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Psychological distress, self esteem and emotional dependency of married individuals as predictors of marital adjustment

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Abstract

In current literature there are studies that have evaluated the relationship between psychological distresses, self-esteem, emotional dependency and marital adjustment. This study aims to contribute to the expansion of this area of research concentrating on especially Turkish case which seems to be considerably different one from both the United States and other Western countries. It is concluded that marital adjustment is higher for the men than for the women. Psychological distress negatively predicts marital adjustment for both women and men, whereas self-esteem and emotional dependency predicts it positively and psychological distress levels are higher for the women than for the men. Some factors for this could be subordinated status of women at home, lack of sufficient income, violence, social and economic inequalities, traditional duties that should be performed in daily affairs. Those in low income class have lower marital adjustment, self-esteem, emotional dependency compared to those in middle and high income classes. There is no doubt that economic problems enhance the preoccupation with financial issues in many couples. Higher-Post Graduate educational level had higher marriage adjustment scores compared to individuals with Primary-Secondary School educational level. Higher/Post Graduate educational level had lower psychological distress scores compared to individuals with Primary-Secondary School educational level and High School.

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1. Introduction

There is a large and growing body of research that strives to explore the marital adjustment which is one of crucial aspects of family and individual life and some of its determinants such as age, gender, income, education level, marriage duration, number of children and so on. Marital adjustment is also associated with less psychological distress (Whisman and Uebelacker, 2003), better self-esteem (Sciangula and Morry, 2009), better emotional dependency (Rusbult and Verette, 1991). Recent researches have frequently focused on the links between the level of psychological distress such as depression, anxiety disorder, hostility, post-traumatic stress disorder, personality disorder, trait anger and the level of marital adjustment obtaining data from different community samples (Roberts 2000; Williams, 2003; Goff and Smith, 2005; Smith and Glazer, 2006; Graham, et al., 2006; Kouros, et al., 2008; Whisman 2007; South, et al., 2008).

The relationship between self-esteem and marital adjustment is an important issue in close relationships (Murray et al., 2006). Researches have found a positive relationship between these two variables (Howard, 2000; Kwon, 2001; Masoud, 2001; Pourdehghan and Mahmmudnia, 2008, Sciangula and Morry, 2009).

Emotional dependency is an important predictor of marital adjustment. A significant positive relationship between emotional dependency and respectively relation satisfaction (Rusbult, et al., 1991), relation motivation/behaviours (Rusbult, et al., 2002), relation adjustment, effective communication skill (Robinson and Blanton, 1993), problem solving skill (Brewer, 1993), happiness (Ferguson, 1993), have been found.

Revealed from recent studies that marital adjustment tends to peak in the first few years of marriage and decline for 10-20 years. Specifically those young couples have lower marital adjustment and therefore a risk of divorce and separation (Glenn, et al., 2010).

Many American studies did not find significant differences in marital adjustment by education (Van Laningham, et al., 2001; Amato, et al., 2003, Umberson, et al., 2005) as empirical studies in Europe on this were rather mixed.

The number of children is generally associated with lower marital adjustment (Bradbury, et al., 2000).

Most studies find that women report lower marital adjustment than men (Rogers and Amato, 2000, Pimentel 2000; Van Laningham, et al., 2001; Amato, et al., 2003, Xu and Lai 2004; Umberson, et al., 2005, Ng et al. 2008).

Lower income predicts less marital satisfaction and more psychological distress in marriage (Kerkmann, et al., 2000; Dakin and Wamper, 2008).

2. Method

2.1. Research Questions

- a) Are there any sex, marriage duration, income and educational level group differences regarding participants' own marital adjustment, psychological distress, self-esteem, and emotional dependency?
- b) Which factors (age, educational level, marriage duration, number of children, income, psychological distress, self-esteem, and emotional dependency) predict male and female participants' own marital adjustment?

2.2. Sample

The sample consists of a 466 married individuals, living in 40 different cities in Turkey. In January 2016 some of senior psychology students at Cumhuriyet University were chosen as volunteer interviewers to apply the questionnaires in 40 cities of Turkey in which their families lived. Using snowball technique each student applied nearly 15 questionnaires. Before administering the scales, the researchers received all participants' informed consent and explained the purpose of the study. The anonymity and the confidentiality of the responses were safeguarded. Each administration was completed within 20-25 minutes. Because some participants were illiterate interviewers helped them to fill in the questionnaire forms. In the end of data cleaning process some cases were left out.

The mean age of the women was 33.61 years ($SD= 9.48$, range = 18-68), and 37.22 years ($SD = 10.18$, range = 18-75) for men. The women's mean age at marriage was 21.25 years ($SD = 3.68$), and the men's was 24.88

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