect of income on marital happiness, a cross-sectional study by Dakin and Wampler (2008) reported that low-income couples scored lower on marital satisfaction than middle-income couples. On the other hand, a longitudinal study by Jackson et al. (2017) found that low-income couples did not score lower on marital satisfaction on average, however, they experienced greater fluctuations in marital satisfaction across time points. Overall, these findings point to an association between income and couples' marital happiness.

Regarding education, researchers have revealed that there is a negative association between education level and marital adjustment, and between education level and marital stability (Alder, 2010; Jose & Alfons, 2007). Yet, Heaton (2002) found contradicting results, reporting a positive association between education and marital stability. Hence, there are mixed results regarding the association between education and marital stability.

Research suggests that there is a U-shaped association between marital happiness and marriage duration such that marital satisfaction decreases towards the middle years of marriage and then increases towards the later years (Jose & Alfons, 2007; Kamp Dush et al., 2008). A longitudinal study by Vanlaningham et al. (2001) reported that marital happiness

either declines continuously or flattens after a long period of decline instead of a U-shaped pattern. Taking these findings into consideration, there is arguably an association between duration of marriage and marital happiness.

In a cross-cultural study by Kowal et al. (2021), the researchers found a negative association between number of children and marital happiness. In line with this finding, a meta-analysis of studies that employed collectivist cultures reported a small but negative association between number of children and marital happiness (Dillon & Beechler, 2010). Similarly, another cross-cultural study revealed that number of children predicted diminished marital happiness in all cultures with the exception of Turkish wives (Wendorf et al., 2011). Researchers have explained this finding with the collectivistic tendencies and stronger traditional gender roles in the Turkish culture. Overall, findings in the literature suggest that the number of children and marital happiness are related, even though the association appears to be weaker in collectivist cultures.

Furthermore, relationship length seems to be a contextual variable that is linked to attachment styles. Umemura et al. (2018) showed that the length of a romantic relationship was significantly negatively associated with both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Moreover, Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al. (2020) found that individuals in relationships for more than 2 years reported significantly lower self attachment behaviors. Hence, relationship length also appears to be a contextual variable that is linked to attachment behaviors.

## **2.8 The Present Study**

### **2.8.1 The Significance of the Study**

Findings in the literature reveal that relationship happiness in marriages are linked to mental and physical health issues (Bradbury et al., 2000). There are several studies that have

investigated the associations between relationship happiness, attachment styles, attachment behaviors and DoS. The relationship between relationship happiness and DoS is evident in the literature such that individuals with higher levels of DoS report higher relationship happiness (Calatrava et al., 2021). The relationship between relationship happiness and attachment styles has also been established in the literature such that individuals with higher attachment insecurity, both in the form of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, report lower relationship happiness (Feeney, 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The association between relationship happiness and attachment behaviors also have strong empirical support. That is, individuals who report higher levels of attachment behaviors also report higher relationship happiness (Sandberg et al., 2017).

The relationship between DoS and attachment behaviors remains unclear. Attachment styles, which are theoretically shaped by attachment behaviors, have been studied in relation to DoS. Findings in the literature reveal that secure attachment is associated with higher levels of attachment behaviors, and insecure attachment styles -attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety- are associated with lower levels of attachment behaviors (Sandberg et al., 2012; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020). Furthermore, the link between attachment styles and DoS has been established in the literature such that secure attachment is associated with higher levels of DoS whereas insecure attachment styles -attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance- are associated with lower levels of DoS (Allsop, 2021; Scigala et al., 2021). Hence, we propose that attachment styles -attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety- will indirectly affect the association between DoS and attachment behaviors. Furthermore, it is expected that attachment styles will indirectly affect the association between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness.

To our knowledge, the association between DoS and attachment behaviors has not been explored yet. Thus, this study aims to add to the literature by filling this gap.

Additionally, studies that employ a newlywed sample and investigate DoS or attachment behaviors are scarce. Hence, the present study also aims to add to the literature by the relatively unique structure of the sample it employs.

### **2.8.2 The Purpose of the Study**

The present exploratory study aims to examine DoS, attachment styles, attachment behaviors, and relationship happiness in newly married women since this is a particularly critical period for couples in Turkey. Issues surrounding DoS and attachment behaviors are known to become salient in this period, and women's health appear to be impacted immensely by their marital relationships (TURKSTAT, 2021). Specifically, the present study will explore the mediating role of attachment styles and attachment behaviors on the association between DoS and relationship happiness.

### **2.8.2 Research Questions of the Study**

Within the scope of the current study, we addressed the following research questions and hypotheses.

RQ1: Does DoS associate with attachment styles?

H1A: DoS will be negatively associated with attachment anxiety.

H1B: DoS will be negatively associated with attachment avoidance.

RQ2: Do attachment styles associate with attachment behaviors?

H2A: Attachment anxiety will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors.

H2B: Attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors.

RQ3: Does DoS associate with attachment behaviors?

H3: DoS will be positively associated with attachment behaviors.

RQ4: Do attachment behaviors associate with relationship happiness?

H4: Attachment behaviors will be positively associated with relationship happiness.

RQ5: Does DoS associate with relationship happiness?

H5: DoS will be positively associated with relationship happiness.

RQ6: Do attachment styles associate with relationship happiness?

H6A: Attachment anxiety will be negatively associated with relationship happiness.

H6B: Attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with relationship happiness.

RQ7: Is there an indirect effect of DoS on attachment behaviors via attachment styles?

H7A: We hypothesize that DoS will be negatively associated with attachment anxiety, and in turn, attachment anxiety will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors. We suggest that the individual's ability to regulate intimacy and autonomy while balancing emotion and logic will diminish their fear of abandonment and preoccupation with their partner, and diminished fear and preoccupation will allow them to remain accessible, responsive and engaged to their partner.

H7B: We hypothesize that DoS will be negatively associated with attachment avoidance, and in turn, attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors. We suggest that the individual's ability to regulate intimacy and autonomy while balancing emotion and logic will diminish their discomfort with intimacy and suppression of attachment needs, and diminished discomfort and suppression will allow them to remain accessible, responsive and engaged to their partner.

RQ8: Is there an indirect effect of attachment styles on relationship happiness via attachment behaviors?



H8A: We hypothesize that attachment anxiety will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors, and in turn, attachment behaviors will be positively associated with relationship happiness. We suggest that the individual's fear of abandonment and preoccupation with their partner will decrease their ability to remain accessible, responsive and engaged to their partner, and decreased ability to display attachment behaviors will lower relationship happiness.

H8B: We hypothesize that attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with attachment behaviors, and in turn, attachment behaviors will be positively associated with relationship happiness. We suggest that the individual's discomfort with intimacy and suppression of attachment needs will decrease their ability to remain accessible, responsive and engaged to their partner, and decreased ability to display attachment behaviors will lower relationship happiness.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### 3.1 Participants

The inclusion criteria for the study were (1) being a woman, (2) being above the age of 25, and (3) being married for the first time and for a maximum of 5 years. The lower age limit was set because the DSI-R has been developed for adults over the age of 25 (Işık & Bulduk, 2015; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). The maximum limit for years of marriage was set according to TURKSTAT (2021) statistics which indicate that divorce rates are highest in the first 5 years of marriage in Turkey. Only individuals in their first marriages are included in this study because the literature points to differences between first married and remarried couples regarding relationship quality and self-regulation skills (Coleman et al., 2000; Meyer et al., 2012). Only women were included in the study since the literature indicated that women experienced lower relationship happiness compared to men and additionally, and because women's health was impacted more by both relationship happiness and display of attachment behaviors, which put them in a higher risk group than men regarding health outcomes (Davis et al., 2016; Fowers, 1991; Jose & Alfons, 2007; Kiecolt-Glaser and Newton, 2001; Rostami et al., 2014; Shek, 1995).

Monte Carlo power analysis simulation was used to determine the sample size for the serial mediation model (Schoemann et al., 2017). Findings from four studies regarding the correlation between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness (Alder et al., 2018; Brimhall et al., 2018; Hee et al., 2019; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020); three studies regarding the correlation between DoS and relationship happiness (Ferreira et al., 2014; Işık et al., 2020; Timm & Keiley, 2011); and two studies regarding the correlation between attachment styles and DoS (Scigala et al., 2021; Timm & Keiley, 2011) were averaged and

then used in the power analysis simulation. Additionally, findings from eight studies regarding the standard deviation of DoS (Cepukiene, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2014; Işık et al., 2020; Ross et al., 2016; Scigala et al., 2021; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006; Timm & Keiley, 2011; Xue et al., 2018); three studies regarding the standard deviation of attachment behaviors (Hee et al., 2019; Sandberg et al., 2016; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020); and 13 studies regarding the standard deviation of relationship happiness (Bradford et al., 2020; Cepukiene, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2014; Hee et al., 2019; Işık et al., 2020; Lampis, 2016; Lampis et al., 2019; Novak et al., 2017; Novak et al., 2018; Sandberg et al., 2016; Sandberg et al., 2017; Sommantico et al., 2021; Timm & Keiley, 2011) were averaged and then used in the power analysis simulation. The estimated sample size was calculated with a critical alpha of .05 to achieve a power of .80 (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007). The simulation was run twice, switching between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidant as the first mediator each time. Monte Carlo power analysis simulation revealed that a sample size of 90 would have adequate power to detect an indirect effect for attachment avoidance as the first mediator, and a sample size of 908 for attachment anxiety as the first mediator, given the effect sizes from earlier studies. The studies that employed a comparable design with similar variables were examined since the sample size for the simulation with attachment anxiety was reasonably large. We found that research studies employing a similar design with similar variables employed a sample of 200 (Bedair et al., 2020; Timm & Keiley, 2011). Hence, the sample size was determined to be 200.

A total of 406 participants were recruited for this study. Prior to further analysis and data screening, 159 participants were removed from the dataset because they had only responded to demographics questions; 31 participants were removed because they had only responded to demographics questions and Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised and not the rest of the questionnaires; and 18 participants were removed because they did not meet the

criteria for inclusion (e.g. being married for more than 5 years, identifying as male etc.). Additionally, 4 participants were removed when screening for outliers in the date (see Data Screening). Thus, preliminary analyses were conducted with 198 women whose ages ranged from 25 years to 49 years ( $M = 29.51$ ,  $SD = 3.72$ ). The years of education participants received ranged from 2 to 28 years ( $M = 16.77$ ,  $SD = 4.12$ ). Participants' monthly family income ranged from 4,000 to 110,000 TL ( $M = 23,349$ ,  $SD = 17,454$ ). In order not to inflate the scale in multivariate analysis, family income variable was rescaled by a factor of 1/1000. Participants' length of marriage ranged from 0 to 5 years ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ). Finally, number of children participants had ranged from 0 to 3 ( $M = 0.42$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ).

**Table 1**

*Participants' Demographic Information*

	n	Missing	M	SD	Range
Age	194		29.51	3.723	25 – 49
Education in years	194		16.77	4.119	2 – 28
Family Income (TL)	193	1	23.349k	17.454k	4k – 110k
Marriage Length	194		2.782	1.494	0 – 5
Number of Children	194		0.418	0.624	0 – 3

*Note.* M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation.

## 3.2 Measures

### 3.2.1 Demographic Information

Participants were asked to indicate their age, education level, income, duration of marriage, and the number of children they have.

### **3.2.2 Differentiation of Self Inventory – Revised (DSI-R)**

Skowron and Friedlander (1998) developed the DSI, and Skowron and Schmitt (2003) revised and improved the DSI into DSI-R to assess the concept of differentiation of self on a sample composed of adults who are aged 25 years and older. The DSI-R is composed of four subscales: emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, fusion with others, and I-position. It is a 46-item test scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true for me) to 6 (very true of me). A sample item from DSI-R is “When I am having an argument with someone, I can separate my thoughts about the issue from my feelings about the person.”. The validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the DSI-R has been established by Işık and Bulduk (2015). The Turkish version of the DSI-R, also referred to as DSI-T, is a 20-item test which supports the four-factor structure with subscales of emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, fusion with others, and I-position. As mentioned above (see Differentiation of Self section), these four subcomponents comprise the construct of DoS, therefore the total of the scale was used in this study. Higher scores in the scale indicate higher DoS. The internal consistency for the total scale of DSI-T was 0.81, and the internal consistency of subscales ranged from 0.74 to 0.78. The test-retest reliability was satisfactory with 0.74. In the present study, the DSI-T was used to assess DoS and a composite score was computed by summing the items within the scale. The internal consistency for the sample in this study was Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .823$ .

### **3.2.3 Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECRR)**

Fraley et al. (2000) developed the ECRR to assess for anxiety and avoidance dimensions that characterize insecure attachment styles among adults. The ECRR is a 36-item test scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The avoidant subscale of ECRR involves 18 items with higher scores indicating higher avoidant attachment, and the anxious subscale involves 18 items with higher scores indicating

higher anxious attachment. A sample item from the anxious subscale is “I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me”. And from the avoidant subscale, a sample item is “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down”. The validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the ECRR has been established by Sümer (2006). The internal consistency for the total scale of the Turkish adaptation of the ECRR was 0.86 for the Anxious subscale, and 0.90 for the Avoidant subscale. The test-retest reliability of the Anxious and Avoidant subscales were 0.82 and 0.81 respectively. In the present study, the ECRR’s avoidant subscale was used to assess avoidant attachment style and anxious subscale was used to assess anxious attachment style. Composite scores for these subscales were found by averaging the items within the subscales. The internal consistency for the avoidant subscale was Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .828$ . For the anxious subscale, the internal consistency was Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .880$ .

### **3.2.4 Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, Engagement Scale (BARE)**

Sandberg et al. (2012) developed the BARE to assess attachment behaviors among adults in romantic relationships. The BARE is a 12-item test scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale has a three-factor structure which are accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement. The respondents are asked to rate themselves and their partners regarding these factors. Higher scores in the scale indicate higher attachment behaviors. A sample item is “I listen when my partner shares her/his deepest feelings”. The validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the BARE has been established by Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al. (2020). The internal consistency for the total scale of the Turkish adaptation of the BARE was 0.89. The test-retest reliability of the Self and Partner subscales were 0.79 and 0.86 respectively. In the present study, the BARE Self subscale was used to assess participants’ own attachment behaviors and a composite score was computed by averaging the items within the scale. The internal consistency for the sample in this study was Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .789$ .

### **3.2.5 Relationship Happiness Questionnaire (RHQ)**

Fletcher et al. (1990) developed the RHQ to assess relationship happiness in premarital relationships. The RHQ is a 6-item test scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores in the scale indicate higher relationship happiness. A sample item is “When all aspects considered, how satisfied are you with your relationship?”. The validity and reliability of the Turkish version of the RHQ has been established by Tuterel-Kıslak (2002) on a sample composed of married participants. The internal consistency for the Turkish adaptation of the RHQ was 0.85 for women (0.80 for overall). The test-retest reliability was 0.95 for women (0.86 for overall). In the present study, the RHQ was used to assess relationship happiness and a composite score was computed by summing the items within the scale. The internal consistency for the sample in this study was Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .886$ .

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedure**

Prior to data collection, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Özyeğin University. Participants were recruited through chain-referral sampling method by sharing the study on social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Instagram and LinkedIn. Data were collected by having participants fill out the questionnaires online on the Qualtrics platform.

Participants were informed about the details of the study and the voluntary nature of the study. All participants filled out the informed consent form on Qualtrics, after which they filled out questionnaires which included the demographic information form, Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised, Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, Brief Accessibility Responsiveness Engagement Scale, and Relationship Happiness Questionnaire.

### 3.4 Data Analytical Approach

#### 3.4.1 Data Screening

Preliminary analyses were conducted on the SPSS 25 Package Program (IBM Corp. Released 2017). Prior to the main analysis, data were screened regarding accuracy of data entries, missing values, outliers in the data, and fulfillment of assumptions of multivariate analysis. Following the screening of item-level accuracy, composite scores for all variables were created by either averaging or summing related items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the corresponding variable.

Missing values were detected in a total of three variables (see Table 1 & Table 2). Less than 5% of the data were missing. Little's (1988) MCAR (missing completely at random) test was conducted to understand the pattern of the missing data. As a result of the applied missing value analysis (MVA), it was shown that missing values were completely at random ( $\chi^2 = 7.461, p = .382$ ). According to Schafer (1999), less than 5% of missingness is discardable when data are missing completely at random. Moreover, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), imputation or listwise deletion show similar results for data with less than 5% missing values when missingness pattern is completely at random. Hence, since less than 5% of the data were missing and the missingness pattern was completely at random, no imputation was made. Full information maximum likelihood estimation was utilized in order to account for missing data (Newsom, 2018).

Multivariate outliers were identified by visually checking Mahalanobis Distance scores (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The Chi-square distribution revealed the value of 20.515 as the cut-off value for the degrees of freedom equaling 5, and  $p < .001$  (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). There were 4 multivariate outliers which were above the value of 20.52, and were deleted prior to further analysis, leaving 194 cases.



A bivariate correlation was run to check for multicollinearity for all the variables. It was found that there was no multicollinearity since none of the variables were highly correlated. In order to assess the normality assumption, skewness and kurtosis were tested, with the criteria of both being in the range of +3 and -3 (Kline, 2011). All variables were in the acceptable range for normality (see Table 2). The multivariate normality plot showed that the results were normal, but slightly positively skewed. The normal P-P Plot of regression standardized residual scatter plot showed that the variables were linear. The Standardized Regression Scatter plot showed that the results were homogenic and homoscedastic.

### **3.4.2 Analytical Approach**

Multivariate analyses were conducted in the Mplus 7 software (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) in order to fit the hypothesized path model with maximum likelihood estimation. A top-down model building approach was employed where all possible covariates (participant age, income, education, length of marriage, and number of children) were included in the model, followed by the removal of nonsignificant covariates to improve the model fit. Nested models were compared by using  $\Delta\chi^2$  test (Kline, 2016). The criteria of comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) values greater than .90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values of .08 or below, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) values of .08 or below are employed to indicate a good fit (Kline, 2011). Indirect effects were tested by using bootstrapping technique (2000 resampling) with 95% confidence intervals (MacKinnon et al., 2007).

**Table 2***Descriptive Statistics for Demographic and Study Variables (N = 194)*

	Missing	Min-Max	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Internal Consistency
DoS		51.0 - 113.0	82.505	12.747	-.025	-.451	.823
Avoidant		1.00 - 4.56	2.199	.707	.543	.077	.828
Anxious		1.28 - 5.83	3.082	.898	.486	.093	.880
BARE	1	2.83 - 5.00	4.517	.451	-1.244	1.648	.789
RHQ	2	16.00 - 42.00	36.427	5.215	-1.361	2.056	.886

*Note.* Min = Minimum, Max = Maximum, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, DoS = Differentiation of Self, Avoidant = Avoidant Attachment Style, Anxious = Anxious Attachment Style, BARE = Attachment Behaviors, RHQ = Relationship Happiness.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### Preliminary Results

Preliminary analyses were conducted in the SPSS 25.0. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency of all variables are presented in Table 2. Bivariate associations were tested to address Hypotheses from 1A to 6B.

#### 4.1 Bivariate Analyses

The bivariate correlations (Pearson) were conducted to test the associations between DoS, attachment styles (attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance), self attachment behaviors, relationship happiness and demographic variables. Correlations between all study variables are presented in Table 3.

The association between DoS and attachment styles were tested. Results revealed that DoS was negatively associated with both attachment anxiety ( $r(192) = -.635, p < .001$ ) and attachment avoidance ( $r(192) = -.341, p < .001$ ). Our Hypotheses 1A (DoS will negatively associate with attachment anxiety) and 1B (DoS will negatively associate with attachment avoidance) were supported.

The association between attachment styles and attachment behaviors were tested. Results showed that both attachment anxiety ( $r(192) = -.347, p < .001$ ) and attachment avoidance ( $r(192) = -.443, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with attachment behaviors. Our Hypotheses 2A (Attachment anxiety will negatively associate with attachment behaviors) and 2B (Attachment avoidance will negatively associate with attachment behaviors) were supported.

The association between DoS and attachment behaviors was tested. Results revealed that DoS was positively associated with attachment behaviors ( $r(192) = .304, p < .001$ ). Our Hypothesis 3 (DoS will positively associate with attachment behaviors) was supported.

The association between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness was tested. Results revealed that attachment behaviors were positively associated with relationship happiness ( $r(192) = .768, p < .001$ ). Our Hypothesis 4 (Attachment behaviors will positively associate with relationship happiness) was supported.

The association between DoS and relationship happiness was tested. Results revealed that DoS was positively associated with relationship happiness ( $r(192) = .346, p < .001$ ). Our Hypothesis 5 (DoS will positively associate with relationship happiness) was supported.

The association between attachment styles and relationship happiness were tested. Results showed that both attachment anxiety ( $r(192) = -.371, p < .001$ ) and attachment avoidance ( $r(192) = -.390, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with relationship happiness. Our Hypotheses 6A (Attachment anxiety will negatively associate with relationship happiness) and 6B (Attachment avoidance will negatively associate with relationship happiness) were supported.

Additionally, the association between demographics including participants' age, number of years of education the participant received, family income, length of marriage, and number of children and the study variables were tested. Results indicated that family income was positively associated with DoS ( $r(192) = .209, p < .01$ ) and negatively associated with attachment anxiety ( $r(192) = -.156, p < .05$ ). Moreover, length of marriage was positively associated with attachment anxiety ( $r(192) = .166, p < .05$ ) and attachment avoidance ( $r(192) = .180, p < .05$ ), and negatively associated with attachment behaviors ( $r(192) = -.251, p < .001$ ) and relationship happiness ( $r(192) = -.307, p < .001$ ).

**Table 3***The Pearson Correlations of the Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	-									
2. Education	.084	-								
3. Income	.096	.149*	-							
4. Marriage Length	.376***	-.003	.015	-						
5. Number of Children	.338***	-.108	-.006	.598***	-					
6. DoS	.091	-.126	.209**	-.021	.053	-				
7. Avoidant	.040	-.077	-.124	.180*	.102	-.341***	-			
8. Anxious	-.028	.001	-.156*	.166*	.119	-.635***	.460***	-		
9. BARE	-.074	-.055	-.026	-.251***	-.054	.304***	-.443***	-.347***	-	
10. RHQ	-.110	-.025	.031	-.307***	-.116	.346***	-.390***	-.371***	.768***	-

*Note.* \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed), \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed), \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed). DoS = Differentiation of Self, Avoidant = Avoidant Attachment Style, Anxious = Anxious Attachment Style, BARE = Attachment Behaviors, RHQ = Relationship Happiness.

## 4.2 Multivariate Analyses

### 4.2.1 Structural Model

A top-down model building approach was employed where all possible covariates (age, years of education, income, length of marriage, number of children) were included in the first model, followed by the removal of nonsignificant covariates to improve the model fit. In the first model, participants' age, years of education, income, and number of children were controlled for on the relationship happiness variable, and length of marriage was controlled for on the relationship happiness, attachment behaviors, attachment avoidance, and attachment anxiety variables (Alder et al., 2018; Sorokowski et al., 2017, Umemura et al., 2018, Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020). The results of the path analysis were as follows:  $\chi^2(12) = 13.017, p = 0.368, CFI = 0.997, TLI = 0.993, RMSEA = 0.021, 90\% CI [0.00, 0.078], SRMR = .027$ . The model fit the data well, yet a competing nested model in which nonsignificant paths from the covariates were removed was also tested to check for possible model improvement. The model improvement was tested with a  $\Delta\chi^2$  test (Kline, 2016). The results of the chi-square difference test showed that nested models were not significantly different from each other,  $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 7.73, p = .56$ . Hence, we moved forward with the structural model with all covariates since it was theoretically more meaningful (Alder et al., 2018; Sorokowski et al., 2017, Umemura et al., 2018, Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020). The final model is depicted in Figure 1.

### 4.2.2 Direct Associations

In the final model, relationship happiness was predicted by attachment behaviors ( $B = 8.017 (SE = .731), \beta = .693, p < .001$ ) and DoS ( $B = .044 (SE = .023), \beta = .106, p = .05, [95\% CI: .001, .089]$ ). DoS predicted attachment avoidance ( $B = -.019 (SE = .004), \beta = -.338, p < .001$ ) and attachment anxiety ( $B = -.045 (SE = .004), \beta = -.633, p < .001$ ). Attachment

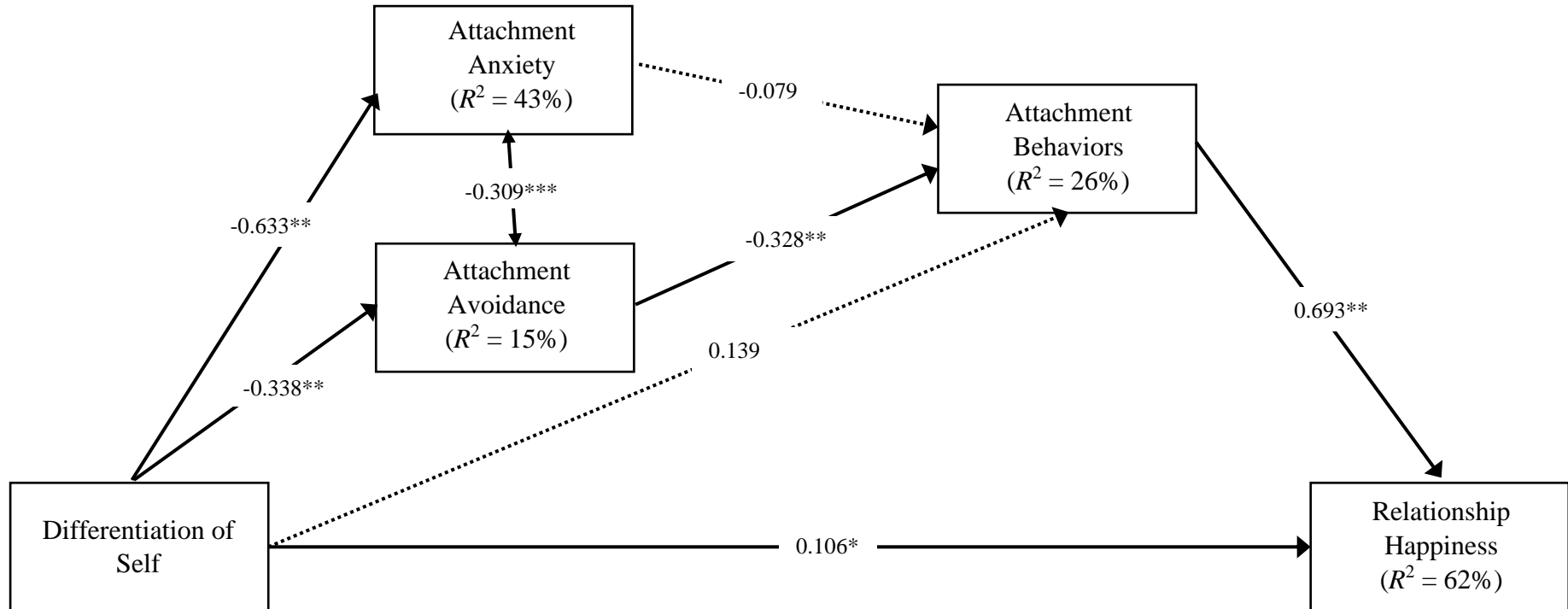
avoidance predicted attachment behaviors ( $B = -.209$ , ( $SE = .054$ ),  $\beta = -.328$ ,  $p < .001$ ). See Figure 1 for complete results.

### 4.2.3 Indirect Associations

The indirect path indicating that attachment avoidance mediated the effects of DoS on attachment behaviors was significant,  $\beta = .111$  ( $SE = .041$ ), [95% CI: .030, .191]. Lastly, the indirect path indicating that attachment behaviors mediated the effects of attachment avoidance on relationship happiness was also significant,  $\beta = -.227$  ( $SE = .064$ ), [95% CI: -.352, -.103]. We acknowledge that testing mediating effect in an absence of longitudinal data would be problematic (Agler & Boeck, 2017). Therefore, our significant results from this model could be interpreted as indirect effects rather than pure mediation. The results regarding indirect effects indicated that higher levels of DoS predicted lower levels of attachment avoidance, and in turn, higher levels of DoS and lower levels of attachment avoidance together predicted higher display of attachment behaviors. Our Hypothesis 7B was supported. Additionally, the results showed that higher levels of attachment avoidance predicted lower display of attachment behaviors, and in turn, higher levels of attachment avoidance and lower display of attachment behaviors together predicted lower relationship happiness. Our Hypothesis 8B was supported. There was no indirect effect between DoS and attachment behaviors through attachment anxiety, and no indirect effect between attachment anxiety and relationship happiness through attachment behaviors. Hence, hypotheses 7A and 8A were not supported.

**Figure 1**

*The Path Model with Standardized Coefficients.*



*Note.* \* $p = .05$  (2-tailed), \*\* $p < .001$  (2-tailed). Participants' age ( $B = -.045$ ,  $\beta = -.032$ ,  $p = .58$ ), years of education ( $B = .037$ ,  $\beta = .029$ ,  $p = .57$ ), income ( $B = .007$ ,  $\beta = .022$ ,  $p = .59$ ), length of marriage ( $B = -.375$ ,  $\beta = -.107$ ,  $p = .06$ ), number of children ( $B = -.046$ ,  $\beta = -.005$ ,  $p = .93$ ) as covariates were controlled for relationship happiness. Participants' length of marriage as a covariate was controlled for attachment behaviors ( $B = -.053$ ,  $\beta = -.174$ ,  $p < .05$ ), attachment avoidance ( $B = .081$ ,  $\beta = .172$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and attachment anxiety ( $B = .091$ ,  $\beta = .151$ ,  $p < .01$ ).



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the direct and indirect contributions of DoS, insecure attachment styles (attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance), and attachment behaviors on relationship happiness. We found a significant indirect effect of DoS on attachment behaviors via attachment avoidance. We also found a significant indirect effect of attachment avoidance on relationship happiness via attachment behaviors. In the following sections, the findings of the study will be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

#### 5.1 Direct Effects

##### 5.1.1 DoS and Attachment Styles

The first research question of the study aimed to examine the association between DoS and attachment styles. It was hypothesized that DoS would be negatively associated with both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. The results of the study confirmed our hypotheses by revealing statistically significant direct effects of DoS on attachment anxiety, and DoS on attachment avoidance, meaning that the participants' ability to balance autonomy and intimacy as well as emotion and logic, predicted their working models regarding romantic relationships. Moreover, the findings showed bivariate associations between DoS and attachment anxiety, and between DoS attachment avoidance such that DoS was significantly negatively associated with both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. These findings are consistent with the previous research suggesting that insecure attachment styles, namely anxious attachment and avoidant attachment style, are associated with lower levels of DoS (Hainlen et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2016; Thorberg & Lyvers, 2006; Xue et al., 2018). These findings might be interpreted as self-regulation capacity along intrapsychic and interpersonal

dimensions promoting emotion regulation strategies in intimate relationships. As Scnarch (2009) put forward, instead of differentiation being a product of secure attachment, it might be the force that regulates the balance of attachment and autonomy (Hardy & Fisher, 2018; Lampis & Cataudella, 2019).

### **5.1.2 Attachment Styles and Attachment Behaviors**

The second research question of the study aimed to examine the association between attachment styles and attachment behaviors. It was hypothesized that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance would be negatively associated with attachment behaviors. The results of the study confirmed our hypotheses for attachment avoidance by revealing statistically significant direct effects of attachment avoidance on attachment behaviors. The findings also showed bivariate associations between attachment avoidance and attachment behaviors, such that attachment avoidance was significantly negatively associated with attachment behaviors. However, direct effects of attachment anxiety on attachment behaviors were not statistically significant even though bivariate associations showed that attachment anxiety and attachment behaviors were significantly negatively associated. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that insecure attachment styles, namely anxious attachment and avoidant attachment style, are associated with lower display of attachment behaviors (Sandberg et al., 2012; Sandberg et al., 2016; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020). This association could be interpreted in two ways: (1) Subjective experience of insecurity in intimate relationships might be hindering engaging in actions that promote attachment security, or (2) low display of attachment behaviors might be provoking attachment insecurity. The lack of a main effect of attachment anxiety on attachment behaviors might be explained by the *cultural fit hypothesis* proposed by Friedman et al. (2010) which suggests that there might be a fit between attachment orientations and cultural norms, and this fit in turn, might have an effect on relationship outcomes. More specifically, Friedman et al. (2010)

propose that anxiously attached individuals might fit better in collectivist cultures, whereas avoidantly attached individuals might fit better in individualist cultures. In the present study, we employed a Turkish sample. According to Kağıtçıbaşı (2007), the Turkish cultural context involves both independent and interdependent values characterized by closely-knit family ties, and a synthesis of self-reliance and harmony, which she describes as the “emotionally interdependent family model” that resembles collectivist cultures. Hence, attachment anxiety might result in culturally adaptive and tolerable behaviors in the Turkish population (see Sümer & Yetkili, 2018). Gender perspective in relation to a cultural perspective might also offer an explanation. Emotional distance of wives and unresponsiveness to their spouses’ needs diverges distinctly from the cultural expectations of women in Turkey (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). On the other hand, wives are expected to express their emotions and bring up relationship issues (Ataca, 2009; Sunar & Fişek, 2005). Therefore, attachment anxiety might result in culturally adaptive and tolerable behaviors for Turkish women. As an alternative explanation, given that individuals who are high on attachment anxiety are also more likely to rate themselves high on self-disclosure, emotional expressiveness and use of others as a secure base, this in turn might be resulting in these individuals inaccurately perceiving themselves as engaging in attachment behaviors (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

### **5.1.3 DoS and Attachment Behaviors**

The third research question of the study aimed to examine the association between DoS and attachment behaviors. It was hypothesized that DoS would be positively associated with attachment behaviors. The results of the study revealed bivariate associations between DoS and attachment behaviors, such that DoS was significantly positively associated with attachment behaviors. This association could be interpreted in two ways: (1) The ability to remain calm in intimate relationships and to modulate emotions might aid in remaining accessible, responsive, and engaged with a romantic partner, or (2) engaging in behaviors that

nurture attachment security might foster an intrapsychic and interpersonal self-regulation capacity (Hardy & Fisher, 2018). Yet, direct effects of DoS on attachment behaviors were not statistically significant. To our knowledge, this is the first study to demonstrate an association between DoS and attachment behaviors. The lack of a main effect of DoS on attachment behaviors might be explained by the significant indirect path indicating that attachment avoidance mediated the effects of DoS on attachment behaviors. In other words, DoS might not have a main effect on attachment behaviors due to attachment avoidance explaining the relationship between DoS and attachment behaviors. To elaborate, the ability to distinguish between emotion and reason, as well as to remain autonomous within the context of an intimate relationship, might decrease the discomfort of being intimate, in turn enabling the person to remain accessible, responsive, and engaged to the significant other.

#### **5.1.4 Attachment Behaviors and Relationship Happiness**

The fourth research question of the study aimed to examine the association between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness. It was hypothesized that attachment behaviors would be positively associated with relationship happiness. The results of the study confirmed our hypothesis by revealing statistically significant direct effects of attachment behaviors on relationship happiness, meaning that the participants' ability to remain accessible, responsive, and engaged to their significant other predicted their romantic relationship happiness. Moreover, the findings showed bivariate associations between attachment behaviors and relationship happiness, such that attachment behaviors were significantly positively associated with relationship happiness. These findings are in line with previous research suggesting that higher display of attachment behaviors is associated with higher relationship happiness (Alder et al., 2018; Bradford et al., 2020; Brimhall et al., 2018; Hee et al., 2019; Sandberg et al., 2017; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020).

### **5.1.5 DoS and Relationship Happiness**

The fifth research question of the study aimed to examine the association between DoS and relationship happiness. It was hypothesized that DoS would be positively associated with relationship happiness. The results of the study confirmed our hypothesis by revealing statistically significant direct effects of DoS on relationship happiness. This finding shows that an individual's ability to emotionally self-regulate and to integrate the needs for autonomy and togetherness predicted their romantic relationship happiness. Moreover, the findings showed bivariate associations between DoS and relationship happiness, such that DoS was significantly positively associated with relationship happiness. The findings are consistent with previous literature suggesting that higher levels of DoS are associated with higher relationship happiness (Aryamanesh et al., 2012; Calatrava et al. 2021; Ferreira, 2014; Işık et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2004; Mohammadi & Alibakhshi, 2021; Skowron, 2000; Sommantico et al., 2021; Timm & Keiley, 2011).

### **5.1.6 Attachment Styles and Relationship Happiness**

The sixth research question of the study aimed to examine the association between attachment styles and relationship happiness. It was hypothesized that attachment styles - attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance- would be negatively associated with relationship happiness. The results of the study revealed bivariate associations between both attachment styles and relationship happiness, such that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were significantly negatively associated with relationship happiness. These findings are in line with previous research suggesting that insecure attachment styles, namely anxious attachment and avoidant attachment style, are associated with lower relationship happiness (Bedair et al., 2020; Feeney, 2002; Mikulincer et al., 2002; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Yahya et al., 2017). This association could be interpreted in two ways: (1) Perceiving relationships as unsafe and engaging in either heightening or inhibiting emotion regulation

strategies might lead to perception of the romantic relationship as unhappy, or (2) Being unhappy in a romantic relationship might invoke feelings of insecurity regarding intimate relationships.

On the other hand, direct effects of attachment styles on relationship happiness were not statistically significant. The lack of a main effect of attachment anxiety on relationship happiness might be explained by the *cultural fit hypothesis* proposed by Friedman et al. (2010). Attachment anxiety is culturally congruent with interdependent family dynamics of the Turkish population, thus having a lesser impact on relationship happiness in the Turkish population (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010; Sümer & Yetkili, 2018). Gender perspective in addition to a cultural perspective might offer another explanation. There is a sharp distinction between what is expected of wives culturally in Turkey and wives being uncomfortable with intimacy and emotional expression. Conversely, wives are expected to voice their feelings and engage in relational arbitration (Ataca, 2009; Sunar & Fişek, 2005). Thus, since attachment anxiety is culturally gender appropriate it might have a lesser impact on relationship happiness in the Turkish population. In line with our finding, Harma and Sümer (2016) also reported that attachment anxiety of wives did not predict their own marital satisfaction in a Turkish married sample.

The lack of a main effect of attachment avoidance on relationship happiness might be explained by the significant indirect path indicating that attachment behaviors mediated the effects of attachment avoidance on relationship happiness. In other words, attachment avoidance might not have a main effect on relationship happiness due to attachment behaviors explaining the relationship between attachment avoidance and relationship happiness. To elaborate, being uncomfortable with intimacy and suppressing attachment needs might prevent the individual from remaining accessible, responsive, and engaged to their partner, in turn lowering their relationship happiness.

## 5.2 Indirect Effects

### 5.2.1 Indirect Effect of DoS on Attachment Behaviors through Attachment Avoidance

The seventh research question of the study aimed to examine the indirect effect of DoS on attachment behaviors through attachment styles. It was hypothesized that attachment styles -attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance- would indirectly affect the association between DoS and attachment behaviors. The results of the study confirmed our hypotheses for attachment avoidance, such that DoS predicted attachment behaviors through attachment avoidance but not through attachment anxiety. It seems that the ability to self-regulate and to remain both autonomous and connected in intimate relationships decreases the individual's discomfort with intimacy and resolves the need to suppress attachment needs (Hardy & Fisher, 2018; Lampis & Cataudella, 2019). Further, decreased discomfort with intimacy and decreased emphasis on self-reliance fosters an ability to remain emotionally available and to sooth an emotionally distressed partner. To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate DoS and attachment behaviors jointly and our findings indicate that the association between the two constructs could be explained by the underlying influence of attachment avoidance.

One explanation for the lack of an indirect effect through attachment anxiety could be the *cultural fit hypothesis* (Friedman et al., 2010). As elaborated on earlier, attachment anxiety fits better in the Turkish collectivist culture (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). Therefore, behaviors that stem from attachment anxiety might constitute adaptive and tolerable behaviors in a Turkish sample (Sümer & Yetkili, 2018). Gender perspective in relation to a cultural perspective might offer another explanation. Expectations regarding Turkish wives expressing their emotions and bringing up relationship issues might serve to behaviors stemming from attachment anxiety being perceived as culturally adaptive attachment behaviors (Ataca, 2009; Sunar & Fişek, 2005). An alternative explanation could be anxiously attached individuals being more likely to rate themselves high on self-disclosure, emotional expressiveness, and

use of others as a secure base (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). As a result of all of these explanations, the individuals might perceive themselves as displaying attachment behaviors.

### **5.2.2 Indirect Effect of Attachment Avoidance on Relationship Happiness through Attachment Behaviors**

The eighth research question of the study aimed to examine the indirect effect of attachment styles on relationship happiness through attachment behaviors. It was hypothesized that attachment behaviors would indirectly affect the association between attachment styles -attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance- and relationship happiness. The results of the study confirmed our hypotheses for attachment avoidance, such that attachment avoidance predicted relationship happiness through attachment behaviors, but attachment anxiety did not. Avoiding intimacy with others and employing an inhibiting style of emotion regulation in which attention is diverted from attachment related thoughts and feelings decreases the ability to engage in actions that enhance attachment security (Sandberg et al., 2012; Sandberg et al., 2016; Skowron & Dendy, 2016; Zeytinoğlu-Saydam et al., 2020). In turn, decreased ability to remain accessible, responsive, and engaged to the significant other lowers relationship happiness (Alder et al., 2018; Bradford et al., 2020; Brimhall et al., 2018; Hee et al., 2019; Sandberg et al., 2017).

One explanation for the lack of an indirect effect of attachment anxiety on relationship happiness through attachment behaviors could be the *cultural fit hypothesis* (Friedman et al., 2010). Sümer and Yetkili (2018) showed that culturally incongruent attachment orientations have a stronger negative impact on satisfaction. In line with this finding, since attachment anxiety is culturally congruent with the collectivist values of the Turkish population, it might not have the detrimental impact on relationship happiness it has in Western cultures (Sümer & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010). The lack of this indirect effect in our findings is also partially consistent with research study by Harma and Sümer (2016) which revealed that attachment avoidance



was the primary risk factor for relationship satisfaction in the Turkish cultural context. Gender appropriateness of attachment anxiety in the Turkish cultural context might be offered as an alternative explanation (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). In line with this perspective, Harma and Sümer (2016) found that attachment anxiety of wives did not predict their own marital satisfaction in a Turkish married sample.

### **5.3 Clinical Implications**

We believe that our findings have some practical implications for counselling and clinical settings since our study provides further evidence for already established therapy models based on attachment theory such as emotionally focused therapy and those based on BFST such as crucible therapy. Our findings underscore the importance of displaying attachment behaviors in predicting relationship happiness, indicating that attachment behaviors might serve as an important point of intervention. In addition to the significance of coregulation, our findings also emphasize the importance of self-regulation, especially for individuals who employ an inhibiting emotion regulation strategy in intimate relationships. Our findings highlight that neither an emphasis on coregulation nor self-regulation by themselves are enough for avoidantly attached individuals in the context of Turkey. These findings indicate that individuals who are high on attachment avoidance need to be able to regulate themselves so as to engage in coregulation through displaying attachment behaviors. Based on the results of our study, attachment avoidance appears to be the decisive factor in predicting relationship happiness from DoS. These findings indicate that individuals who are high on attachment avoidance need to be able to regulate themselves in order to engage in coregulation through displaying attachment behaviors. Therefore, clinicians might arguably benefit from employing an approach that integrates both perspectives when working with this population.

To further advocate for an integrative approach in the clinical settings, it is important to look at therapy modalities that give coregulation and self-regulation the focus that they deserve by utilizing specifically developed interventions tailored to attend to these issues in couple therapy. However, it should be noted that the modalities targeting attachment and DoS tend to favor either coregulation or self-regulation (Hardy & Fisher, 2018).

Emotionally focused couple therapy (EFCT) is an experiential and systemic model of therapy based on attachment theory, integrating both an intrapsychic and interpersonal focus along with an emphasis on processing emotional experience when working with couples (Johnson, 2019). EFCT aims to create emotional security in couple relationships by restructuring the interactional pattern between partners through creating emotional experiences (Johnson, 2019). Enactments are one of the interventions of EFCT that serve to change the interactional pattern through creating bonding moments where the therapist helps the clients remain emotionally available to their partners while feeling insecure, which facilitates responding to an emotionally distressed partner (Tilley & Palmer, 2012). Thus, enactments in EFCT lead clients to display attachment behaviors to create change in the couple relationship and to establish healthy coregulation. In alignment with our findings on the importance of displaying attachment behaviors in predicting relationship happiness, enactments might indeed serve as an important point of intervention. Significance of these bonding moments are in line with research on mirror neurons that suggest nonverbal synchrony is essential for empathy and emotional attunement (Fishbane, 2007; Johnson, 2007). Adults in romantic relationships attune through the eye gaze, and enactments in EFT serve to engage clients nonverbally by having them face each other (Goleman, 2006; Johnson, 2007). Therefore, in light of the literature and our findings, therapists might benefit from incorporating EFCT enactments into their practice.

Noting the significance of coregulation, our findings also emphasize the importance of self-regulation to engage in coregulation through displaying attachment behaviors, especially for individuals who are high on attachment avoidance. Crucible therapy (CT) is an application of BFST which views emotional intimacy and differentiation as inherently intertwined (Schnarch, 1991). CT aims to help clients become more differentiated through improving anxiety tolerance (Schnarch & Regas, 2012). To improve anxiety tolerance, CT therapists utilize confrontation questions and help clients disclose uncomfortable truths and tolerate the messages they are hearing from their partners (Schnarch, 2011). Through these interventions, the therapist aims to enable clients to take responsibility for their own needs and to self-soothe (Gehart, 2014). Another important aspect of CT is the therapist's ability to embody the theory by working on their own level of differentiation, for the client cannot reach a higher level of differentiation than the therapist (Gehart 2014; Hardy & Fisher, 2018). Taking the findings of our study into account, when couples present for therapy, the therapist might consider assessing their attachment orientations and incorporating the aforementioned interventions of CT to improve the avoidant partner's level of differentiation. Therapists might also consider working on their own level of differentiation in order to be able to attend to client differentiation issues.

EFCT favors amplifying coregulation and CT favors amplifying self-regulation to create change in the couple relationship (Hardy & Fisher, 2018). On the other hand, emotion focused therapy for couples (EFT-C) is a therapy model that draws on both attachment theory and BFST (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). EFT-C expands the EFCT stages and steps to put greater emphasis on self-regulation, in addition to the emphasis on coregulation. Additionally, like CT, EFT-C also accentuates therapist differentiation for therapists to be able to understand their own emotional experience and make use of their experience in a way that helps the couple (Greenberg & Goldman, 2008). As stated in previous elaborations, our

findings suggest that both coregulation and self-regulation need to be emphasized when working with avoidantly attached partners in the Turkish context. Therefore, clinicians might consider employing an approach that integrates both perspectives, such as EFT-C.

Lastly, our findings indicate that attachment avoidance plays a key role in predicting relationship happiness from DoS in a sample of newly married Turkish women, and not attachment anxiety. Therefore, interventions that target the avoidantly attached individual in the Turkish context might be of greater consequence to improve relationship satisfaction. For instance, there are three main change events in EFCT which are de-escalation of the negative cycle, withdrawer re-engagement, and pursuer softening (Dagleish et al., 2015). Withdrawer re-engagement targets the avoidantly attached partner. Our findings highlight the significance of withdrawer re-engagement change event in the Turkish population. Further research is needed to understand whether this is specific to the Turkish population or to collectivist cultures in general.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Future Directions**

One of the strengths of this study is the contribution to the literature by addressing DoS, attachment styles, attachment behaviors and relationship happiness at once. To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate DoS and attachment behaviors together. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by shedding light on the relationship between self-regulation and coregulation by providing evidence of indirect effects between the two constructs, as well as revealing their effect on relationship happiness.

Despite these strengths, various limitations of the study should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, our study employed a cross-sectional design which prevented us from making casual inferences regarding direct and indirect paths. Future research might examine the model with a longitudinal design to infer causality. Second, the study involved

only female participants which limited the generalizability of the findings. Future work should test the model with male participants to understand whether our findings were gender specific. Third, participants in this study were married for at most 5 years. Hence, the findings of our study may not be generalizable to longer marriages, dating relationships or divorced individuals. Future research might replicate the study with individuals with different relationship status. Fourth, all the measures were based on self-report. This might have resulted in both social desirability bias and common methods bias. Moreover, we only collected data from one half of the couple which only accounts for the perceptions of one partner. Testing the model with dyadic data would be particularly valuable. Fifth, we used total scale scores for DoS. Future studies could test the model with the subscales of DoS to get a more detailed and complete picture of the association between DoS, attachment styles, attachment behaviors and relationship happiness. Finally, the model could be replicated in a culture with more individualistic values to understand whether the cultural fit hypothesis explains our findings.

**APPENDIX A**

## Demografik Bilgiler Formu

1. Kaç yaşıdasınız?
2. Kaç yıl eğitim/öğretim gördünüz?
3. Hanenizin aylık toplam geliri yaklaşık olarak kaç TL'dir?
4. Kaç yıllık evlisiniz?
5. Kaç çocuğunuz var?

## APPENDIX B

### Benliğin Ayrışması Ölçeği

1-----2----3---4----5-----6  
Hiç Uygun Çok  
Değil Uygun

Aşağıda kendinizle ve başkalarıyla olan ilişkilerinize yönelik düşünce ve duygularınızı içeren ifadeler yer almaktadır. Sizden istenen her bir ifadeyi dikkatlice okuyarak 1'den 6'ya kadar olan seçeneklerden sizi en iyi ifade eden seçeneği işaretlemenizdir. Eğer herhangi bir madde sizinle direkt ilgili gözüküyorsa (örn., şu anda bir eşiniz/partneriniz yoksa), olması halinde nasıl düşünüp nasıl davranabileceğinizle ilgili en iyi tahmininizi belirtiniz. İçten yanıtlarınız için teşekkürler.

1. Ailemin yanındayken genellikle kendimi kısıtlanmış hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.Önemli bir işe ya da göreve başlarken genellikle başkalarının cesaretlendirmesine ihtiyaç duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. İnsanlar benimle yakınlık kurmaya çalıştıklarında, kendimi onlardan uzak tutarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. İnsanlar benimle yakınlık kurmaya çalıştıklarında, bundan genellikle rahatsızlık duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.Hemen hemen hayatımdaki herkesten onay alma ihtiyacı hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Değiştiremeyeceğim şeyler için üzülmenin bir anlamı yok.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Yakın ilişkilerimde kısıtlanma kaygısı yaşarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Eleştirilmek beni oldukça rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Anne/babamın beklentilerine göre yaşamaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Kendimi olduğum gibi kabul ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Eşimle/partnerimle bir tartışma yaşarsam, tüm gün bu tartışma üzerine düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Başkaları tarafından baskı altında olduğumu hissettiğim zamanlarda bile onlara “hayır” diyebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Yaptığım şeyin doğru olduğunu düşünüyorsam başkalarının ne dediğini pek de umursamam.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Bir karar alırken danışacağım birileri yoksa kolay kolay karar veremem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Başkaları tarafından incitilmek beni aşırı derecede rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Eşimin/partnerimin yoğun ilgisi beni bunaltır.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. İnsanlar üzerindeki izlenimimi merak ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Duygularımı genellikle çevremdekilerden daha yoğun yaşarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Hayatımda ne olursa olsun, kendimle ilgili düşüncelerimden asla taviz vermem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Anne/babamın fikrini almadan karar veremem.	1	2	3	4	5	6

## APPENDIX C

## Yakın İlişkilerde Yaşantılar Envanteri-II

Aşağıdaki maddeler romantik ilişkilerinizde hissettiğiniz duygularla ilgilidir. Bu araştırmada sizin ilişkinizde yalnızca şu anda değil, genel olarak neler olduğuyla ya da neler yaşadığınızla ilgilenmekteyiz. Maddelerde sözü geçen "birlikte olduğum kişi" ifadesi ile romantik ilişkide bulunduğunuz kişi kastedilmektedir. Eğer halihazırda bir romantik ilişki içerisinde değilseniz, aşağıdaki maddeleri bir ilişki içinde olduğunuzu varsayarak cevaplandırınız. Her bir maddenin ilişkilerinizdeki duygu ve düşüncelerinizi ne oranda yansıttığını karşılarındaki 7 aralıklı ölçek üzerinde, ilgili rakam üzerine çarpı (X) koyarak gösteriniz.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç		Kararsızım/ fikrim				Tamamen
	katılmıyorum		yok				katılıyorum
1. Birlikte olduğum kişinin sevgisini kaybetmekten korkarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Gerçekte ne hissettiğimi birlikte olduğum kişiye göstermemeyi tercih ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Sıklıkla, birlikte olduğum kişinin artık benimle olmak istemeyeceği korkusuna kapılırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Özel duygu ve düşüncelerimi birlikte olduğum kişiyle paylaşmak konusunda kendimi rahat hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Sıklıkla, birlikte olduğum kişinin beni gerçekten sevmediği kaygısına kapılırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere güvenip inanmak konusunda kendimi rahat bırakmakta zorlanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilerin beni, benim onları önemseyemediğim kadar önemsemeyeceklerinden endişe duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere yakın olma konusunda çok rahatımdır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Sıklıkla, birlikte olduğum kişinin bana duyduğu hislerin benim ona duyduğum hisler kadar güçlü olmasını isterim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere açılma konusunda kendimi rahat hissetmem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. İlişkilerimi kafama çok takarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



12. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere fazla yakın olmamayı tercih ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Benden uzakta olduğunda, birlikte olduğum kişinin başka birine ilgi duyabileceği korkusuna kapılırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişi benimle çok yakın olmak istediğinde rahatsızlık duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere duygularımı gösterdiğimde, onların benim için aynı şeyleri hissetmeyeceğinden korkarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Birlikte olduğum kişiyle kolayca yaklaşabilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Birlikte olduğum kişinin beni terk edeceğinden pek endişe duymam.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Birlikte olduğum kişiyle yaklaşmak bana zor gelmez.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişi kendimden şüphe etmeme neden olur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Genellikle, birlikte olduğum kişiyle sorunlarımı ve kaygılarımı tartışırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Terk edilmekten pek korkmam.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Zor zamanlarımda, romantik ilişkide olduğum kişiden yardım istemek bana iyi gelir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Birlikte olduğum kişinin, bana benim istediğim kadar yaklaşmak istemediğini düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Birlikte olduğum kişiye hemen hemen her şeyi anlatırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişiler bazen bana olan duygularımı sebepsiz yere değiştirirler.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Başımdan geçenleri birlikte olduğum kişiyle konuşurum.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Çok yakın olma arzumu bazen insanları korkutup uzaklaştırır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Birlikte olduğum kişiler benimle çok yakınlaştığında gergin hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

29. Romantik ilişkide olduğum bir kişi beni yakından tanıdıkça, “gerçek ben”den hoşlanmayacağından korkarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişilere güvenip inanma konusunda rahatımdır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Birlikte olduğum kişiden ihtiyaç duyduğum şefkat ve desteği görememek beni öfkelenendirir.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. Romantik ilişkide olduğum kişiye güvenip inanmak benim için kolaydır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. Başka insanlara denk olamamaktan endişe duyarım	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Birlikte olduğum kişiye şefkat göstermek benim için kolaydır.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. Birlikte olduğum kişi beni sadece kızgın olduğumda önemser.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Birlikte olduğum kişi beni ve ihtiyaçlarımı gerçekten anlar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## APPENDIX D

### Duyarlılık, Ulaşılabilirlik, Yakınlık Ölçeği

Lütfen şu anki ilişkinizde eşiniz/sevgiliniz ile yaşadıklarınızı en iyi ifade eden seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5  
Hiçbir Her  
Zaman Zaman

1. Eşime vakit ayırırım.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Eşimin ilgimi çekmesi kolaydır.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Eşim benimle duygularını paylaştığında onu dinlerim.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Eşimle iyi iletişim kurabildiğime inanıyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Eşime sırlarımı anlatırım.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Eşime kendimi yakın ve bağlı hissediyorum.	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX E

### İlişkilerde Mutluluk Ölçeği

Aşağıda eşinizle olan ilişkinizle ilgili altı soru yer almaktadır. Lütfen her bir soruyu okuduktan sonra 7-dereceli ölçek üzerinde cevap veriniz.

1. Eşinizi ne kadar seviyorsunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç sevmiyorum						Çok seviyorum
2. İlişkinizde ne kadar mutlusunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç mutlu değilim						Çok mutluyum
3. Genelde, ne sıklıkla eşinizle aranızdaki ilişkinin iyi gittiğini düşünürsünüz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç düşünmem						Çok düşünürüm
4. İlişkinizdeki sorunlar ne kadar ciddidir?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Çok ciddi						Hiç ciddi değil
5. Tüm yönleriyle düşündüğünüzde, ilişkinizden ne kadar doyum alıyorsunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç doyum almıyorum						Çok doyum alıyorum
6. Genelde, ilişkinize ne kadar bağlısınız?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Hiç bağlı değilim						Çok bağlıyım

**APPENDIX F****Gönüllü Katılım Onay Formu**

**Projenin Adı:** Yeni evli kadınların ayrımlaşma düzeylerinin ve ilişkideki bağlanma davranışlarının romantik ilişki mutlulukları üzerindeki etkisi.

**Proje yürütücüsünün adı ve iletişim bilgileri:**

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**Projenin amacı:** Bu çalışmanın amacı ilk evliliklerini yapmış ve en fazla 5 senedir evli olan, 25 yaşından büyük olan kadın bireylerin benliklerinin ayrımlaşma düzeylerinin ve ilişki içerisindeki bağlanma davranışlarının romantik ilişki mutluluklarına etkisini incelemektir. Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular Türkiye’de Çift ve Aile Terapisi alanında bağlanma davranışlarını hedef alacak müdahalelerin kullanımının ilişki mutluluğu üzerindeki olası faydalarına ışık tutarak katkı sağlayacaktır.

**Süreç:** Gönüllü onay formunun her birey için ayrı ayrı doldurulması beklenmektedir. Tüm kimlik bilgileriniz araştırmada gizli tutulacaktır. Onay formunu doldurduktan sonra demografik bilgi formunu ve anket sorularını doldurmanız istenmektedir.

Bu anketin sonunda eğer destek almaya ihtiyacınız olduğunu düşünürseniz Özyeğin Üniversitesi Çift ve Aile Merkezi (ÖZÜÇAM) ile (549) 810 86 25 numaralı telefonda ya da Bilgi Üniversitesi Psikolojik Danışmanlık Merkezi (PDM) ile pdm@bilgi.edu.tr adresinden ya da (212) 311 76 74 numaralı telefonda iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

**Gizlilik:** Bu araştırmada gizlilik esasına uyulacaktır. Katılımcıların tüm kişisel bilgileri, demografik formları ve anket sorularına verilen cevaplar korumalı dosyalarda ve korumalı bilgisayarlarda saklanacaktır.

**Gönüllü Katılım:** Bu araştırma projesine katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında araştırmaya katılmaktan vazgeçebilirsiniz. Katılımdan vazgeçmenin hiçbir olumsuz sonucu olmayacaktır. Araştırma projesine katılmanın katılımcılara doğrudan faydası olmayacaktır; bu araştırma ile bilimsel bilgiye katkı yapılması amaçlanmaktadır. Proje katılımınız sırasında veya daha sonra bir sorunuz olursa yukarıdaki iletişim bilgileri ile araştırmacıya ulaşabilirsiniz.

Bu formda anlatılan araştırmanın etik yönleriyle ve/veya araştırma detaylarıyla ilgili sorularınız, sorunlarınız veya önerileriniz varsa lütfen Özyeğin Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu ile (216) 564 9512 numaralı telefonda temasa geçiniz.

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Yukarıda sözü geçen “Yeni evli kadınların ayrımlaşma düzeylerinin ve ilişkideki bağlanma davranışlarının romantik ilişki mutlulukları üzerindeki etkisi” isimli araştırma projesinin detaylarını okudum ve bu proje ile ilgili sorularım cevaplandı. Bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. Özel nitelikli kişisel verilerimin, kişisel verilerimin sadece araştırma konusu ile ilgili olarak kullanılmak üzere toplanmasına, işlenmesine ve amaç ile sınırlı olarak aktarılmasına muvafakat ediyorum.

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