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## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LONELINESS LEVEL AND DECEPTION TENDENCIES IN MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

*Evli Bireylerde Yalnızlık Düzeyi ve Aldatma Eğilimi Arasındaki İlişki*

Yasin DEMİR\*

Hatice KUMCAĞIZ\*\*

### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the level of loneliness and the tendency to deceive in married individuals. 270 volunteer married individuals participated in the study. The data of the study were collected by using the Deception Tendency Scale and UCLA Loneliness Scale and the analyzes were performed through SPSS package program. Results show that males' tendency to deceive is significantly higher than females, and loneliness level does not differ significantly according to gender. Both the tendency of deception and loneliness levels of the individuals who had multiple marriages were significantly higher than the individuals who had single marriages. In addition, there was a positive relationship between loneliness and tendency to deceive. Finally, it was found that the tendency to deceive predicts loneliness to a meaningful level.

**Keywords:** Loneliness, tendency to deceive, married individuals.

### ÖZ

Bu araştırma evli bireylerde yalnızlık düzeyi ile aldatma eğilimi arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmaya 270 gönüllü evli birey katılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri Aldatma Eğilimi Ölçeği ve UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği kullanılarak toplanmış ve analizler SPSS paket programı aracılığıyla yapılmıştır. Bulgular; erkeklerin aldatma eğilimlerinin kadınlardan anlamlı düzeyde yüksek olduğunu, yalnızlık düzeyinin cinsiyete göre anlamlı düzeyde farklılaşmadığını göstermektedir. Birden fazla evlilik yapan bireylerin hem aldatma eğilimleri hem de yalnızlık düzeyleri tek evlilik yapan bireylerden anlamlı düzeyde yüksektir. Ayrıca yalnızlık ile aldatma eğilimi arasında pozitif yönde ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır. Son olarak aldatma eğiliminin yalnızlığı anlamlı düzeyde yordadığı saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Yalnızlık, aldatma eğilimi, evli bireyler

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage, one of the most popular institutions among people, is a complex phenomenon in today's changing society. People get married for a variety of reasons; these include sexuality, love, economic security, companionship, protection, emotional sexual attraction, escape from loneliness and unhappy home situation, common interest and the desire to have children (Arshad, Mohsin, & Mahmood, 2014; Demir, Atli, & Kis, 2016). Marriage life includes meeting the needs such as nutrition, protection and housing in unity and solidarity within the framework of positive relationships. At the same time, the social roles and responsibilities of the spouses in the marriage process, personal entrepreneurship and creativity are promoted, and the roles that occur along with

\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Fırat Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilim Dalı. E-posta: [yasindemir@firat.edu.tr](mailto:yasindemir@firat.edu.tr) ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2456-1449>

\*\* Doç. Dr., Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilim Dalı. E-posta: [haticek@omu.edu.tr](mailto:haticek@omu.edu.tr), ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0165-3535>

sexual maturation are shared (Gülsün, Ak, & Bozkurt, 2009). In fact, marriage is a union that includes various emotions, roles, duties and responsibilities. Technological advances in recent years have affected the marriage process and the relationship dynamics of the family. As a result of the developments in the relationship dynamics of the family, there has been a transition from extended family to nuclear family. In this transition process in families, the relations of spouses have also been adversely affected and alienation tendencies have started to be seen among the spouses towards themselves, their spouses and even the society they live in (Kibaroglu & Ersoy, 2019).

Marriage process of couples to each other in time to enter the process of alienation of married individuals creates the problem of loneliness. Loneliness is one of the most important problems that negatively affect the life of an individual. In this transition process in families, the relations of spouses have also been adversely affected and alienation tendencies have started to be seen within the spouses towards themselves, their spouses and even the society they live in (Kibaroglu & Ersoy, 2019).

In the process of marriage, couples enter into a process of alienation with each other, which causes the problem of loneliness in married individuals. Loneliness is one of the important problems that affect the life of the individual. On the other hand, it is very difficult to define the loneliness that causes the individual to be detached from the society in which s/he lives. Loneliness can be examined objectively and objectively. However, the perception and expression of loneliness is considered as a result of individual experiences. In reality, loneliness is a terrible experience that cannot be expressed verbally. Perhaps individuals feel lonely because loneliness cannot be expressed and shared. Loneliness causes an individual to develop a sense of loneliness by reducing his adaptation to the society in which s/he lives. Loneliness affects individuals' lives negatively. Loneliness causes problems such as depression in individuals (Yaşar, 2007).

In the marriage process, in which women and men continue to associate with intense emotions, over time responsibilities, non-coping problems and spouses' disagreement may cause couples to move away from each other (Demir & Durmuş, 2015). Well-groomed men and women in business, with the support of the cosmetic industry, look as cute as they are. It may be difficult for a man and woman who does not receive care and love from their spouse in the house to maintain their loyalty to their spouse. A constant tension at home and an atmosphere of discussion can distract men and women from their spouses. In the face of the problems h/she experiences, the individual may seek a different quest and even cause the spouses to behave insensitive to each other. Insensitive behaviors of spouses towards each other may cause deception behavior (Tarhan, 2018). Deception behavior plays an important role in ending marriages (Shackelford, Besser, & Goetz, 2008). Because of the differences in the perceptions of women and men related to extramarital affairs, different people define deception behavior in different ways. Therefore, there is no universal definition of deception behavior (Munsch, 2012). In the literature, cheating is defined as cheating with emotional content, as well as having low emotional bonds, unfaithfulness between spouses, extramarital sexual intercourse, having sexual intercourse with someone other than the primary partner (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Hartnett, 2005; Subotnik, 2007).

Marriage is accepted as one of the most important interpersonal relationships that develop in human life, while it can be an important source of satisfaction and happiness for some people and it can become a phenomenon that brings many negative consequences for others (Küçükçelik, 2015). In marriage, especially the problems experienced between spouses negatively affect the physical and mental health of family members and cause behavioral problems to occur (Yılmaz, 2001). Marriage problems that increase over time have also a negative impact on the environment the couples are in together. Individuals who cannot cope with marital problems may opt for the divorce phenomenon. Divorce affects individuals and the society from different angles in a myriad of ways such as psychological, social, economic and so on. In recent years, divorce has increasingly become a major problem in Turkey (Dogan, 2016). As can be seen, problems in marriage affect not only married individuals but also the society in which they live. For this reason, factors affecting marital integrity

should be investigated in order to ensure that marriages do not end and individuals with high psychological well-being and therefore societies are raised. Deception behavior is one of the most common causes of termination of marriage (Amato & Rogers, 1997; Çiçek, 2014). In many societies, deception is deemed to be “deviant” behavior by considering it morally wrong and unfair. However, deception is experienced in many relationships (Jackman, 2015). According to TSI (2017) data, 32.2% of women in Turkey, and 8.7% of men divorced because of infidelity. It is stated that violence in the family is effective in increasing tendency to deceive (Ulutaşdemir, 2002). In one study, it is stated that the increase in deception behaviors may result in an increase in sexually transmitted diseases as a result of unprotected sexual intercourse. Therefore, it is stated that deception behavior is an important public health problem (Conley, Moors, Ziegler, & Karathanasis, 2012). In this context, it is considered important to identify possible factors that may cause a tendency to deceive. In this context, this study was carried out with the aim of determining the place of the concepts of loneliness and deception in marriage, and the factors affecting the deception and loneliness was found to be one of the limited researches about loneliness and deception in terms of marriage. This situation reveals the importance of the research. At the same time, it can be said that the research conducted is meaningful in terms of guiding the preventive psychoeducation studies to be applied to individuals working in the field of mental health such as psychiatrist, psychologist and psychological counselor. In this context, the research was carried out to reveal the relationship between married individuals' deception tendency and loneliness level according to various factors. Within the framework of this general purpose, the following research questions were sought:

- \* Do deception tendencies and loneliness levels differ according to sex significantly?
- \* Is there a significant difference in the tendency to deceive and loneliness according to the number of marriages?
- \* Is there a significant relationship between deception tendencies and loneliness levels?
- \* Is the level of loneliness predictive of deception tendencies?

## **2.METHOD**

**2.1. Research Model:** This study investigating the relationship between loneliness and deception tendency in married individuals was conducted within the framework of quantitative research paradigms and relational screening model was used in the study (Balcı, 2009; Karasar, 2009).

**2.2. Working Group:** The study group consisted of 270 married individuals (133 women (49.3%) and 137 men (50.7%)), who live in Samsun, are currently married and share the same house with their spouse and volunteered to participate in the study. 230 (85.2%) of the participants had single marriage and 26 (13.3%) had two marriages. 4 participants (1.5%) were married three times. While 47 (17.4%) of the participants stated that they had no children, 93 participants (34.4%) stated that they had one child, 72 participants (26.7%) stated that they had two children and 58 participants (21.5%) stated that they had three or more children.

**2.3. Measurements:** Infidelity Tendency Scale (ITS) and UCLA Loneliness Scale were used as data collection tools in the study.

**2.3.1. Deception Tendency Scale (DTS):** The scale was developed by Polat (2006) to measure the tendency of deception of married individuals. The scale is a five-point Likert-type scale. The 30-item scale consists of 18 positive items that measure the tendency to deceive, and 12 negative items that measure behaviors that are not considered cheating and are scored in reverse. The scores that can be obtained from the scale vary between 30-150. High scores indicate that the deception tendency is high. While the scale was developed, data were collected from individuals who cheated on their spouses and who did not. Expert opinions were consulted within the scope validity of the scale. In addition, the measurement tool was applied to individuals who cheated on their spouse at least once

and who never did, and it was found that they were capable of separating the two groups. For reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha and two-half reliability were evaluated and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was .95 and two-half reliability coefficient was similarly measured as .95 (Polat, 2006). Therefore, it can be said that the Deception Tendency Scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool. For this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .96.

**2.3.2. UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-LS):** The scale developed by Russell, Peplau and Ferguson (1978) and revised by Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona (1980) was adapted to Turkish by Demir (1989). It consists of 20 items, 10 of which are graded reversely and it is a measuring tool with 4 ratings. The scores that can be obtained from the scale vary between 20-80. The high score obtained from the scale is accepted as an indicator of high levels of loneliness. The scores of the individuals who complained about loneliness and those who did not complain were examined within the scope of validity and it was found that the scale was a distinctive measurement instrument. In addition, the relationship between Beck Depression Inventory was examined and found to be highly positive. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .94. In addition, the test was re-tested and calculated as .94 (Demir, 1989). Therefore, it can be said that the UCLA Loneliness Scale is a valid and reliable measurement tool. For this study, the internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .88.

**2.4. Data Collection:** In order to conduct the research, permission was obtained from Ondokuz Mayıs University Social and Humanities Ethics Committee (Decision no: 2018/106). The data of the study were collected by means of their responses to self-report measurement tools obtained from married individuals who are willing to participate in the study. The participants completed the forms in 20-30 minutes. Those who accepted to participate in the study were informed about the purpose of the study and measurement tools were applied after obtaining their verbal consent.

**2.5. Data Analysis:** SPSS software was used to analyze the data. It was examined whether the data showed normal distribution before performing the analysis. Skewness-kurtosis values were examined while calculating normality. Since the skewness and kurtosis values of the data were within acceptable limits (between -1 and +1), normal distribution tests were used. Data were analyzed by t test, Pearson Correlation Analysis and Simple Linear Regression Analysis.

### 3. FINDINGS

The t-test was performed to determine whether the participants' deceptive tendencies and loneliness levels differed by gender and the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Results of t-test for examining the deception tendencies and loneliness levels of the participants in terms of gender

		n	$\bar{x}$	sd	df	t	p
Tendency to deceive	Male	133	74.20	23.69	268	4.722	.000*
	Female	137	89.06	27.80			
Loneliness	Female	133	39.32	9.17	268	1.225	.183
	Male	137	40.87	9.91			

\* $p < .001$

Table 1. Results of t-test for examining the deception tendencies and loneliness levels of the participants in terms of gender

As can be seen in Table 1, it was found that the mean score of deception tendency of men was significantly higher than that of women [ $t(268) = -4.722$ ;  $p = .000$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. The loneliness levels of the participants were higher than the average score of [ $t(268) = -1.225$ ;  $p = .183$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

The t-test was conducted to determine whether the participants' deceptive tendencies and loneliness levels differ and the results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The results of the t-test for examining the deception tendencies and loneliness levels of the participants in terms of the number of marriages

		n	$\bar{x}$	sd	df	t	p
Tendency to deceive	Single Marriage	230	79.07	26.73	268	4.022	.000*
	Multiple Marriages	40	97.08	22.30			
Loneliness	Single Marriage	230	39.29	9.38	268	3.430	.001**
	Multiple Marriages	40	44.80	9.39			

\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 2, both the tendency to deceive [ $t(268) = -4.022$ ;  $p = .000$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and loneliness levels [ $t(268) = -3.430$ ;  $p = .000$ ,  $p < .01$ ] of those who have had more than one marriage were significantly higher than single marriages.

The relationships between the deception tendencies and loneliness levels of the participants are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Pearson Correlation Analysis test results between participants' deception tendencies and loneliness levels

		Loneliness
Tendency to deceive	r	.27
	p	.000*
	n	270

\* $p < .001$

When Table 3 was examined, it was found that there was a low positive correlation ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ) between the deception tendencies of the participants and their loneliness levels. Regression analysis was conducted to predict the tendency of loneliness in married individuals and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The results of simple linear regression analysis in predicting loneliness tendency in married individuals

Predictive Variable	B	Standard Error	$\beta$	t	p
(1) Loneliness	51.239	6.806	.271	4.606	.000*

Note: Dependent variable: Tendency to deceive;  $R = .271$ ,  $R^2 = .073$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .070$  (\*  $p < .001$ )

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that loneliness in married individuals positively predicts the deception tendency. According to this finding of the study, it was found that married individuals explained about 7% of the tendency to deceive the level of loneliness [ $F(1,268) = 21.219$ ;  $p = .000$ ,  $p < .001$ ].

#### 4.DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Couples have some positive and negative experiences in the process of living together by making a marriage decision. The ways in which spouses experience negative experiences shape the course of the situation (Malkoç & Güren, 2018). In this study where the relationship between the loneliness level and the tendency of cheating of married individuals was investigated, it was found that the tendency of cheating by sex was found to be significantly higher than that of men. When the literature is examined, it is stated in the study of Polat (2006) that men tend to cheat more. In the study of Tagler and Jeffers (2023), it was found that males have more tendencies to deceive than females. In another study, it is seen that men tend to cheat significantly higher than women (Sagarin et al., 2012). However, on the other hand, there is no significant difference in deception behavior between men and women (Scheeren, Apellániz, & Wagner, 2018). In this study, the loneliness levels of married individuals did not differ significantly according to gender. When the literature is analyzed, it is found that there are not consistent studies showing that the loneliness level varies

according to gender. Dogan (1998) did not find a significant difference between gender and loneliness in their study with married and divorced individuals. In a study conducted on elderly couples in America, no significant difference was found between gender and loneliness levels (Ayalon et al., 2013). Pinquart and Sorensen (2001) reported that women were lonelier than men in their study on older adults. According to the results of this study, it can be said that the research findings are partially supported by the literature. In this study, it was determined that both deceitful tendencies and loneliness levels of multiple marriages significantly differed from single marriages. It was found that the mean score of deception tendency of married individuals who had multiple marriages was significantly higher than those of single marriages. Similarly, the loneliness level scores of married individuals who had multiple marriages were significantly higher than those of single marriages. When the related literature was examined, no study could be found on this research finding. Although the marriage process is seen as a sharing process for spouses, spouses may sometimes feel emotionally lonely. Emotional loneliness that can be seen in their spouses is primarily related to “the absence of a partner, that is, the absence of a close and intimate bond ((Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). Lack of social relations or weakness of relations with friends and family of the individual is also mentioned as social loneliness. Therefore, social support perceived by the individual is accepted as an important factor in reducing loneliness (Adamczyk, 2016; Bernardon, Babb, Hakim-Larson, & Gragg, 2011). In the light of these studies, it is thought that individuals who feel lonely both emotionally and socially exhibit deceptive behaviors that may cause disruption of their marriage process in order to feel emotionally well and their marriage results in divorce. In the study, it was found that there is a low positive relationship between the deception tendencies of the married individuals and their loneliness levels. It is stated that loneliness is one of the reasons that cause a tendency to deceive individuals. Married people can get away from each other and feel lonely. Although individuals make efforts to get rid of this situation, they may turn to behaviors that they think will be good for them if they are not successful. In order to get rid of their loneliness, they may have emotional or sexual relationships with others (Solomon & Teagno, 2011). In a study, it is stated that those who have high marital adjustment have a low tendency to deceive (Polat, 2006). Loneliness is seen as a condition that negatively affects the well-being of individuals but decreases with love and relationship satisfaction (Türk & Yıldız, 2017). In the literature, it is stated that individuals who are not emotionally satisfied with their marital relationship and with their spouse cannot find the closeness they are expecting begin to seek new sexual experiences, seek behaviors that may lead to betrayal against their spouse in their marriage in search of freedom (Scheeren, Apellániz, & Wagner, 2018). As it is seen in the researches, it can be said that individual and relational based problems lead to deception tendency. This study has several limitations. First, the analyzed data is cross-sectional. This avoids a thorough evaluation of the causes and consequences. Only quantitative data were collected in this study. It is thought that individual interviews that provide qualitative data will provide deeper information about cheating and loneliness in marriage. In this study, the dimension of deception is generally discussed. In future studies, it is recommended to conduct studies that deal with deception behavior of married individuals with emotional and sexual deception.

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