

Neuroticism Reimagined: The Transformative Power of Leisure in Relationships

Nevrotizmi Yeniden Anlamak: İlişkilerde Boş Zamanın Dönüştürücü Gücü

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between neuroticism, leisure satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction, focusing on the mediating role of leisure satisfaction in mitigating the negative effects of neuroticism. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data were collected from a sample of 452 participants through validated survey instruments (Five-Factor Personality Scale, Relationship Satisfaction and Leisure Satisfaction Scale). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test two models: (1) the direct impact of neuroticism on leisure satisfaction and relationship satisfaction, and (2) the mediating effect of leisure satisfaction on the relationship between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction. Findings revealed that neuroticism negatively affects both leisure satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. In the direct model, however, leisure satisfaction played a significant positive role, partially buffering the adverse effects of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction. Fit indices for both models demonstrated robust results, supporting the validity of the proposed relationships. The study concludes that fostering leisure satisfaction may serve as a practical intervention strategy to improve relationship outcomes in couples experiencing challenges due to neurotic tendencies. These findings contribute to the literature by emphasizing the transformative potential of leisure experiences in enhancing personal and relational well-being, paving the way for future research and applications in psychology and relationship counseling.

Keywords: Leisure satisfaction, Couples' well-being, Relationship satisfaction, Neuroticism,

Özet

Bu çalışmada, nevroziklik, boş zaman tatmini ve ilişki tatmini arasındaki ilişki araştırılmış ve nevrozikliğin olumsuz etkilerini azaltmada boş zaman tatmininin aracılık rolüne odaklanılmıştır. Nicel bir yaklaşım kullanılarak, geçerliliği doğrulanmış anket araçları (Beş Faktörlü Kişilik Ölçeği, İlişki Doyumu ve Boş Zaman Tatmini Ölçeği) aracılığıyla 452 katılımcıdan oluşan bir örneklemden veri toplanmıştır. İki modeli test etmek için yapısal eşitlik modellemesi (SEM) kullanılmıştır: (1) Nevrotikliğin boş zaman tatmini ve ilişki tatmini üzerindeki doğrudan etkisi ve (2) nevroziklik ile ilişki tatmini arasındaki ilişkide boş zaman tatmininin aracılık etkisi incelenmiştir. Nevrotikliğin doğrudan modelde hem boş zaman tatminini hem de ilişki tatminini olumsuz etkilediği bulgulanmıştır. Ancak aracılık modelinde boş zaman tatmini önemli bir pozitif rol oynamış ve nevrozikliğin ilişki tatmini üzerindeki olumsuz etkilerini kısmen tamponladığı tespit edilmiştir. Her iki model için de uyum indeksleri, önerilen ilişkilerin geçerliliğini destekleyen sağlam sonuçlar göstermiştir. Çalışma, boş zamanda elde edilen tatminliğin, nevrozik eğilimler nedeniyle zorluklar yaşayan çiftlerde ilişki sonuçlarını iyileştirmek için pratik bir müdahale stratejisi olarak hizmet edebileceği sonucuna varmıştır. Sonuç olarak, boş zaman deneyimlerinin kişisel ve ilişki refahı artırmada dönüştürücü potansiyelini vurgulayarak literatüre katkıda bulunmakta, psikoloji ve ilişki danışmanlığında gelecekteki araştırma ve uygulamalara zemin hazırlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Boş zaman doyumu, Çiftlerin refahı, İlişki doyumu, Nevrotiklik

Journal of Sports and Science 3(1):117-134
e-ISSN: 2980-2067
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Citation: Önal, L. (2025). Neuroticism reimagined: the transformative power of leisure in relationships. *Journal of Sports and Science*, 3(1), 117-134.

Dates:
Received: 16.01.2025
Accepted: 03.03.2025
Published: 20.03.2025

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, couple relationships are influenced by various factors, including digital media, economic conditions, cultural contexts, and evolving social norms (Eichenberg et al., 2017; Gabb & Fink, 2015). Despite global progress, cultural shifts toward gender equality remain slow, and traditional roles continue to persist (Abela et al., 2020). The quality of romantic relationships is pivotal to individual well-being, as positive interactions enhance satisfaction while negative behaviors contribute to instability. The diversity of relationship forms and the growing significance of personal relationships reflect the complex and dynamic nature of couple relationships in contemporary society (Brown et al., 2017; Gabb & Fink, 2017).

Couple relationships in Türkiye are shaped by a unique interplay of cultural traditions, emotional dependencies, and evolving social norms (Boratav et al., 2021). Although there is a trend toward more egalitarian and emotionally involved partnerships, traditional values and familial expectations still exert a significant influence (Kemer et al., 2016). Younger generations and multicultural couples often navigate these changes by emphasizing commonalities and adopting progressive attitudes. However, traditional expectations continue to hold substantial sway (Celenk et al., 2011). While multiple factors influence romantic relationships, dynamics are significantly shaped through mechanisms such as neuroticism, sexual satisfaction, cognitive biases, emotional reactivity, and negative behaviors. Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability, moodiness, and a higher tendency to experience negative emotions, has been consistently linked to lower relationship satisfaction (Fisher et al., 2008; Russell & McNulty, 2011). In Türkiye, neuroticism is perceived to negatively impact relationship satisfaction through maladaptive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes. Cognitive biases, particularly negative interpretations of relationship scenarios, play a crucial role in this context (Kreuzer & Gollwitzer, 2021; Kurdek, 1997).

Neuroticism's influence on romantic relationships has been well-documented. It negatively impacts relationship satisfaction, sexual fulfillment, conflict resolution, and daily well-being through cognitive and emotional pathways (Finn et al., 2013). These mechanisms underscore the importance of understanding neuroticism's effects on romantic partnerships to develop targeted interventions for improving relationship quality (Möller, 2004). Studies have identified mediators such as sexual satisfaction and relationship-specific cognitive biases, highlighting the intricate connections between personality traits and romantic dynamics (Cao et al., 2019; Sayehmiri et al., 2020).

Leisure time, often an overlooked factor in relationship studies, plays a crucial role in shaping couples' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes. Positive evaluations of leisure time significantly enhance relationship satisfaction by fostering shared experiences and emotional connection (Vernon, 2009). The productive use of free time in activities such as vacations or joint leisure pursuits enhances marital satisfaction, reduces stress, and strengthens the emotional bonds between partners (Dyck & Daly, 2006; Glorieux et al., 2011). Despite the competing demands of work and family, couples who prioritize leisure time experience better relationship quality (Voorpostel et al., 2008). Leisure activities play a crucial role in emotional regulation, stress reduction, and overall well-being, making them particularly significant in the context of neuroticism. Neurotic individuals often exhibit heightened emotional reactivity and difficulty coping with stress, which can lead to negative patterns in relationships (Takiguchi et al., 2022). However, engaging in meaningful leisure activities has been shown to buffer the effects of neuroticism by fostering positive emotions, improving interpersonal communication, and creating opportunities for emotional connection (Kahlbaugh & Huffman, 2017). In the context of couple relationships, leisure satisfaction acts as a stabilizing force, mitigating the adverse effects of neuroticism on relationship dynamics. Shared leisure activities enhance emotional intimacy, reduce conflict, and foster a sense of partnership, even in relationships where one or both partners exhibit high levels of neuroticism (Dobson & Ogolsky, 2021; Harmon, 2016). Recent studies suggest that the quality of leisure time -rather than the quantity- plays a pivotal role in shaping relationship satisfaction among couples (Dobson & Ogolsky, 2021; Kyeong et al., 2019; Ward et al., 2014). When couples engage in mutually satisfying activities, neurotic individuals are less likely to display maladaptive behaviors, allowing for more constructive communication and emotional connection (Woszidlo & Segrin, 2013). This underscores the importance of examining leisure satisfaction not only as a mediator but also as a critical component of relationship well-being in the presence of neuroticism. By exploring the interplay between leisure satisfaction and neuroticism, this study aims to shed light on how positive leisure experiences can mitigate the negative effects of neuroticism, contributing to a more satisfying and stable relationship. This approach highlights the potential of targeted leisure interventions as a tool for improving relationship outcomes in couples where neuroticism poses a challenge.

METHOD

This study employed the relational screening method, one of the quantitative research designs. The relational screening method is commonly used in research aimed at determining the level of

relationship between two or more variables. In this study, the effects of neurotic personality traits on relationship satisfaction were examined through the mediator variable of leisure satisfaction. Data were collected using face-to-face surveys, and the results were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Sampling Selection

This study was conducted with married couples. This sample selection allows for the observation of the effects of neurotic personality traits on relationship satisfaction and natural tendencies toward leisure activities. In the literature, the impact of personality traits on elements such as satisfaction and participation in joint activities in relationships has been explored in various studies. The characteristics of the sample chosen in our study aim to increase the generalizability of the findings to a broader married population and strengthen the internal validity of the research.

Data Collection

In this study, the data collection process was carried out through face-to-face surveys. To ensure the participation of couples, the survey was directly administered to the participants of the study. Participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the purpose of the survey, and it was emphasized that their privacy would be protected upon completion of the survey. After the surveys were completed, the data were collected and evaluated to be analyzed in accordance with the hypotheses of the study.

The data collection tools used in the study consist of three main scales:

Five-Factor Personality Scale (Neuroticism Subscale): This scale, used to measure neurotic personality traits, aims to determine the participants' level of emotional instability. The neuroticism subscale of the Five-Factor Personality Scale, developed by Benet, Martinez, and John, and adapted into Turkish by Schmitt and colleagues for validity and reliability, was used. The Five-Factor Personality Scale (Benet, Martínez, Verónica, John, & Oliver, 1998) consists of 44 items. The Emotional Stability (Neuroticism) subscale includes 8 items. The Turkish validity and reliability of the scale were conducted by Schmitt et al. (2008).

Relationship Satisfaction Scale: This scale, used to measure the overall satisfaction level of couples in their marriages, is an effective measurement tool for determining marital satisfaction. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) is a self-report measure of relationship satisfaction, specifically focusing on romantic relationships (Hendrick, 1981). The scale includes 7 Likert-type items (e.g., "To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?"), which are designed to be rated by participants based on their thoughts regarding their intimate

relationships on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (“poorly”) to 5 (“extremely well”). Items 4 and 7 are reverse-coded. Higher scores indicate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. The internal consistency of RAS is reported as .86 (Cronbach's alpha) (Hendrick, 1988). According to the information provided above, RAS is a consistent and valid scale. The Turkish translation and adaptation of the scale were conducted by Curun (2001). The internal consistency of the Turkish version was reported as .86 (Cronbach’s alpha), making it a consistent and valid scale.

Leisure Satisfaction Scale: This scale, used to measure the level of participation in joint leisure activities by couples, evaluates the importance of shared activities in family relationships. Some subscales of this scale have been adapted and applied to participant couples. The Leisure Satisfaction Scale (LSS) was developed by Beard and Raghep (1980) and consists of a short form with 24 items. The social subscale from the short form was used in this study. The Turkish validity and reliability study was conducted by Vapur and Sevin (2021). In the validity and reliability study, the reliability coefficient of the "Social" subscale, which represents one of the dimensions of the scale, was determined as .79. The scale uses a 5-point Likert-type scoring system.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS software. During the statistical analysis process, the accuracy and reliability of the data were initially examined, followed by validity and reliability analyses of the scales. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed for the primary model, and fit indices were calculated. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the effects of neurotic personality traits on relationship satisfaction were tested through mediating variables.

Structural Equation Modeling

In the study, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of neurotic personality traits on relationship satisfaction. Two main models were examined (Figure 1, Figure 2):

Model 1

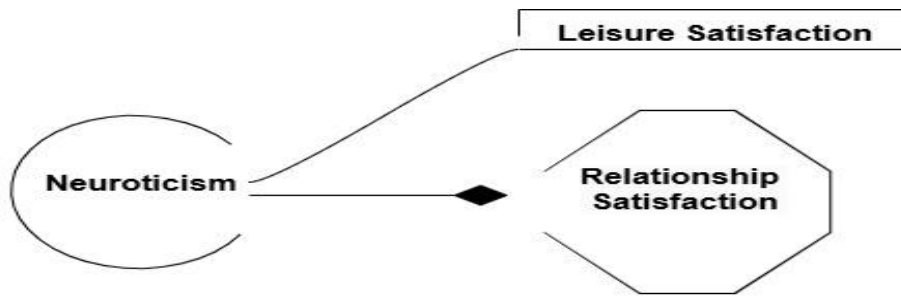


Fig. 1. Examination of the direct effect of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction and leisure satisfaction.

Model 2

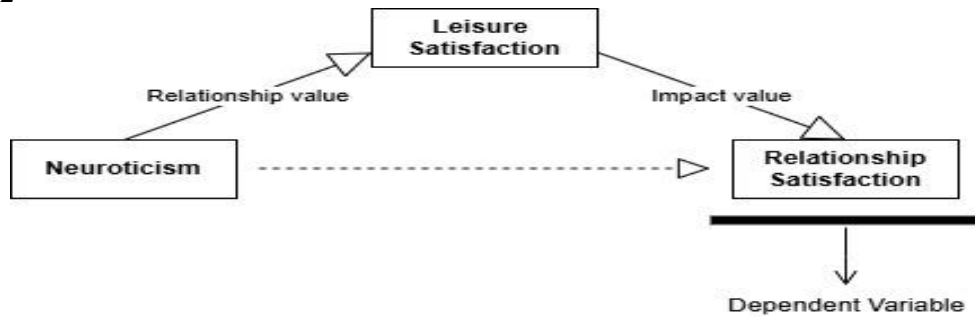


Fig. 2. Examination of the mediating model where neuroticism indirectly affects relationship satisfaction through leisure satisfaction.

These models were analyzed using AMOS software and were evaluated based on model fit indices.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive of the participants.

Gender	N	%
Male	226	50.0
Female	226	50.0
Education		
Primary School	82	18.1
High School	213	47.1
Bachelor's Degree	126	27.9
Graduate Degree	31	6.9
Age		
Average Age 36 ±	452	100.0
Employment Status		
Employed	355	78.5
Unemployed	97	21.5
Marriage Duration		
Less than 5 years	198	43.8
5-10 years	213	47.1
More than 10 years	41	9.1
Monthly Income		

Less than 18,000 TL	82	18.1
More than 18,000 TL	370	81.9
Number of Children		
1 child	241	53.3
2 children	116	25.7
3 children	112	24.8
4+ children	31	6.9
Frequency of Spending Leisure Time with Partner		
Once a week	297	65.7
Twice a week	146	32.3
Three times a week	116	25.7
Four or more times a week	74	16.4
Participation in Family or Couples Therapy		
Yes	86	19.0
No	366	81.0
TOTAL	452	100

The descriptive statistics of the sample provide a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants. The sample consists of 452 individuals, evenly divided between 226 females (50.0%) and 226 males (50.0%). Regarding education, 82 participants (18.1%) completed primary school, 213 (47.1%) graduated from high school, 126 (27.9%) hold a bachelor's degree, and 31 (6.9%) have attained a graduate degree. The average age of participants is 36 years, with a standard deviation indicating some variability within the sample. In terms of employment status, a majority of participants (355 individuals, 78.5%) are employed, while 97 (21.5%) are unemployed. The duration of marriage shows that 198 participants (43.8%) have been married for less than 5 years, 213 (47.1%) are in marriages lasting between 5 and 10 years, and 41 (9.1%) have been married for more than 10 years. Regarding income, 82 individuals (18.1%) report a monthly income of less than 18,000 TL, while the remaining 370 participants (81.9%) earn more than 18,000 TL. The number of children reveals that 241 participants (53.3%) have one child, 116 (25.7%) have two children, 112 (24.8%) have three children, and 31 (6.9%) have four or more children. In terms of the frequency of leisure time spent with their partner, 297 participants (65.7%) engage in such activities once a week, 146 (32.3%) do so twice a week, 116 (25.7%) spend time three times a week, and 74 individuals (16.4%) spend leisure time four or more times a week with their partner. Lastly, with respect to participation in family or couples therapy, 86 individuals (19.0%) have attended therapy, while 366 (81.0%) have not.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Leisure Satisfaction (LS), Neuroticism (N), and Relationship Satisfaction (RS)

Scale	\bar{x}	sd	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis
LS (Leisure Satisfaction)	2.75	0.82	2.80	0.10	-0.25
N (Neuroticism)	2.93	1.08	3.00	0.05	-0.30
RS (Relationship Satisfaction)	3.20	1.20	3.25	-0.10	-0.40

The table presents the descriptive statistics for Leisure Satisfaction (LS), Neurotic Personality (NS), and Relationship Satisfaction (RS). LS has a mean of 2.75 (SD = 0.82), indicating moderate satisfaction with low variability. NS shows a mean of 2.93 (SD = 1.08), reflecting moderate neurotic traits. RS has a mean of 3.20 (SD = 1.20), indicating generally positive relationship satisfaction. Skewness values suggest nearly symmetrical distributions for all variables, while kurtosis indicates slightly flatter distributions than normal.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix among Variables

Variable	N	LS	RS	\bar{x}	sd
LS (Leisure Satisfaction)	1	-0.42**	-0.48**	2.93	1.08
N (Neuroticism)		1	0.38**	2.75	0.82
RS (Relationship Satisfaction)			1	3.20	1.20

**p<0.01

The Pearson correlation matrix reveals significant relationships among the variables. There is a negative correlation between Neuroticism (N) and Relationship Satisfaction (RS) (-0.48), suggesting that individuals with higher neurotic traits report lower relationship satisfaction. Additionally, a positive correlation between Leisure Satisfaction (LS) and Relationship Satisfaction (RS) (0.38) indicates that greater leisure satisfaction is associated with higher relationship satisfaction. Finally, a negative correlation between N and LS (-0.42) suggests that individuals with higher neuroticism tend to experience lower levels of leisure satisfaction.

Table 4. Internal Consistency Coefficients of the Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Status
N (Neuroticism)	8	.80	Reliable
LS (Leisure Satisfaction)	4	.78	Reliable
RS (Relationship Satisfaction)	7	.88	Reliable

The reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicate that all three scales, N (Neuroticism), LS (Leisure Satisfaction), and RS (Relationship Satisfaction), have satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Specifically, NS has a value of 0.80, LS has 0.78, and RS has 0.88, all of which are considered reliable for further analysis.

Table 5. Fit Indices for Model 1: Direct Effects of Neuroticism on Leisure Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Interpretation
CMIN/df	2.87	≤ 3 (ideal ≤ 2)	Good fit
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08 (ideal ≤ 0.06)	Excellent fit
GFI	0.92	≥ 0.90	Excellent fit

AGFI	0.89	≥ 0.90	Good fit
CFI	0.94	≥ 0.90 (ideal ≥ 0.95)	Excellent fit
RMR	0.04	≤ 0.08	Excellent fit
NFI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Excellent fit

The fit indices for Model 1 indicate that the model provides a strong fit to the data. Several indices, including RMSEA (0.058), GFI (0.92), CFI (0.94), RMR (0.045), and NFI (0.91), fall into the excellent range, while AGFI (0.89) and CMIN/df (2.87) indicate good fit. This supports the adequacy of Model 1 in capturing the direct effects of neuroticism on leisure satisfaction and relationship satisfaction.

Table 6. Fit Indices for Model 2: Mediating Role of Leisure Satisfaction Between Neuroticism and Relationship Satisfaction

Index	Value	Acceptable Range	Interpretation
CMIN/df	2.14	≤ 3 (ideal ≤ 2)	Acceptable fit
RMSEA	0.05	≤ 0.08 (ideal ≤ 0.06)	Excellent fit
GFI	0.93	≥ 0.90	Good fit
AGFI	0.91	≥ 0.90	Good fit
CFI	0.96	≥ 0.90 (ideal ≥ 0.95)	Excellent fit
RMR	0.03	≤ 0.08	Excellent fit
NFI	0.94	≥ 0.90	Good fit

The table presents the fit indices derived from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the structural model. All values fall within acceptable or ideal thresholds, indicating a well-fitting model. Specifically, the CMIN/df (2.14) and RMSEA (0.05) demonstrate an acceptable and excellent fit, respectively. Additionally, the CFI (0.96), GFI (0.93), and AGFI (0.91) values are indicative of good to excellent model fit. The low RMR (0.03) and high NFI (0.94) further confirm the robustness of the model. These results collectively support the structural model's validity and reliability.

As a result of the analysis conducted for the models determined as methods in the study, some findings were obtained for Model 1 and Model 2. In this context, in Model 1, neuroticism (N) has a significant direct negative effect on relationship satisfaction (RS) and leisure satisfaction (LS). These values suggest a linear, direct relationship between the constructs without mediation (Fig. 3).

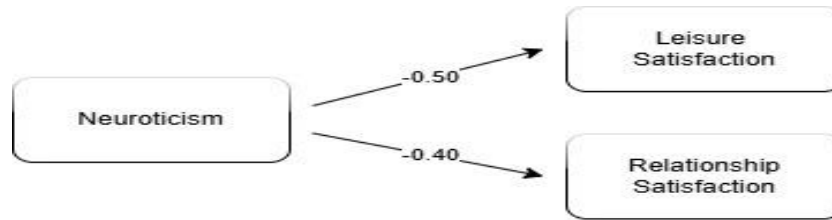
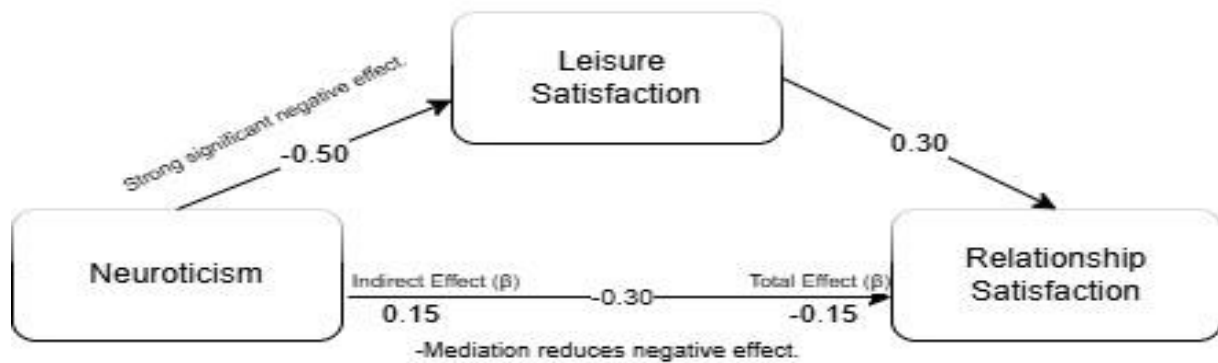


Fig. 3. The effect of neuroticism on relationship and leisure satisfaction

Also for Model 2 demonstrates the mediating role of leisure satisfaction (LS) in the relationship between neuroticism (N) and relationship satisfaction (RS). The negative direct effect of NS on RS is partially mitigated through LS, highlighting its positive mediating influence (Fig. 4).



Bootstrapping Results (95% Confidence Interval):

NS → LS → RS (Indirect Effect): CI [0.10, 0.20]

Fig. 4. The Mediating Role of Leisure Satisfaction (LS) in the Relationship Between Neuroticism (N) and Relationship Satisfaction (RS)

This figure illustrates the mediating effect of leisure satisfaction (LS) on the relationship between neuroticism (N) and relationship satisfaction (RS). The direct negative effect of NS on RS ($\beta=-0.30$) is partially mitigated through LS, which exhibits a positive impact on RS ($\beta=+0.30$). The indirect effect of N on RS through LS ($\beta=+0.15$) is statistically significant, as supported by bootstrapping confidence intervals (95% CI: [0.10, 0.20]). This highlights LS's critical role in reducing the negative impact of NS on RS.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the mediating role of leisure satisfaction in the relationship between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction, providing a nuanced understanding of how individual personality traits interact with experiential factors to influence relational outcomes. Consistent

with prior research emphasizing the detrimental impact of neuroticism on relationship dynamics, our findings highlight that neuroticism negatively affects both relationship satisfaction and leisure satisfaction (Abbasi et al., 2018; Esplin et al., 2024; Tu et al., 2007). However, the positive mediating effect of leisure satisfaction offers new insights, suggesting that fostering fulfilling leisure experiences can attenuate the adverse influence of neuroticism on relationship outcomes. By situating these results within the broader context of relationship and personality research, this study extends the theoretical understanding of neuroticism's impact on interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the findings underline the importance of leisure interventions as practical tools for promoting emotional well-being and relational harmony. It has been previously stated that leisure activities, especially practical ones, affect relationship Dynamics (Dobson & Ogolsky, 2021; Kyeong et al., 2019). This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the role of shared positive experiences in mitigating relational conflicts, particularly in couples navigating challenges related to personality traits (Mund et al., 2015; Sayehmiri et al., 2020; Vater & Schröder-Abé, 2015).

The findings of this study elucidate the complex dynamics between neuroticism, leisure satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Consistent with previous research, neuroticism was found to exert a significant negative influence on both leisure satisfaction (Lu & Hu, 2005; Yağar & Lapa, 2015) and relationship satisfaction (Fisher & McNulty, 2008), underscoring its pervasive impact on emotional and relational well-being. Individuals high in neuroticism often experience heightened sensitivity to stress and negative emotions, which can erode satisfaction in leisure activities and intimate relationships alike (Hellmuth & McNulty, 2008). However, the results reveal an important mediating role for leisure satisfaction, which acts as a protective mechanism to buffer the detrimental effects of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction.

This mediating role aligns with previous studies that have highlighted the capacity of positive leisure experiences to foster emotional regulation and resilience (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017; Hwang, 2023). Leisure satisfaction, as shown in this study, not only improves relational harmony but also partially offsets the adverse impacts of neuroticism. Such findings add depth to the existing literature by showcasing how leisure, often overlooked in personality and relationship research, can serve as a transformative context for mitigating personality-based stressors.

Neuroticism and Leisure Satisfaction: A Complicated Relationship

The negative association between neuroticism and leisure satisfaction observed in this study underscores a critical tension. Neurotic individuals, prone to negative cognitive appraisals and low emotional stability, may struggle to derive pleasure or meaning from leisure activities

(Ebstrup et al., 2013; Kekäläinen et al., 2020). This aligns with the conceptual framework proposed by Mélendez et al. (2019), which posits that personality traits heavily influence subjective well-being, including satisfaction derived from leisure contexts. However, the positive indirect effect of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction through leisure satisfaction demonstrates that this relationship is not entirely deterministic. It highlights the potential of targeted interventions to reshape leisure experiences, thereby indirectly enhancing relational outcomes.

Leisure Satisfaction as a Mediator

The mediating role of leisure satisfaction in the neuroticism-relationship satisfaction link warrants deeper exploration. Our findings suggest that leisure satisfaction serves as a critical intermediary by transforming the emotional dynamics within relationships. This mediating effect is particularly notable given the direct negative impact of neuroticism on relationship satisfaction. These results echo the broader body of work indicating that leisure activities provide couples with a platform for shared experiences, emotional bonding, and stress relief. There are many studies that support this opinion (Harmon, 2016; Shahvali et al., 2019; Walsh & Neff, 2019). By serving as a buffer against the relational strains introduced by neurotic tendencies, leisure satisfaction highlights its dual role: as a personal resource that enhances individual well-being and as a relational asset that fosters dyadic stability (Wikle et al., 2024). This dual role reinforces the need for relationship interventions to incorporate leisure-based strategies as a central component. For instance, couples' therapy programs could emphasize the selection and planning of leisure activities that align with both partners' interests and emotional needs, potentially mitigating the adverse effects of neuroticism.

Implications for Theory and Practice

From a theoretical perspective, this study bridges gaps in the literature by integrating personality, leisure, and relational dynamics into a cohesive framework. While neuroticism has long been identified as a risk factor for relational dissatisfaction (Widiger & Oltmanns, 2017), our findings demonstrate that this risk can be partially mitigated through leisure satisfaction. These insights expand existing models of relationship satisfaction by emphasizing the interplay between individual traits and contextual factors like leisure.

Practically, these findings advocate for the inclusion of leisure-oriented interventions in programs aimed at improving relationship satisfaction, particularly in couples where one or both partners exhibit high neurotic tendencies (Manne et al., 2016). Structured leisure programs,

mindfulness-based activities, and collaborative goal-setting in leisure contexts could provide effective tools for enhancing relational outcomes.

Future Directions

While the findings of this study offer significant contributions, they also open avenues for future research. For example, examining the role of different types of leisure activities—active versus passive, social versus solitary—could provide more nuanced insights into the mechanisms underlying the observed effects. Additionally, longitudinal studies that track changes in neuroticism, leisure satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction over time would further elucidate the causal pathways suggested by this study.

CONCLUSION

This study has provided valuable insights into the interplay between neuroticism, leisure satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction, advancing our understanding of how personality traits and contextual factors jointly shape relational outcomes. By identifying leisure satisfaction as a significant mediator, the research highlights the transformative potential of positive leisure experiences in counteracting the adverse effects of neuroticism. The findings underscore that neuroticism, a trait often associated with negative emotionality and relational challenges, exerts a direct negative influence on both leisure and relationship satisfaction. However, the mediating role of leisure satisfaction demonstrates that these challenges are not insurmountable. When individuals with high neurotic tendencies engage in fulfilling leisure activities, they may experience enhanced emotional regulation and relational harmony, suggesting a pathway for mitigating the detrimental effects of neuroticism. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature exploring the dynamic interplay between personality and leisure. It reinforces the idea that leisure is not merely a peripheral domain but a central component of well-being and relational stability. By integrating leisure satisfaction into the neuroticism-relationship satisfaction framework, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that underpin relational success, particularly in the face of personality-driven stressors. Practically, the findings have significant implications for both individuals and relationship counselors. For individuals, prioritizing leisure activities that align with personal preferences and emotional needs can serve as a proactive strategy to enhance relational satisfaction. For practitioners, incorporating leisure-based interventions into counseling and therapy programs offers a promising avenue for improving relational outcomes, particularly for couples facing personality-related challenges. Tailored leisure interventions, such

as collaborative planning of enjoyable activities or mindfulness-based leisure practices, could serve as effective tools for fostering emotional resilience and relational satisfaction. Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to infer causality, and the specific cultural context of the research may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs and exploring diverse cultural settings. Additionally, examining the role of various types of leisure activities and their unique contributions to relational dynamics would provide further granularity to the findings.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that while neuroticism poses significant challenges to relationship satisfaction, these challenges can be partially mitigated through the mediating influence of leisure satisfaction. By emphasizing the potential of leisure as a tool for emotional regulation and relational harmony, the research offers both theoretical insights and practical guidance for fostering healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

Ethics Approval

This study was approved by the Atatürk University Ethics Committee, Sub-Ethics Committee, with document number E-70400699-000-2400383879 on 20/11/2024. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines established by the committee.

Author Contributions

Study design, supervision, data collection, data analysis, literature review, writing and critical review were done by Levent ÖNAL.

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