



INVESTIGATING INFIDELITY TENDENCY AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BASED ON ATTACHMENT STYLES AND GENDER

BAĞLANMA STİLLERİNE VE CİNSİYETE GÖRE ÇATIŞMA YÖNETİMİ VE ALDATMA
EĞİLİMİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, bağlanma stillerinin çatışma çözüm biçimleri ve aldatma eğilimi üzerindeki etkisinde cinsiyetin rolü olup olmadığını; ayrıca aldatma eğilimi ve çatışma yönetim biçimleri arasındaki ilişkileri incelemektir.

Bu amaçla 145 kadın, 55 erkek olmak üzere 200 evli katılımcıya Yakın İlişkilerde Yaşantılar Envanteri, Aldatma Eğilimi Ölçeği ve Çatışma Yönetim Biçimleri Ölçeği verilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda, güvensiz bağlanma stiline sahip bireylerin, güvenli bağlanma stiline sahip olanlara ve erkeklerin kadınlara göre aldatma eğilimlerinin daha yüksek olduğu bulunmuştur. Güvensiz bağlanma stiline sahip olanların güvenlilere göre daha fazla olumsuz aktif ve olumsuz pasif çatışma yönetimine ve kadınların erkeklere göre daha fazla olumlu aktif çatışma yönetim biçimine yöndikleri bulunmuştur. Son olarak aldatma eğilimi ile olumsuz aktif çatışma yönetim biçimi arasında da anlamlı ve olumlu yönde ilişkiye rastlanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular literatür ışığında tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bağlanma stilleri, aldatma, çatışma yönetimi, cinsiyet

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to investigate married individuals' infidelity tendency and conflict management style in accordance with adult attachment style and gender. 200 participants of 145 women and 55 men were presented with Personal Information Sheet, Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, Infidelity Tendency Questionnaire and Conflict Management Questionnaire. According to statistical analyses and evaluations, it has been found out that; compared to secure participants, insecure participants' and compared to women, men's infidelity tendency was statistically higher. Comparison with secure participants, insecure participants were found to have higher tendency for negative active and negative passive conflict management styles and women showed out to have higher tendency for positive active conflict management style. Additionally, Infidelity tendency and negative - active conflict management were observed to be positively related.

Key words: Attachment style, infidelity, conflict management, gender.

INTRODUCTION

The root of the close relationships, that have prominence effects on person's physical, emotional and social needs, depends on the relation between the attachment system that occurs among caregiver and the baby (Bowlby 1969; Feeney, 1999; Fraley and Shaver, 2000). Hazan and Shaver (1987) suggested that, how a romantic relationship is structured, preceded and ended can be understood in the frame of attachment process in childhood. For this reason the attachment style of a person prominence effects his or her cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions in a romantic relationship (Feeney, 1999). According to this perspective, marital conflict and management styles of this conflict between couples cannot be thought independent from attachment styles and many recent studies has frequently investigated the relation between attachment styles and marital conflict. In this direction, with the study conducted by 40 married couples, Kobak and Hazan (1991) suggested that secure attachment style has effects to increase the individuals' attempt to use constructive problem solving and positive communication styles when expressing their feelings during a conflict and secure attachment is found to be related with relationship harmony. In the longitudinal study that Simpson, Rholes and Philips (1996) investigated about the conflict solving styles of people with different attachment styles revealed that; individuals who has anxious attachment style perceives their relations more negative. According to Creasey (2002) who worked with 145 couples, attachment style is a predictor for couple interaction and conflict management style in the relation. Moreover, Shi (2003) suggested in his study about the relation between adult attachment styles and conflict solving in relations that; compared to unsecured individuals, secure individuals are tend to use more active problem solving and behaves more conciliatory.

Pistole and Arricale (2003) conducted a study, with a total of 188 university students (41 men, 147 women), about attachment styles, feelings about conflict, expressions in conflict and the conflict management tactics. According to the result of this study, secured individuals, compared to individuals who have fearful and preoccupied attachment styles, found to feel less threat from their partner during conflict. According to the study of Karairmak and Duran (2005), which have been conducted with university students, it has been seen that securely attached people display more collaboration in conflict management compared to unsecured ones. On the other hand, it has been mentioned that conflict management styles also differs

according to gender differences. Compared to women, men tend to behave more avoidant from conflict and women behave more active during conflict (Hojjat, 2000; Napier, 1978).

In relation with the quality of marriage, investigating the infidelity or infidelity tendency is also very important as it has been affecting negatively the stability and quality of marriage beside the emotional and physical wellbeing of partners (Weil, 1975). Confusion of feeling and thought, jealousy and instability towards future is some of the results for an individual who experienced infidelity from his/her partner. (Thompson,1982). It has been revealed that, 60 -65% of the couples who applied to couple therapy in USA, has the reason of infidelity (Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson, 2001).

According to Hall and Fincham, it can be defined as “a secret sexual, romantic, or emotional involvement that violates the commitment to an exclusive relationship” which became a widespread problem in marriages nowadays. Although is a widespread problem, to investigate and study this problem is somehow difficult because of the complex nature of infidelity beside Turkish traditional and cultural structure.

Researchers determine some common factors that are related with infidelity such as low marriage satisfaction, low quality or low numbers in sexual or emotional sharing in marriage or conflicts between couples (Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson, 2001; Polat, 2006). According to personal development model, it is not only the unhappy marriage that cause infidelity but sometimes self exploration and self development may result with infidelity tendency (Thompson, 1984).

Although it has been seen that, infidelity is related with self perception and others perception of people there is a big need to investigate its relation with attachment styles, there are relatively limited studies about these variables and their relations. One of these studies belongs to Amidon (2007) who studied adult attachment styles, emotion regulations, gender roles and infidelity. It has been revealed that dismissed and preoccupied attachment styles are positively related with experiencing infidelity. Another important finding of the study displayed that secure and fearful attachment styles are not related with any kind of infidelity. According to Bogaert and Sadava (2002), securely attached individuals perceive themselves more attractive on the other hand anxiously attached individuals see themselves less attractive and live more infidelity experience. According to Feeney, Noller and Patty (1993) individuals who have avoidant attachment style reported to live less and sketchy relationships. On the

other hand anxiously attached individuals reported that they live relationships more in number but short in time. However individuals who are securely attached said that they get high satisfaction and love in their romantic relationship. These results shows that compared to unsecure individuals, individuals who had securely attached has higher relationship satisfaction, and has the feelings of faithfulness and security in terms of their romantic relationship.

Wiederman (1997) has informed that as a common feature for the studies done about infidelity displayed that men have higher percentages of experiencing extramarital relations compared to women. Moreover Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson (2001) also informed that men have more infidelity tendency than women. Another difference between men and women in terms of infidelity is the style of it (Cramer, Lipinski, Meter and Houska, 2008).

Although studies about conflict management and infidelity is so limited, it is known that, couples experience problems because of infidelity's damaging psychological results and loosing trust and commitment in the relationship. On the other hand a very significant reason for infidelity is shown as marital problems and dissatisfaction from relationship (Boekhout, Hendrick and Hendrick, 2003). Conflict or negative management of conflicts is also a specific factor that increases the dissatisfaction from marriage (Crowley, 2006). After a deep investigation of research Buunk (1987) suggested that; the partner that engage in extramarital relationships is not "pulled" by the effective alternatives but "pushed" because of the problems occurs in the current marriage or relationship. This comment emphasizes that; negative conflict management which may cause problems in marriage can be also an important motive for living extramarital relationship. The study of Polat (2006) also supports this comment with finding positive relation between infidelity tendency and conflict tendency.

In accordance with the literature review above, this study aimed to investigate the effects of attachment styles on conflict management styles and infidelity and the role of gender on these. Relationship between infidelity tendency and conflict management styles is also studied.

METHOD

Participants

The participants consisted of parents of private college students, parents of Anatolian High School students, the students of a public course that serves for women and the men employees of a private telecommunication company. All of the schools and the public course are under the control of Kadıköy Ministry of Education and all the participants were randomly selected from the institutions. The main criteria for being a participant were to be volunteer and to live together with their spouses. Besides that, all the measures were given to only one spouse in each home, to increase the openness and secrecy.

A number of 200 people (55 men and 145 women) were taken in to consideration as being participants of the present study. Subjects ranged in age from 26 to 64 with the average of 43.15 ($S=8.30$).

In terms of economical status 51.5% ($N= 103$) described themselves as “middle”, 43.5% ($N=87$) as “good”. In the sample 61 participant (30.5%) were high school graduate, 78 (39%) were university graduate and 24 (12%) has master or doctoral degree in education level.

Measures

Conflict Management Questionnaire (CMQ): Developed by Hojjat (2000) the purpose of CMQ is to measure the strategies of married couple’s conflict managements. It constitutes of 4 sub dimensions that aims to measure different conflict management orientations: *Positive – active*, *Positive- passive*, *Negative- active* and *Negative – passive*. Individuals who use positive-active strategy are active in their attempts to solve the conflict and in obtaining the most equitable outcome. Individuals who employ the positive-passive strategy do not actively pursue a resolution to the conflict even though they also seek an equitable outcome. Those who adapt to negative-passive strategy are passive in dealing with conflicts and do not desire an equitable outcome. And finally individuals who use negative-active strategy actively pursue outcome that are not equitable.

It is 17 item self report 6-point likert type questionnaire and high scores from each sub dimensions point outs the tendency for that conflict management style.

In the original study of Hojjat (2000), Cronbach alphas for the pos-act, pos-pas, neg-act and neg-pas strategies were found .63, .76, .72 and .71 respectively. The adaptation of the measure to Turkish is made by Ugurlu (2003). Ugurlu found the Cronbach alphas of each 4 dimensions between .43 - .69. (pos-act: .50, pos-pas: .69, neg-act: .43, neg-act: .65).

In the present study the Cronbach alpha reliability is found .46 for pos-act, .66 for pos-pas, .48 for neg.act and .57 for neg-pas.

Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory (ECRI): The inventory is designed to assess individual differences with respect to attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance, by Brennan et al in 1998 (Sümer, 2006). It consists of a total of 36 items, 18 of which designed to measure avoidance and 18 of which is designed to measure anxiety, and it is 5 point likert type design. Some of the items are reversed. Getting lower than average score from each of the attachment dimensions, point out to the secure attachment style.

The adaptation and reliability study for Turkish sample was done by Sümer (2006). In this study, Cronbach alpha score is found .86 for anxiety dimension, and .90 for avoidance dimension. In a previous study done by Bahadır (2006) for the same inventory, avoidance dimension's Cronbach alpha score was found as .86 and anxiety dimension's Cronbach alpha score was found as .85 and total inventory's Cronbach alpha score was found .85. For the sample of the present study, Cronbach alpha score is found .84 for avoidance dimension and .79 for anxiety dimension.

Infidelity Tendency Questionnaire (ITQ). This inventory is designed with the aim of measuring married individuals' infidelity tendencies by Polat (2006). It constitutes of totally 30 item 18 of which measures positive infidelity tendency and 12 of which is negative infidelity tendency behaviours. The negative items are scored reversely and high score from the inventory displays high infidelity tendency. For reliability Cronbach alpha and split half reliability scores are evaluated and .95 is found for Cronbach alpha and .95 is found for two half reliability. This result displays the high internal consistency of the measure. For the present study the Cronbach alpha reliability is found .92.

Procedure

The data of the study were collected between March – June 2009. After the necessary permissions were taken, the measures were sent closely to the parents of the students who are going to the randomly selected schools in Istanbul and collected by the help of Psychological

Counsellors of the schools and the researchers. Totally 350 pack of measures were sent to the participants and 220 of them came back as fully completed. 20 of them were invalid for some reasons and 200 data were taken into consideration. Approximately 20 -25 minutes needed to fulfil the measures totally.

RESULTS

The standard deviation scores of positive-active, positive-passive, negative-active and negative passive conflict management styles and infidelity tendency scores according to secure and insecure attachment styles of women and men participants, is given in the Table 1.

Table 1: The *M* and *SD* for men and women participants' Conflict Management Style and Infidelity Tendency Styles in accordance with Attachment Styles.

		SECURE ATTACHMENT M (SD)	INSECURE ATTACHMENT M (SD)	TOTAL M (SD)
POSACT CM	W	15.02 (4.04)	15.69 (4.05)	15.49 (3.86)
	M	13.89 (3.31)	14.32 (3.80)	14,18 (3.62)
	Total	14.69 (3.85)	15.32 (3.83)	15.13 (3.83)
POSPAS CM	W	19.98 (4.37)	19.30 (4.50)	19.50 (4.46)
	M	19.28 (5.30)	21.02 (3.93)	20.45 (4.45)
	Total	19.77 (4.62)	19.76 (4.41)	19.7 (4.47)
NEGACT CM	W	6.40 (2.72)	8.26 (3.26)	7.71 (3.22)
	M	6.11 (1.57)	7.97 (3.33)	7.36 (2.99)
	Total	6.31 (2.43)	8.19 (3.27)	7.62 (3.15)
NEGPAS CM	W	11.70 (4.41)	14.69 (4)	13.8 (4.34)
	M	11 (3.80)	13.76 (3.80)	12.85 (3.98)
	Total	11.49 (4.22)	14.44 (3.96)	13.54 (4.25)
INFIDELITY TENDENCY	W	43.53 (13.35)	49.54 (16.04)	47.76 (15.49)
	M	55.72 (27.54)	58.14 (19.93)	57.35 (22.47)
	Total	47.13 (19.26)	51.83 (17.50)	50.40 (18.14)

POSACT CM: Positive-active conflict management; POSPAS CM: Positive-passive conflict management; NEGACT CM: Negative-active conflict management; NEGPAS CM: Negative-passive Conflict management

To determine the effect of attachment styles on conflict management styles and infidelity tendency according to gender, two way factor analyses is applied to the data of 2 (secure –insecure) X 2 (woman–man), as suitable to the factor research design. This analyse is repeated for 5 times for secure – insecure attachment styles, positive-active, positive-passive,

negative-active and negative passive conflict management styles and infidelity tendency scores.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) results that have been applied to the scores of participant' positive active conflict management styles according to attachment styles have shown that, neither attachment styles nor gender or common effect of attachment style X gender has a significantly meaningful effect. However, gender is seen as having a marginal effect ($p < .06$).

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) applied to positive passive conflict management styles also revealed that both fundamental dimension has not a significant effect neither one by one, nor commonly.

The results analyses of variance (ANOVA) applied to negative active conflict management styles showed that just attachment style effect is significantly important [F (1,196)= 12.92, $p < .001$]. According to this result, unsecured individuals (8.19), compared to secured ones (6.31) uses more negative active conflict management styles. Gender and the common effect of gender X attachment styles have no meaningful effect on the scores.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) applied to negative passive conflict management styles displayed that, only the attachment styles has significantly important effect on the scores. [F (1,196)= 17.47, $p < .001$]. So it is suggested that, individuals who has insecure attachment styles (14.44), compared to individuals who are securely attached (11.49), uses negative passive conflict management style more. Gender and the common effect of gender X attachment styles are not significantly effective on the scores.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) applied to the infidelity tendency scores according to attachment styles had revealed that just gender has a significantly important effect [F (1,196)= 12.07, $p < .01$]. As a results it is seen that men participants (57.35), compared to women (47.76) have higher infidelity tendency. Attachment styles and attachment styles X gender common effect has not a meaningful effect on infidelity tendency scores.

As a last, infidelity tendency and conflict management styles relationship also investigated by Pearson Correlation Analyses. A correlation between infidelity tendency and negative active attachment style is found to be significantly important ($r = .182$, $p < .01$) (Table 2).

Table 2: Correlation Between Conflict Management Scores and Infidelity Tendency Scores.

	POSACT	POSPAS	NEGACT	NEGPAS
INFIDELITY TENDENCY	-.009	-.055	.182**	.060

**P< .01

DISCUSSION

The main goal of the present research is to investigate if there is a role of gender on attachment styles effect on conflict management styles and infidelity tendency, beside searching the relation between infidelity tendency and conflict management styles.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) results that have been applied to the scores of participant' positive active conflict management styles according to attachment styles have shown that, neither attachment styles nor gender or common affect of attachment style X gender has a significantly meaningful effect. However, gender is seen as having a marginal effect. According to these results, women tend to use more positive active conflict management tactics. These findings are also corresponding with previous researches saying that; women behaves more dominant and active during conflicts and men wants to be far away from conflicts. (Hojjat, 2000). Napier (1978) also mentions that, according to the conditioning in gender roles, compared to men, women are used to adopt the roles that are open for consensus and continuity of the relation; however men, as they are keen on individuality and independency in socialization process, seek distance and independency in relation. In the same direction Christensen and Shenk (1991) has research results showing that women behaves more demanding and men behave more avoiding during conflicts. The ANOVA analyses that applied to the scores of applicants' negative active and negative passive conflict management styles according to attachment styles has shown that, compared to securely attached ones, unsecured individuals tend to use more negative active and negative passive conflict management styles. In the frame of attachment theory, as a result of the insecurity feeling towards both themselves and others, insecurely attached individuals tend to use less constructive problem solving skills and positive communication styles. Moreover, Crowley (2006), had found out a positive correlation between secure attachment and constructive reflections during conflict. The findings of Bahadır (2006) are also overlapping with present study's findings as they say compared to unsecurely attached individuals,

securely attached ones use less avoiding and force in conflict management tactics. Sümer and Cozarelli (2004) also found out that, the high self value and security feeling in attachment result with less negative attribution to partner's behaviors and more relationship satisfaction. By these findings, it can be argued that, making more positive attribution may result with behaving more constructive during conflicts.

Shi (2003) also reached similar results in his own research and he found out attachment styles as a predictor for conflict solving skills. According to the results of this study, individuals who are securely attached were seen as more active problem solvers, more combining and more consensual during conflicts. Compared to the unsecured ones, the securely attached individuals who have positive attitudes towards themselves and others precede more satisfactory conflict solving strategies. According to Simpson, Collins, Tran and Haydon (2007), the infants, who were determined as securely attached when they are 12 month old, have been seen as more socially competent by their teachers at primary school, and express more positive daily experiences with their partners when they are adults. Moreover they adopted more consensual conflict solving tactics and less negative emotions during conflicts.

As the other main research point of the current study, infidelity tendency is investigated according to attachment styles and it has been revealed that compared to securely attached individuals, insecurely attached ones have more infidelity tendency.

Amidon (2007) found a similar result with detecting a positive correlation with preoccupied and dismissing attachment style and living extramarital involvement. Feeney, Noller and Patty (1993) also suggested that avoidant individuals live more hook – up type and short term romantic relations and anxious individuals live many number but short term romantic relationships. Research has shown that, individuals with secure attachment styles live more satisfaction and love in their relations and it has been explained by their feeling of security, faithfulness and relationship satisfaction. Allen and Baucom (2004) suggested that, unsecured individuals live extramarital relationships and have higher tendency for infidelity for the reason to compensate the feeling of insecurity.

As the insecurely attached individuals have low satisfaction from marriage and relationship (Crowley, 2006) and as they have lower marriage harmony compared to securely attached ones (Kobak and Hazan, 1991), may result of these individuals tend to be involved

more extramarital relations. According to the research of Duba, Kindsvatter and Lara (2008), the reason why individuals tend to be involved in infidelity can be grouped as personal, outsource effects and relation based effect. In the heading of personal reasons, satisfaction feeling from partner and relationship, infidelity perspective of the person and attachment styles can be listed. The insecurity in attachment that have developed in early childhood may have effects on adult romantic relationship and the avoidant attached individuals, who live difficulties in behaving closely, or their partners may search this closeness in another partner or relationship. Or, an anxiously attached people who have fears to lose their partners and so that have difficulties to live long lasting relations, or their partner may seek this kind of a relationship in another partner and all these effects may prepare the basis for infidelity. Moreover, low relationship quality in marriage, problem that lived in conflicts and communications, the loss or decrease in perceived partner support related with the insecurity in attachment styles may be commented as some reasons for searching a new partner and increasing of infidelity tendency.

Another finding of the current research is that infidelity tendency may differ according to gender. This finding is corresponding with the previous research that suggests that men have higher infidelity tendency in comparison to women. (Atkins, Baucom, Jacobson, 2001; Atwood and Seifer, 1997; Egan and Angus, 2004; Polat, 2006; Wiederman, 1997). Boekhout, Hendrick and Hendrick (2003) also suggested that men promote monogamy lower and tend to engage in sexual infidelity more than women.

A possible reason why men experience more infidelity than women may be the society's acceptable approach to men's such behaviours. As the reason of men infidelity tendency may depend on quick satisfaction feeling, or the existing of women who does not want a real relationship (Norment, 1998), may push men easily to extramarital or extra relational relationships and these can be the explanation why men have higher infidelity tendency compared to women (Polat, 2006). Again in another study the reason why men tend to have more infidelity than women is explained with the low sexual satisfaction (Atkins, Baucom, Yi and Chistensen, 2005).

The last finding of the present research is the correlation between infidelity tendency and negative active conflict management style. Similarly Polat (2004) has found out a significantly positive correlation between infidelity tendency and conflict tendency that has been conducted with 204 married women and men participants. As mentioned before, a very

common finding supported with many research was the reason attributed to infidelity is the conflicts, dissatisfaction and unhappiness in marriages (Atkins, Baucom, Yi and Chistensen, 2005; Polat, 2006; Thomson, 1984). According to this; it can be commented that, a new partner search can be a consequence of living stress and dissatisfaction form current partner. In the study of Atkins, Baucom and Jacobson (2001), the possibility of living an extramarital relationship in an unhappy marriage is four times greater than the couples who are happy with their marriages. These results may display that negative managements of conflict at home would lead a new partner or relation search outside. If it can be thought that the negative conflict management that cover forcing the partner to accept the needs and wishes of the other partner, physical abuse and lying, may affect the marital satisfaction and harmony in a very negative way, in such an environment high infidelity tendency can be an expected result. Especially the “lying” dimension of the negative active conflict management style can be seen as very related with infidelity as it means to rejecting the promises and cheating of the partner.

There were also some limitations of the present study. One main limitation of the current study was the low reliability points of conflict management style measure. Measuring the each conflict management style with just 4 or 5 item, may be a reason for this low reliability. In the future studies it would be better to use a more item measurement or develop a new detailed measurement, would help to increase the reliability. Another limitation could be related with the low number of men participants and the ratio of men and women participant number in the sample of the research. This difference may affect the findings about gender differences. In the future studies each gender’s participant numbers may be close to each other to get a more reliable data.

Although the literature about attachment is widening day by day both at international and local research area, no other study is came across that combined the topics adult attachment, infidelity tendency and conflict management. In addition the literature about infidelity is so rare in Turkey and there is no topic studied about attachment and infidelity tendency. For this reason, the present study would contribute much and fulfil a missing area in the field. In addition, as this study has revealed the attachment base reasons for infidelity, and gave data about gender differences, it would provide a different perspective to the applicants and researchers in this field. Moreover as an inevitable factor in marriage, the importance of conflict management, the gender differences about conflict management styles

and the attachment style's role in conflict management are also the important highlighters of the present study to the research are.

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