



RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

Development of the Emotional Intimacy Scale in Romantic Relationships: A Validity and Reliability Study

Romantik İlişkilerde Duygusal Yakınlık Ölçeği Geliştirilmesi: Geçerlik ve Güvenirlik Çalışması

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Abstract:

This study aimed to develop and test an Emotional Intimacy Scale to measure the partners' perception of the emotional intimacy level of romantic relationships and test the psychometric properties. The participants consisted of 640 individuals who participated in the study in 2023, from all regions of Turkey. First, literature review on emotional intimacy in relationships was conducted. Then, semi-structured interviews were made with six individuals who were in romantic relationships. In collaboration with eight experts and one academican, an item pool was created. After the items were shared with six experts in the field, they were assessed for content validity and finalized after they had been reviewed by them. The first step of the study was to perform an exploratory factor analysis of the data. The results of the exploratory factor analysis revealed a unidimensional structure consisting of 10 items with an eigenvalue of 5.377, explaining 53.774% of the total variance. Following the initial factor analysis phase, a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out and it was found that the fit indices met the required criteria. Following the analysis of the data, it was concluded that the Emotional Intimacy Scale is a valid and reliable tool for measuring emotional intimacy.

Keywords: Emotional intimacy, intimacy, romantic relationship, scale development.

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Öz:

Çalışmada romantik ilişkilerin duygusal yakınlık düzeyine dair partnerlerin algısını ölçmek amacıyla psikometrik özellikleri incelenmiş bir duygusal yakınlık ölçeği geliştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar, 2023 yılında Türkiye'nin tüm bölgelerinden katılan 640 kişiden oluşmuştur. Öncelikle duygusal yakınlık kavramı ile ilgili literatür incelemesi yapılmış, romantik ilişkisi olan altı bireyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sekiz uzman ve bir akademisyen tarafından madde havuzu oluşturulmuştur. Oluşturulan maddeler, alanında uzman altı kişi ile paylaşılarak kapsam geçerliği açısından değerlendirilmiş ve maddelerin son hali verilmiştir. Araştırmanın birinci adımında açımlayıcı faktör analizi yapılmıştır. Açımlayıcı faktör analizi sonuçlarında, öz değeri 5,377 olan, toplam varyansın %53,774 ünü açıklayan, 10 maddeden oluşan tek boyutlu bir yapı ortaya çıkarılmıştır. İkinci aşamada ise doğrulayıcı faktör analizi uygulanmış, uyum indekslerinin geçerli kriterleri sağladığı ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Yapılan analizler incelendiğinde, Duygusal Yakınlık Ölçeği'nin geçerli ve güvenilir bir ölçme aracı olduğu sonucuna erişilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal yakınlık, yakınlık, romantik ilişki, ölçek geliştirme.

Introduction

Prager and Roberts (2004) explained intimacy as close experiences/relationships and emotions such as love, commitment, belonging, pleasure, and compassion that people feel in their close interactions. Wong (1981) stated that intimacy requires two or more individuals who share a feeling of togetherness. Lewis (2004) categorized intimacy under various groups such as emotional intimacy, social intimacy, physical intimacy, and cognitive intimacy, and stated that emotional intimacy corresponds to feelings such as compassion, trust, and empathy between individuals. Emotional intimacy provides couples with the experience of mutual warmth, trust, closeness and love (Brock & Lawrence, 2014). Ferguson, Ferguson and Thurman (1993) asserted that emotional intimacy allows spouses to meet their basic emotional needs. Canel (2007) identified love, acceptance and belonging, trust, respect, and gratitude as the components of emotional intimacy. According to Gottman and Silver (1999), strong and stable marriages are characterized by friendship and trust.

In research on emotional intimacy such as love, care and trust in couples, it was explained that sexual frequency (Štulhofer, Graham, Janssen, & Træen, 2018), sexual communication (Chen, Dai, Calabrese, & Merrill, 2024), sexual life (Janssen, McBride, Yarber, Hill & Butler, 2008; Ménard et al., 2015; Murray, Milhausen, Graham & Kuczynski, 2017; Sandberg, 2013), communication (Hesse & Tian, 2020; Lin, Gosnell & Gable, 2019; Sels, Tran, Greenaway, Verhofstadt & Kalokerinos, 2021), spiritual intimacy (Flint, 2022), harmony between partners (Boden, Fischer & Niehuis, 2009) can predict emotional intimacy. The examination of the related literature showed that the scales developed on intimacy in romantic relationships addressed intimacy differently from each other (Davis, Pallen, DeMaio & Jackson, 2000; Schaefer & Olson, 1981). It is noteworthy that previously developed scales were composed of items covering different dimensions of the relationship such as support, communication, sex, and spending time together. However, by supporting her study findings with the literature, Özdemir (2019) argued that emotional intimacy refers to *emotional outcomes* that emerge as a result of the experiences and interaction processes between spouses regarding dimensions such as spending time together, sex life, and communication. For this reason, she suggested that an *emotional intimacy scale* that does not include experiences and interactions between partners but only includes emotional outcomes should be developed. In order to effectively measure emotional intimacy in a

relationship, researchers took into account the variability of experience and interaction, and they argued that emotional intimacy is achievable no matter what type of experience occurs. It is not necessary that couples who spend time together or who communicate well will necessarily have emotional outcomes such as love, affection, respect, and trust. It is likely that the source of these emotional outcomes will differ depending on the relationship. In this manner, the scale to be developed will contribute to literature on this subject.

Method**Participants**

This study included 640 participants from all regions of Türkiye who took part in direct and online data collection in 2023. In the study, the convenience sampling method, one of the non-random sampling methods, was used to determine the sample from which the data was collected. This method is based on the principle that the researcher chooses the most accessible participants (Adu & Miles, 2023). The study group was made up of 385 females (60.2%) and 255 males (39.8%). Three hundred and twenty-eight (51.2%) of the participants were dating, 21 (3.3%) were engaged, and 291 (45.5%) were married. The mean age of the participants was 26.70 (SD $\frac{1}{4}$ = 8.26).

Data Collection Tools

Demographic Information Form. Researchers developed the Demographic Information Form to determine the demographic characteristics of study participants.

Emotional Intimacy Scale. The scale was developed to measure the perception of individuals in romantic relationships about the level of their emotional intimacy with their partner. Individuals were asked to assess the emotional intimacy in their relationship by taking into account their partner and themselves, in other words, by taking into account their relationship holistically. An assessment of the validity and reliability of the scale is presented in this study. Higher scores on the scale indicate a greater level of emotional intimacy between the couple.

Intimacy Scale in Romantic Relationships. Developed by Ercan (2019), this scale assesses intimacy in couples' romantic relationships. Self-disclosure, physical attraction, support and trust are the four subscales of the scale. It has 17 items, including one that is reverse scored. The reliability analysis results revealed that Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient is .88 for the whole scale, .79 for the first factor, .83 for the second factor, .81

for the third factor, and .72 for the fourth factor. Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be .77 in the present study.

Romantic Intimacy Scale. The scale was developed by Hook, Gerstein, Detterich & Gridley, 2003). The adaptation study conducted by Akbay and Gündoğdu (2021) revealed a structure consisting of 47 items and four factors. Its Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as .78. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .83 for the whole scale (47 items), .89 for the first factor, .93 for the second factor, .72 for the third factor, and .75 for the fourth factor.

Scale Development Process

Literature review and interviews were conducted as a first step in the scale development study. We developed a list of 27 items based on participants' responses in semi-structured interviews and opinions provided by eight experts and one academican. The items were related to the feelings such as love, affection, commitment, trust, respect, empathy, gratitude, compassion, belonging, and acceptance. In order to determine the content validity of the items, six field experts were consulted. The 22-item draft scale was composed after reviewing the expert opinions, making the recommended changes and corrections, and reviewing the expert opinions.

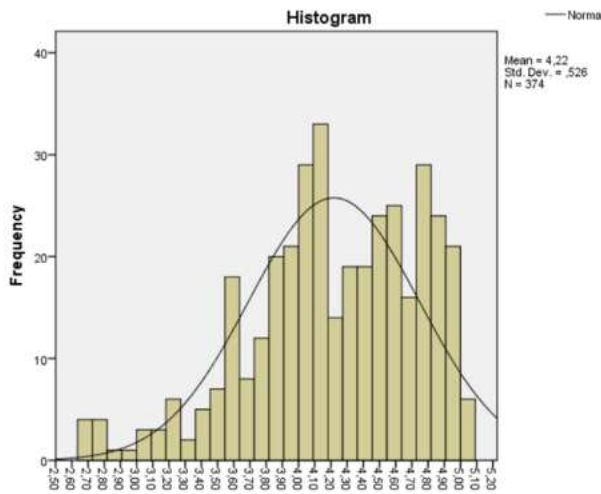
Data Collection Process

The researchers granted permission for the use of the measurement tools in the study. Then, permission was obtained from Düzce University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for the ethical compliance of the research (2023/342, dated 23.11.2023). The participants were also asked whether they volunteered to participate in the study, and confidentiality was emphasized.

Data Analysis

Data were collected from 390 participants in the first stage of the study. After outliers and missing data were removed from the sample group, the normality of the data distribution was examined by testing the kurtosis and skewness values. The skewness value of the remaining data (N=374) was calculated as -.671 (SH=.126) and kurtosis value as .031 (SH=.252). The Z value for normality was also examined. The value was between +3 and -3 (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu & Büyüköztürk, 2016). In normality assumptions, kurtosis and skewness values can be between -1 and +1 and Z value can be between +3 and -3 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Therefore, according to the analysis results, it the data were accepted as normally distributed. In addition, histogram and normal Q-Q graph are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1. Histogram



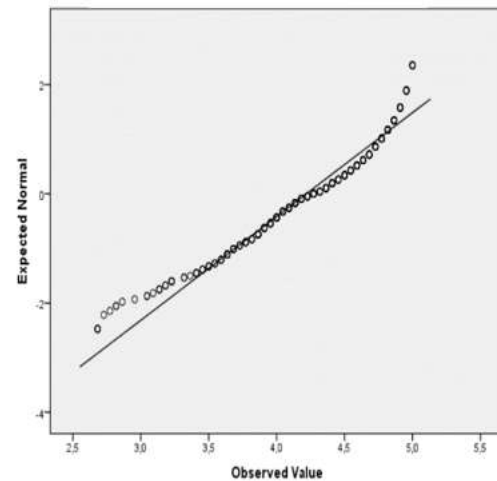
We tested whether the necessary prerequisites were met prior to conducting the exploratory factor analysis. Missing values, outliers, normality of distributions, and

Findings

Findings Regarding the Exploratory Factor Analysis

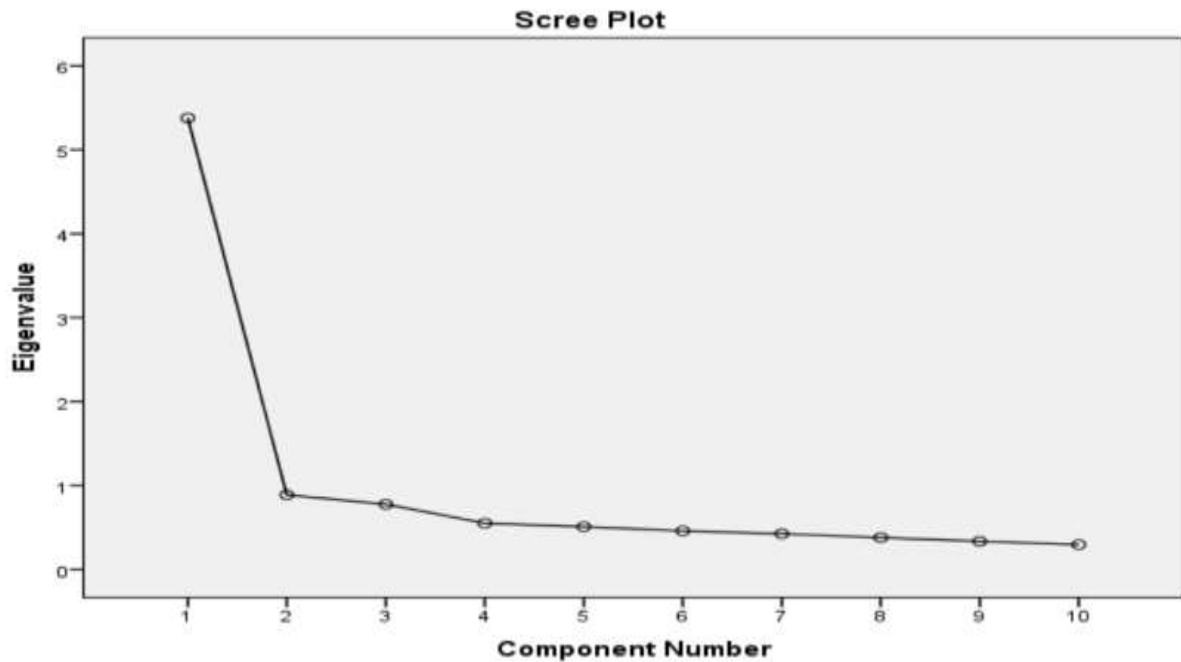
It is recommended that the sample size be five times the total number of items (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Hence, it is appropriate to use this sample size for analysis. For the purpose of determining the factor structure of the scale, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on the data set. KMO coefficient of .92 was determined by the analysis. According to Büyüköztürk (2016), this is acceptable for exploratory factor analysis. In the Bartlett's test of

Figure 2. Q-Q Graph



multicollinearity of the data were also examined, and the data met normality assumptions.

sphericity, it was found to be 1795.093 ($p < .000$). Using direct oblimin technique and principal component analysis, the factor structure of the scale was examined. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis to determine the construct validity of the scale, it was found that the scale had a unidimensional structure, consisting of 10 items, which explained 53.774% of the variance. Furthermore, the scree plot in Figure 3 indicated a single cut-off point for the number of factors.

Figure 3. Scree Plot for the Emotional Intimacy Scale

The factors of the scale developed in the present study explain the variance sufficiently (Tavşancıl, 2006). The literature reported that if the factor loading values are .32 and above, the item is acceptable for the scale (Büyüköztürk, 2016; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). The sub-factor items were screened to ensure that they had a loading value over .32 and no overlaps occurred in this

direction. In order to make the scale as functional as possible, the number of items was reduced from 22 to 10, and the scope was sufficiently broad and it was statistically appropriate. The factor loadings of the items in the scale ranged between .70 and .77. Table 1 summarizes the findings regarding this.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results and Descriptive Statistics of the Scale Items

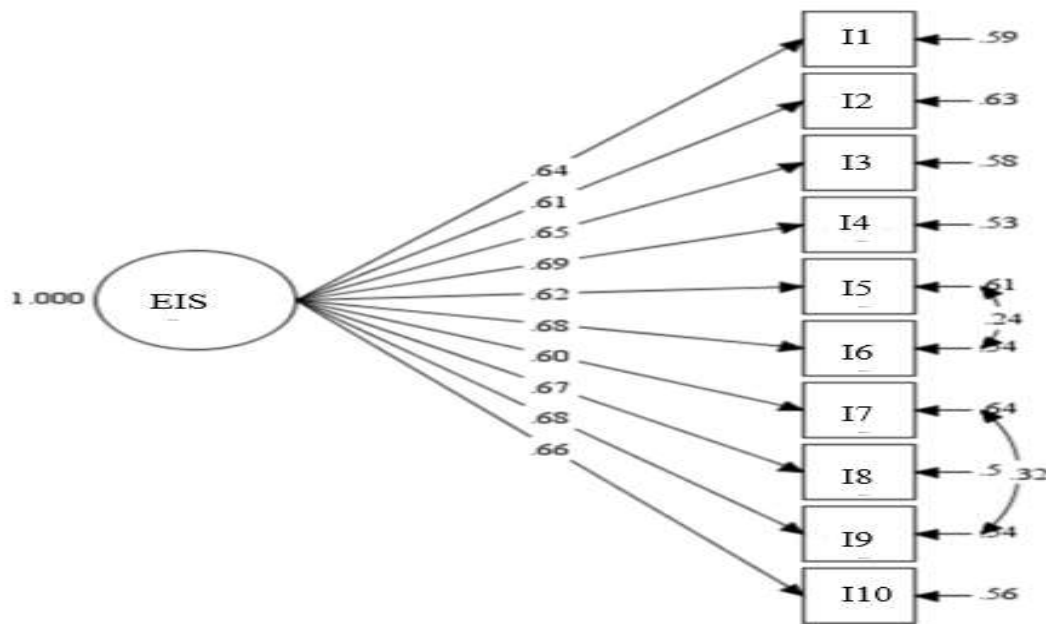
Item No	\bar{X}	SS	Factor Loadings
I1	4.55	.60	.729
I2	4.51	.70	.715
I3	4.47	.71	.697
I4	4.19	.82	.751
I5	4.36	.75	.710
I6	4.33	.73	.743
I7	4.27	.71	.723
I8	4.26	.84	.773
I9	4.25	.71	.740
I10	4.36	.73	.750

Table 1 shows that the scale comprises ten items and has a single dimensional structure after the exploratory factor analysis.

Findings Regarding the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Following the removal of missing data and outliers from the study, confirmatory factor analysis was performed on 266 participants. A confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the MPLUS program to verify the factor structure revealed by the exploratory factor analysis. Data from 266 participants was analyzed to determine the unidimensionality of the Emotional Intimacy Scale and the fit index values were as follows: χ^2 (33, N = 266) = 86.26 χ^2 /sd = 2.61, $p < .000$, CFI = .95, TLI = .93, SRMR = .04,

RMSEA = .07. The examination of the fit indices of the unidimensional model with the modification between items 7 and 9 and items 5 and 6 revealed that some of them resulted in an excellent fit and some gave an acceptable fit. The results showed that the unidimensional structure of the scale met the statistically validity criteria (Çokluk et al., 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The factor loadings of the scale ranged between .53 and .64. The factor structure of the scale is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Path Diagram and Factor Loadings of the Emotional Intimacy Scale**Criterion-Related Validity**

For the criterion validity, correlation values regarding relationship between the scales is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Results Between Scales

	Intimacy Scale in Romantic Relationships	Romantic Intimacy Scale
Emotional Intimacy Scale	.68**	.53**

** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents that the correlations between the Emotional Intimacy Scale and the other scales were significant ($p < .01$) and positive.

Findings Regarding Reliability

The internal consistency coefficient values for the Emotional Intimacy Scale, which is evaluated on a single total score, was found to be .90. In addition, the test-retest reliability coefficient obtained as a result of administering the scale to the same individuals twice with a four-week interval was found to be .86. Accordingly, the results of

the analyses regarding the reliability of the scale are sufficient, and the scale meets the reliability requirements (Creswell, 2005).

Examination of Item-Total Correlations

In order to test the appropriateness of the items to the study purpose, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the score obtained from each item and the total score of the scale were examined. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Item-Total Correlation Results

Item No	Item-Total Correlation Coefficients
I1	.698**
I2	.693**
I3	.647**
I4	.713**
I5	.684**
I6	.726**
I7	.646**
I8	.709**
I9	.665**
I10	.759**

** $p < .01$

Table 3 shows that item-total correlations showed that the items in the scale measure similar behaviors (Tavşancıl, 2006).

Examination of t Values

In order to determine the discrimination power of the items, t values were determined. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. t Values Regarding the 27% Lower-Upper Group Difference

Item No	t	p	Item No	t	p
1	-11.24	.00	6	-12.85	.00
2	-13.39	.00	7	-9.66	.00
3	-9.24	.00	8	-10.98	.00
4	-10.11	.00	9	-12.75	.00
5	-10.35	.00	10	-15.36	.00

*** $p < .001$

Table 4 presents that the difference between the lower and upper group mean scores of the items was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to build a comprehensive framework for emotional intimacy by reviewing literature and interviewing individuals in romantic relationships. The interviews led to the creation of a draft scale and item pool covering the dimensions of love-affection-commitment, trust, respect, empathy, gratitude, compassion, belonging-acceptance. As a result of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value, the Barlett's test chi-square, and correlation or covariance matrix being different from the unit matrix, the Emotional Intimacy Scale was found to have appropriate psychometric properties, indicating that the data set could be analyzed using factor analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2016). Initially, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted, followed by a confirmatory factor analysis based on the findings. Different fit indices have been evaluated to test the adequacy of fit in confirmatory factor analysis carried out to test the unidimensional structure revealed by exploratory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis results revealed that the model showed good fit and the construct validity was high. As a result of the findings, the one-factor structure of the Emotional Intimacy Scale consisting of 10 items was confirmed.

According to Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which indicate the ability of measurement tools to give reliable and consistent results, the Emotional Intimacy Scale was highly reliable, with a testing-retest correlation coefficient. Additionally, items with item-total correlation coefficients showed high internal consistency. In the distribution of the scale items, the items were considered discriminatory. In terms of the criterion-related validity of the scale, correlation values were obtained between the scales. This suggests that the Emotional Intimacy Scale has a high level of criterion-related validity (Büyüköztürk, 2016; Creswell, 2005).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, this reliable and valid scale may be used in future studies on romantic relationships.

Limitations

Study data indicated that the Emotional Intimacy Scale was sufficient to measure intimacy in romantic relationships. Study limitations include the fact that 60.2% of the participants were female. Accordingly, researchers who will conduct similar studies are recommended to include higher number of male participants.

Declarations

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

In this article, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules were followed. The authors are responsible for any violations that may arise in relation to the article. Ethical approval was obtained from the Duzce University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision number 2023/342, dated 23.11.2023.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing Interests

The author declares that no competing interests in this manuscript.

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Authors' Contributions

Author(s) Contribution Rate: Authors's contribution to this article is 50%, 50%. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article.

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