RESEARCH ARTICLE

Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction in the Premarital Period: An Analysis of Personality, Family, Relationship, and Cultural Dynamics with "Before I Do"

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effect of personality dynamics, family background, couple interactions, and cultural factors on relationship satisfaction among 308 young adults in Türkiye who have decided to marry. Data were collected using the Comprehensive Premarital Assessment Scale Battery (Before I Do) and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale. The relationships between various dynamics and relationship satisfaction were analyzed, including personality dynamics (emotional stability, empathy, openness, self-esteem, secure attachment), family dynamics (family closeness, parental marital relationship, family-partner relationships), relationship dynamics (harmony and cooperation, relationship challenges), and cultural dynamics (religious belief, lifestyle, traditions, marriage preparation). Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of these variables on relationship satisfaction. The analyses revealed that personality dynamics explained 36% of the variance in relationship satisfaction, family dynamics accounted for 46%, relationship dynamics contributed 52%, and the inclusion of cultural dynamics increased the explanatory power to 56%. These results enhance the understanding of factors contributing to relationship satisfaction. By addressing these comprehensive dynamics, premarital programs may better prepare couples for marriage and lead to more satisfying relationship outcomes.

Marriage is a significant process where couples unite their lives and build a future together. To ensure a healthy marriage, couples need to know each other well and evaluate their relationships before getting married (Özgüven, 2014). Premarital assessment tools allow couples to deepen their understanding of their relationship and proactively identify and address potential challenges they may face in their marriage (Dell'Isola et al., 2021; Larson & Holman, 1994). Assessment is a crucial component of premarital counseling, and some governments worldwide offer various incentives to support couples' participation in premarital evaluations (Markman & Ritchie, 2015). Evaluating premarital relationships allows couples to reconsider factors that could influence their future marriages from an objective perspective and helps them become aware of various areas that affect themselves, their partners, and their relationships (Busby et al., 2001; Le et al., 2010; Rahmati & Bahrami Nejad, 2019; Şen, 2015). Moreover, reassessing their relationships allows couples to understand how well their expectations are met, their degree of satisfaction, their emotions toward each other, and the problematic aspects of their relationship (Busby et al., 2007). A critical examination of their premarital

relationships, guided by a preventive approach, can illuminate both the strengths and potential issues within these relationships (Holman et al., 1994). Through such evaluations, common challenges in relationships emerge, encompassing areas such as friendships, family ties, religious beliefs, leisure activities, sexuality, and financial matters. Identifying and addressing these problematic areas enables couples to seek appropriate support and make necessary improvements, thereby enhancing their overall relationship satisfaction (Bradbury & Lavner, 2012; Busby et al., 2001).

Recognizing the pivotal role of the premarital period in shaping future marital outcomes, numerous interventions have been established to fortify this foundation (Cordova et al., 2014; Halford et al., 2010, 2012; McGeorge & Carlson, 2006). As marital challenges and divorce rates rise, the demand for empirically robust measures to evaluate couples has increased, highlighting the necessity to develop tools that can adapt to societal changes (Bagarozzi & Sperry, 2019). The assessment of romantic relationships plays a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of data on relationship functionality, which is fundamental for the quality and longevity of the partnership (Stanley et al., 2019). Such preventive measures have garnered significant attention in family research for their capacity to address and alleviate marital difficulties, thereby driving a demand for relationship enrichment programs and premarital evaluations (Fawcett et al., 2010; Fleming & Cordova, 2012; Jakubowski et al., 2004; Larson et al., 2002; Stahmann, 2000; Stanley et al., 2020). Among the assessment-focused approaches that have proven effective and are most widely used with premarital couples are programs such as FOCCUS (Markey et al., 1997), PREPARE/ENRICH (Olson & Olson, 1999), RELATE (Busby et al., 2001), and SYMBIS (Parrott & Parrott, 2003). These widely utilized assessment programs lay the groundwork for understanding and improving relationship dynamics, a foundational step toward addressing the broader concept of relationship satisfaction, which is pivotal in preventing marital distress and promoting long-term relationship health (Halford et al., 2010).

Relationship satisfaction is one of the most frequently examined outcome measures in romantic relationship research (Amato et al., 2007; Halford & Pepping, 2017; Hawkins & Booth, 2005). It refers to how happy individuals are with various aspects of their relationships, such as closeness, conflict, and equality (Gerlach et al., 2020). Recent studies on romantic relationships have aimed to explain the fundamental structure of romantic relationships by addressing concepts such as relationship satisfaction, stability, and happiness (Dwiwardani et al., 2018; Van Tongeren et al., 2014). Since premarital relationship satisfaction is seen as a protective factor against marital distress and separation, examining a couple's relationship history and identifying relationship strengths and challenges may constitute a useful strategy for improving marital health (Jackson, 2009). Addressing relationship satisfaction is particularly necessary for developing intervention studies that will enable couples to establish strong relationships, alleviate relationship problems, and prevent unwanted separations (Bradbury et al., 2000; Halford & Bodenman, 2013).

A variety of factors, including personality traits, relationship dynamics, and communication and personality history, can predict relationship satisfaction. Therefore, premarital programs focus on examining and developing these factors (Hahlweg & Richter, 2010; Montgomery, 2008). Studies examining premarital predictive factors influencing relationship satisfaction have reported that personality traits (Dyrenforth et al., 2010; Malouff et al., 2010; Schaffhuser et al., 2014), family background (Dennison et al., 2014; Kumar & Mattanah, 2016; Martinson et al., 2010), cultural background (Hilpert et al., 2016; Uhlich et al., 2022), and relationship factors (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006; Godbout et al., 2017; Kochar & Sharma, 2015) significantly impact relationship satisfaction as both protective and risk factors (Jackson, 2009). Investigating these factors in relation to relationship satisfaction is crucial for addressing marital difficulties and mitigating the risks that could lead to the dissolution of marriage. Premarital counseling processes utilize comprehensive assessments and various theoretical frameworks to help couples establish healthier and more satisfying relationships. These processes have the potential to increase overall relationship satisfaction while ensuring that couples enter their marriages better prepared (Singer et. al., 2015; Sperry, 2016).

The significance of the present study derives from its thorough exploration of factors that influence relationship satisfaction during the premarital period, a critical component for fostering strong and sustainable marriages. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the degree to which personality traits (emotional stability, empathy,

openness, self-esteem, secure attachment), family dynamics (family closeness, parental marital relationships, family-partner relationships), relationship dynamics (harmony and cooperation, relationship challenges), and cultural dynamics (religious belief, lifestyle, traditions, marriage preparations) relate to relationship satisfaction among young adults contemplating marriage. Additionally, the study seeks to determine how these various dynamics collectively predict relationship satisfaction.

Methodology

Participants

This research examined the relationships between premarital predictive factors and relationship satisfaction among young adults who have decided to marry. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University (No: E-35853172399000002708952). Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method through social media platforms and university campuses in Ankara, İstanbul, and İzmir. Inclusion criteria required participants to be volunteers, over 18 years old, in a romantic relationship, and planning to marry, with the wedding scheduled at least six months later. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality assurances through an informed consent form. The consent form also highlighted that participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and participants could withdraw without consequences. Data collection took place in 2023, with partners in each couple invited to complete the survey online using Google Forms independently. After providing informed consent, both partners completed the surveys individually, which included demographic questions and various measures related to relationship satisfaction and predictive factors. The study group consisted of 308 individuals, with 50.6% female and 49.4% male participants. The age distribution was as follows: 35.6% were between 18-24 years, 32% were between 25-31 years, 16.8% were between 32-38 years, and 15.5% were between 35-49 years. Participants from all geographic regions of Türkiye were included in the study. According to the participants, 40.9% met their partners through social media, 28.9% through educational or work environments, 17.9% through arranged meetings, and 12.9% through mutual friends. Additionally, 32.3% of the participants had been with their partner for 0-6 months, 32% for 7-12 months, 21.5% for 1-3 years, and 14.2% for over 3 years.

Data Collection

In the study, the "Sociodemographic Information Form" developed by the researcher, the "Comprehensive Premarital Assessment Scale Battery (Before I Do)" developed by the researcher, and the "Relationship Satisfaction Scale" were used to collect data.

Sociodemographic Information Form: The sociodemographic information form was developed by the researchers. The form included questions such as gender, age, occupation, place of residence, economic income level, method of meeting the partner, and duration of the relationship with the partner.

Comprehensive Premarital Assessment Scale Battery (Before I do): The comprehensive Premarital Assessment Scale Battery (Before I Do), developed by the researchers for her PhD dissertation, consists of four subscales: Personality Dynamics, Family Dynamics, Relationship Dynamics, and Cultural Dynamics. The Personality Dynamics subscale includes items reflecting personality traits influencing the relationship. The Family Dynamics subscale covers the individual's relationships with their family, parental marital relationships, and family-partner relationships. The Relationship Dynamics subscale encompasses the dynamics of romantic relationships. The Cultural Dynamics subscale involves the cultural influences within the couple's relationship. The development of the scale was grounded in the ecological approach, which considers the complex interactions between individuals and their environments (Halford & Pepping, 2017). The items and subscales of the inventory were developed based on qualitative interviews with couples, the premarital couples' literature, and existing premarital assessment scales. The item pool was presented to three academic experts—one in couple and marriage therapy, one in measurement and evaluation, and one in Turkish grammar. After their feedback, adjustments were made, resulting in a Likert-scale inventory of 324 items rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with four subscales. The trial form of the inventory was administered to 18 participants (9 women, 9 men). Adjustments based on participant feedback from this pilot

study led to a validation sample of 327 individuals. After the construct validity test, a 140-item form was presented to a sample of 308 individuals for confirmatory factor analysis. The final form of the scale battery comprises four subscales and 108 items. The Personality Dynamics subscale includes 35 items in five dimensions: emotional stability, empathy, openness to experience, self-esteem, and secure attachment, with a total Cronbach's alpha value of .93. The Family Dynamics subscale includes 33 items in three dimensions: family closeness, parental marital relationship, and family-partner relationships, with a total Cronbach's alpha value of .95. The Relationship Dynamics subscale includes 44 items in two dimensions: harmony and cooperation, and relationship challenges, with a total Cronbach's alpha value of .94. The Cultural Dynamics subscale consists of 28 items in four dimensions: spiritual beliefs, lifestyle, traditions, and marriage preparations, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .96. The model fit of the Comprehensive Premarital Assessment Scale Battery (Before I Do) was evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood estimation. The results indicated that the scale has acceptable construct validity across its four subscales. For the Personality Dynamics subscale, all fit indices demonstrated a good fit: χ^2 (df = 550) = 3.00, p < .001, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .08, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, IFI = .99, PNFI = .91. Similarly, the Relationship Dynamics subscale also showed a robust fit with indices χ^2 (df = 944) = 1.99, p < .001, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, IFI = .99, PNFI = .95. The Family Dynamics subscale displayed acceptable fit indices: χ^2 (df = 944) = 2.63, p < .001, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, IFI = .92, PNFI = .78. Finally, the Cultural Dynamics subscale exhibited excellent fit indices: χ^2 (df = 344) = 1.56, p < .001, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, IFI = .99, PNFI = .91.

The Relationship Satisfaction Scale: The Relationship Satisfaction Scale is a seven-item, 7-point Likert-type scale developed by Hendrick (1988) to measure relationship satisfaction in marriage. Originally developed for married couples, this scale has also been validated for measuring relationship satisfaction among university students in romantic relationships (Hendrick et al., 1998). Its Turkish adaptation was conducted by Curun (2001) with 140 university students in emotionally involved relationships. Factor analysis revealed that the scale is unidimensional, measuring a single factor. The internal consistency coefficient of the Relationship Satisfaction Scale is .86. Two items on the scale are reverse-scored, indicating that higher scores reflect greater relationship satisfaction. The validity of the scale was confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis, yielding satisfactory fit indices (RMSEA = .05, CFI = .95, TLI = .94). The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was found as .86 in the current study.

Data Analysis

SPSS v28 statistical software package was used for data analysis. Skewness and kurtosis values were examined to determine the distribution of the data. As the results of the normality analysis met the assumptions of normal distribution (Byrne, 2013), parametric analysis methods were employed for data analysis (see Table 1). Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between personality dynamics, family dynamics, relationship dynamics, cultural dynamics, and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the effect of personality, family, relationship, and cultural dynamics (i.e., sub-scales of Before I Do) on relationship satisfaction.

Results

A Pearson's correlation was run to examine the associations between relationship satisfaction and subscales of Before I Do (i.e., personality, family, relationship, and cultural dynamics). Mean, SD, and correlations for the study variables are shown in Table 1. The results revealed that relationship satisfaction was statistically and positively associated with sub-dimensions of personality dynamics, including emotional stability (r = .23, p< .05), empathy (r = .25, p< .01), and secure attachment (r = .58, p< .01). However, there was no statistically significant relationships between relationship satisfaction and openness and self-esteem (i.e., sub-dimensions of personality dynamics). Relationship satisfaction was also statistically and positively associated with sub-dimensions of family dynamics, including family closeness (r = .49, p< .01), parental marital relationship (r = .37, p< .01), and family-partner relationships (r = .48, p< .01). Additionally, relationship satisfaction was statistically and positively associated with harmony and cooperation (i.e., sub-dimensions of relationship dynamics; r = .57, p< .01), and negatively associated with relationship challenges (i.e., sub-dimensions of relationship dynamics; r = -.53, p< .01). Finally, there were statistically significant relationships between

relationship satisfaction and sub-dimensions of cultural dynamics, including religious belief ($r = .25$, $p< .01$), lifestyle ($r = .47$, $p< .01$), and marriage preparations ($r = .24$, $p< .01$). However, there was no statistically significant relationships between relationship satisfaction and traditions (i.e., sub-dimensions of cultural dynamics).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. I.RS	43,21	5,29	-,056	-,24	1	,228*	,247**	,020	,064	,578**	,489**	,369**	,477**	,568**	-,527**	,248**	,474**	,115	,237**
2. Emotional stability [a]	26,14	3,88	-,46	,08	,228*	1	,496**	,390**	,585**	,254**	,213*	,269**	,222*	,076	-,333**	,010	,215*	,159	,170
3. Empathy [a]	28,57	3,26	-,39	,87	,247**	,496**	1	,364**	,503**	,489**	,394**	,419**	,448**	,352**	-,355**	,254**	,281**	,083	,271**
4. Openness [a]	24,04	5,72	-,76	-,22	,020	,390**	,364**	1	,595**	,187*	,135	,071	,112	,086	-,232*	,058	,098	,003	,070
5. Self-Esteem [a]	17,53	2,56	-1,04	,31	,064	,585**	,503**	,595**	1	,328**	,197*	,278**	,362**	,168	-,211*	,195*	,345**	,333**	,335**
6. Secure Attachment [a]	49,17	4,75	-,99	,81	,578**	,254**	,489**	,187*	,328**	1	,592**	,450**	,544**	,689**	-,520**	,331**	,353**	,094	,359**
7. Family closeness [b]	43,50	5,67	-1,41	2,97	,489**	,213*	,394**	,135	,197*	,592**	1	,699**	,253**	,524**	-,384**	,191*	,313**	,156	,216*
8. Parental marital relationship [b]	51,11	11,25	-2,07	2,83	,369**	,269**	,419**	,071	,278**	,450**	,699**	1	,446**	,354**	-,246**	-,029	,383**	,282**	,284**
9. Family-partner relationships [b]	40,53	7,50	-,760	-,23	,477**	,222*	,448**	,112	,362**	,544**	,253**	,446**	1	,479**	-,295**	,286**	,331**	,229*	,275**
10. Harmony and cooperation [c]	111,42	7,21	-1,73	2,47	,568**	,076	,352**	,086	,168	,689**	,524**	,354**	,479**	1	-,476**	,357**	,428**	,156	,528**
11. Relationship challenges [c]	49,81	9,63	-,14	-,45	-,527**	-,333**	-,355**	-,232*	-,211*	-,520**	-,384**	-,246**	-,295**	-,476**	1	-,135	-,384**	-,043	-,242**
12. Religious belief [d]	35,20	4,13	-,86	-,15	,248**	,010	,254**	,058	,195*	,331**	,191*	-,029	,286**	,357**	-,135	1	,071	,252**	,383**
13. Lifestyle [d]	34,55	3,85	-,77	,30	,474**	,215*	,281**	,098	,345**	,353**	,313**	,383**	,331**	,428**	-,384**	,071	1	,261**	,335**
14. Traditions [d]	21,75	3,58	-1,55	2,92	,115	,159	,083	,003	,333**	,094	,156	,282**	,229*	,156	-,043	,252**	,261**	1	,418**
15. Marriage preparations [d]	29,05	1,75	-2,20	2,56	,237**	,170	,271**	,070	,335**	,359**	,216*	,284**	,275**	,528**	-,242**	,383**	,335**	,418**	1

Note. N = 308. *M* = Mean value; *SD* = Standard deviation, RS= Relationship Satisfaction, [a] Subscale of Personality Dynamics, [b] Subscale of Family Dynamics, [c] Subscale of Relationship Dynamics, [d] Subscale of Cultural Dynamics. *$p< .05$, **$p< .01$, ***$p< .001$.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were also run to predict relationship satisfaction scores based on the subscales of Before I Do (i.e., personality, family, relationship, and cultural dynamics). As shown in Table 2, the results illustrated that sub-dimensions of personality dynamics (i.e., emotional stability, empathy, openness, self-esteem, secure attachment) contributed significantly to the regression model in Model 1 ($F(5, 303) = 14.25$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R2 = 0.36$). The sub-dimensions of personality dynamics explained 36% of the variance in relationship satisfaction in Model 1. The addition of sub-dimensions of family dynamics (i.e., family closeness, parental marital relationship, family-partner relationships) to the prediction of relationship satisfaction also led to a statistically significant increase in Model 2 ($F(8, 300) = 13.50$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R2 = 0.46$). Including the sub-dimensions of family dynamics explained 46% of the total variance in Model 2. Furthermore, the addition of relationship dynamics sub-dimensions (i.e., harmony and cooperation, relationship challenges) to the prediction of relationship satisfaction led to a statistically significant increase in Model 3 ($F(10, 288) = 13.41$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R2 = 0.52$). Including the sub-dimensions of relationship dynamics explained 52% of the total variance in Model 3. Finally, the addition of cultural dynamics sub-dimensions (i.e., religious belief, lifestyle, traditions, marriage preparations) to the prediction of relationship satisfaction led to a statistically significant increase in Model 4 ($F(14, 284) = 11.72$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R2 = 0.56$). Including the sub-dimensions of relationship dynamics explained 56% of the total variance in Model 4.

Table 2. Regression Coefficients of Before I Do Scale on Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE (B)	β	B	SE (B)	β	B	SE (B)	β	B	SE (B)	β
Constant	11,957	4,522		11,831	4,314		18,126	8,352		11,172	8,714	
Emotional stability [a]	,336	,130	,247	,362	,120	,266	,310	,119	,228	,352	,114	,258
Empathy [a]	-,076	,158	-,047	-,251	,150	-,155	-,274	,143	-,169	-,289	,140	-,179
Openness [a]	-,029	,086	-,031	,010	,081	,010	-,019	,077	-,021	,029	,076	,032
Self-Confidence [a]	-,502	,224	-,243	-,621	,212	-,301	-,514	,204	-,249	-,751	,219	-,364
Secure Attachment [a]	,694	,095	,624	,359	,113	,323	,168	,121	,151	,194	,117	,175
Family closeness [b]				,315	,106	,338	,227	,104	,243	,203	,107	,217
Parental marital relationship [b]				-,050	,050	-,106	-,024	,048	-,051	-,026	,053	-,056
Family-partner relationships [b]				,269	,065	,381	,226	,064	,321	,206	,064	,291
Harmony and cooperation [c]							,130	,072	,178	,070	,080	,096
Relationship challenges [c]							-,126	,045	-,230	-,091	,044	-,166
Religious belief [d]										,149	,101	,116
Lifestyle [d]										,395	,105	,288
Traditions [d]										,001	,112	,000
Marriage preparations [d]										-,135	,262	-,045
R^2		.39			.50			.56			.61	
ΔR^2		.36***			.46***			.52***			.56***	

Note. N= 308, *B*= Unstandardized regression coefficient, *SE (B)*= Standard error of the coefficient, *β*= Standardized coefficient, R^2 = Coefficient of determination, ΔR^2 = Adjusted R^2. [a] Subscale of Personality Dynamics, [b] Subscale of Family Dynamics, [c] Subscale of Relationship Dynamics, [d] Subscale of Cultural Dynamics. *$p< .05$, **$p< .01$, ***$p< .001$.

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Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the multifaceted determinants of relationship satisfaction using a comprehensive assessment tool. Our findings reveal that several factors are predictors of relationship satisfaction. Notably, emotional stability, empathy, secure attachment, family closeness, parental marital relationships, harmony and cooperation, relationship challenges, religious belief, lifestyle, and marriage preparations were all significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the hierarchical regression analysis highlighted the cumulative impact of these dynamics, along with personality, family, relationship, and cultural factors, providing substantial insight into the complex ways in which relationship satisfaction is influenced. In exploring the dynamics that foster relationship satisfaction during the premarital period, our study has identified several key factors that exert substantial influence.

The findings indicate that certain sub-dimensions of personality dynamics are significantly associated with relationship satisfaction. Emotional stability, empathy, and secure attachment were all positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, suggesting that individuals who score higher on these traits tend to report higher levels of satisfaction in their relationships. These findings align with previous studies indicating a relationship between emotional stability and relationship satisfaction (Jackson 2009; Khalatbari et al. 2013; Vater & Schröder–Abé 2015). Similarly, secure attachment was strongly and positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Research has shown that individuals with a secure attachment style report higher relationship satisfaction (Eğeci & Gençöz 2006; Jackson 2009; Kumar & Mattanah 2016). A meta-analysis examined the relationships between insecure attachment styles (anxiety and avoidance) and relationship satisfaction, reporting that anxious and avoidant attachment styles are negatively associated with relationship satisfaction (Candel & Turliuc, 2019). These findings are consistent with existing literature, suggesting that individuals who possess these traits are better equipped to navigate the complexities of romantic relationships, leading to higher levels of satisfaction. Higher emotional stability may contribute to relationship satisfaction by promoting the emotional regulation and resilience necessary for managing conflicts and stress within a relationship. A secure attachment style, characterized by trust and confidence in the partner's responsiveness and availability, may enhance relationship satisfaction by creating a safe and supportive relational environment. It was found that as scores on empathy, which is a sub-dimension of personality dynamics, increased, scores on relationship satisfaction also increased, although this increase was not statistically significant. However, openness and self-esteem did not show significant correlations with relationship satisfaction in this study. Previous research has found that empathy, openness, and self-esteem are associated with relationship satisfaction and relationship quality (Eğeci & Gençöz, 2006; Erol & Orth, 2017; Sciangula & Morry, 2009; Weidmann et al., 2017). Bartram (2008) stated that personality traits can be shaped by cultural influences and that cultural contexts play a significant role in the personality structures of individuals. These conflicting findings highlight the importance of cultural and contextual factors in psychological research. It is conceivable that the effects of personality traits on relationship outcomes may vary significantly depending on the sample group, cultural norms and values, and the specific aspects of relationship satisfaction being measured.

It has been observed that all sub-dimensions of family dynamics, including family closeness, quality of parental marital relationships, and family-partner relationships, have a significant correlation with relationship satisfaction. In the relevant literature, studies have reported that healthy family relationships and experiences (Jackson, 2009; Martinson et al., 2010), and parental conflicts and divorces (Dennison et al., 2014) are associated with relationship satisfaction. Enhanced familial closeness, marital quality between parents, and positive family-partner relations are closely linked to increased relationship satisfaction, underscoring the importance of healthy family interactions in fostering satisfying romantic relationships. In a collectivist cultural context like Türkiye, families inevitably play a significant role in individuals' relationships. Individuals often observe and model their relationships based on their family dynamics or, conversely, strive to create relationships different from those they experienced in their families. The relationship individuals have with their families occupies a central place in their romantic relationships. Studies conducted with premarital individuals in Türkiye have also highlighted the role of the family of origin in relationships (Kocadere, 1995; Saraç et al., 2015).

It has been noted that harmony and cooperation, which are sub-dimensions of relationship dynamics, have a significant association with relationship satisfaction. These results highlight the importance of partners' harmony, mutual trust and support, the effort they put into the relationship, and the presence of teamwork within the relationship. Existing research has also shown that harmony and cooperation between couples significantly influence relationship satisfaction (Dyrenforth et al., 2010; Heller et al., 2004; Malouff et al., 2010). As anticipated, the study revealed that an increase in scores for relationship challenges corresponds with a decline in relationship satisfaction. Moreover, a significant inverse correlation was established between relationship challenges and satisfaction. This negative association can be attributed to the sub-dimension of relationship challenges, which encompasses adverse elements such as issues of trust, critical attitudes, pressure, disagreements, and divergent views. These findings substantiate the proposition that escalating relationship challenges exert a detrimental impact on relationship satisfaction, underscoring the critical nature of addressing these factors in relational dynamics. Premarital couples have been categorized by Fowers and Olson (1992) into four types: vitalized, harmonious, traditional, and conflicted. A longitudinal study examining the relationship satisfaction among these types reported that vitalized couples exhibit the highest level of satisfaction, followed by harmonious, traditional, and conflicted couples (Kim et al., 2006). These results can similarly be interpreted in terms of harmony and cooperation and relationship challenges on relationship satisfaction.

The dimensions of lifestyle, religious beliefs, and marriage preparations are positively associated with relationship satisfaction. This suggests the benefit of individuals discussing and reflecting on their expectations and beliefs regarding lifestyle and shared values at the onset of their relationship. It has been reported in studies that religious values are significantly positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Ahmadi & Beach, 2011; Saraç et al., 2015). The positive correlation with marriage preparations likely highlights the importance of shared goals and responsibilities related to the wedding. The traditions sub-dimension within the cultural dynamics factor did not show a significant correlation with relationship satisfaction. While traditions play a role in shaping overall cultural identity, their direct correlation with relationship satisfaction may be less pronounced compared to other cultural factors such as religious beliefs and lifestyle.

This study elucidated the multifaceted determinants of relationship satisfaction among premarital couples, highlighting not only individual, familial, relational, and cultural determinants but also revealing how these elements integrate through hierarchical regression analysis. Hierarchical regression analysis further clarifies the relative contribution of these dynamics, organized in layers, starting with personality dynamics, which alone explained 36% of the variance in satisfaction. The subsequent inclusion of family dynamics, relationship dynamics, and cultural dynamics gradually increased the explanatory power of our model (56%). This step-by-step approach highlights how interactions at multiple levels (personal, familial, relational, and cultural) collectively shape relationship outcomes and offers a comprehensive look at the factors that contribute to premarital satisfaction. In the literature on couple studies, premarital predictors of relationship satisfaction and stability are organized into three main categories. First, background and contextual factors which include familial dynamics, sociocultural factors like education and race, and support from friends and parents; second, individual characteristics and behaviors encompassing self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and physical and emotional health; and third, couple interaction processes involving similarities in race, religion, and socioeconomic status, as well as values, attitudes, and communication and conflict resolution skills (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993; Holman & Linford, 2001; Larson & Holman, 1994). Afterward, this model was conceptually expanded to include premarital predictors in four broad categories: familial factors, individual factors, contextual factors, and couple factors (Busby et al., 2001; Holman, 2001; Larson et al., 2008). This study presents a new premarital model consisting of four categories that conceptualize the factors influencing relationship satisfaction in premarital relationships within Turkish culture. The dimensions of our model are 1) Personality Dynamics, which includes emotional stability, empathy, openness to experience, self-esteem, and secure attachment; 2) Family Dynamics, which encompasses family closeness, parental marital relationships, and family-partner relationships; 3) Relationship Dynamics, which involves harmony and cooperation, and relationship challenges; and 4) Cultural Dynamics, which includes spiritual beliefs, lifestyle, traditions, and marriage preparations.

Limitations

This study presents some limitations that must be acknowledged to properly contextualize the findings. First of all, the research was conducted in a specific cultural environment in Turkey, which limits the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts or populations. Second, the study is based on self-reported data, which is inherently subject to issues such as social desirability and recall bias. Using a combination of self-reports with observational or longitudinal data may reduce these biases.

Another important limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study. This design limits the ability to infer causality by capturing a snapshot of participants' perceptions and experiences at a single point in time. We recommend conducting longitudinal studies to observe changes and causal relationships over time. This provides a more dynamic understanding of the factors affecting relationship satisfaction.

Implications and Future Research

The findings of this study offer significant implications for premarital assessment, counseling, and relationship education programs. By identifying the critical predictors of relationship satisfaction—such as personality traits, family dynamics, relationship dynamics, and cultural factors—this research provides a foundation for developing more targeted and effective premarital interventions. These interventions can be tailored to address the dynamics identified in this study, thereby enhancing their efficacy in preparing couples for marriage and fostering long-term relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of considering cultural context in premarital assessments and interventions. Cultural dynamics, including religious beliefs, lifestyle, and marriage preparations, were found to significantly influence relationship satisfaction. Therefore, premarital programs should be culturally sensitive and adaptable to the unique cultural backgrounds of the couples they serve.

Future research should explore several areas. Firstly, longitudinal studies are essential to track changes in relationship satisfaction over time and establish causal relationships between the identified predictors and relationship satisfaction. Such studies can provide deeper insights into how these dynamics evolve and interact throughout the premarital period and into marriage. Furthermore, future research should focus on the development and testing of specific interventions targeting the identified predictors of relationship satisfaction. By designing and evaluating programs that address personality traits, family dynamics, relationship dynamics, and cultural factors, researchers can determine the most effective strategies for enhancing premarital relationship satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable information about the complex interplay of personal, familial, relational, and cultural factors affecting relationship satisfaction in Türkiye. By identifying key predictors such as emotional stability, secure attachment, positive family dynamics, and cultural factors on the phenomenon of marriage, it underlines the importance of addressing these elements in premarital assessment, education, and counseling. The present study not only contributes to the existing literature by providing a cultural and contextual understanding of the premarital period but also proposes a comprehensive model that could be integrated into premarital programs.

informed about its purpose, potential risks, and benefits. Written consent was obtained from each participant. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University (24/02/2023 No: E-3585317239900002708952).

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