Investigating The Effects of Marital Adjustment on the Eating Attitude & Behavior of Couples
Evlilik Uyumunun Çiftlerin Yeme Tutum ve Davranışlarına Olan Etkilerinin Araştırılması

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ÖZET

Evlilik yeni bir yaşantı stili olup, iki farklı bireyin hayatının önemli bir aşaması olarak görülmektedir. Birey evlilik ile sosyal, psikolojik ve fizyolojik ihtiyaçlarını gidermektedir. Evlilik anlaşmasıyla birlikte toplumun yapı taşı aile oluşmakta, sosyal, fizyolojik, ahlaki ve kültürel olarak insan neslinin devamlılığı sağlanmaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı; evlilik uyumunun, çiftler üzerindeki beslenme tutum ve alışkanlıklarına olan etkilerini araştırmaktır. Bu araştırmanın evrenini Konya ilinin Selçuklu, Konya ve Meram ilçesinde yaşayan 22-65 yaş grubunda evliliğinde beş yılı geçmiş 326 evli bireyler oluşturmaktadır. Bu amaç gözetilerek basit rastgele örnekleme yolu ile çalışmanın yapılacağı evli bireyler belirlenmiştir. Örneklem veri toplama esnasında katılımcıların gönüllülüğü temel alınmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak anket ve 'Yenilenmiş Yakındoğu Evlilikte Uyum Ölçeği 'kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde Ölçeklerin ve demografik değişkenlerin normal dağılıma uygunluğunun belirlenmesi için Kolmogorov-Smirnov testi uygulanmıştır. Varyansların homojenliği için Levene testi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucuna göre; evlilik öncesi ve sonrası besin tercihlerinin farklılık gösterdiği, besin tercihlerinin evlilik süresi ve eğitim durumuna göre değiştiği ayrıca evlilikte empati'nin evlilik süresine göre değişkenlik gösterdiği görülmüştür.

Anahtar kelimeler: Evlilik uyumu, beslenme tutumu, aile

ABSTRACT

Marriage is a new lifestyle and is regarded as an important stage in the lives of two different people. A person tries to fulfill his/her social, psychological, and physiological needs via marriage. With a marriage agreement, a family institution, which is the building block of the society, is created; thus, the continuity of the human generation is ensured socially, physiologically, morally and culturally. The aim of this research is to investigate the effects of marital adjustment on eating attitudes and habits on couples. The universe of the research comprises 326 married participants who have been married for over five years between the age of 22-65 living in Selçuklu, Konya and Meram districts of Konya. By considering this purpose, the married people, on whom the study was conducted, were determined by simple random sampling method. The sample data collection phase was based on the volunteering of the participants. A survey and the "Renewed Near East Marital Adjustment Scale" were used as data collection tools. In the analysis of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test was used to determine the suitability of the scales and demographic variables for normal distribution. Levene test was used for the homogeneity of the variances. According to the result of the research, it was revealed that the food preferences were different before and after marriage. The food preferences changed in terms of the duration of marriage and educational status of participants, and their empathy feelings in marriage varied according to the duration of marriage.

Keywords: Marital adjustment, nutritional attitude, family

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INTRODUCTION

The first ring of socialization chain is the family, which is a process that teaches individuals by showing them how to actively play a role in functional society and social groups, and to equip them with the behaviors that they will interact with in the society and to determine their social relations with other individuals they will encounter (Nirun, 1994).

In marriage, as couples share, couples' sharing starts to be enjoyable and joyous. Then couples proceed to get such sharing into a habit over time, (Cutter et al., 2019). Apart from eating out together in social activities, having breakfast or having dinner together is a common concept in Turkish culture.

Social factors are important in this context because eating together is a social activity for most people. Social relationships and social processes may determine how people eat healthily. Marriage, parenting or peer acceptance are examples that can be given in the context of social relationships. Taylor (2003) defined social support as a situation of being loved, valued, and being in a network of mutual responsibilities. In Turkey, thanks to internet technology, mass communication has become independent, more democratic, and interactive. The bond created with increased participation is expanding gradually. The fact that technology can be used by everyone and appeals to all ages, being economical and appealing to all interests increases the use and power of the internet (Cakir, 2007). The internet is used in various fields such as having fun, obtaining information and creating leisure activities, the internet facilitates many daily tasks of individuals, and has affected individuals and society in many aspects (Buyukfiliz, 2016; Ozer, 2013). Nutrition emerged as one of the main elements of this topic. When social media accounts were examined, serving various food and offering dinner tables were among the most searched items on the Internet.

This study is important in terms of understanding the effects of food intake, which is the vital element of life, on the nutritional habits of individuals, as well as contributing to the literature by underlining the nutritional training among different disciplines. The study aims to examine the nutritional attitudes and behaviors of couples married over five years. For this purpose, we have tried to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Does educational level affect couple's nutrition choices?
2. Does marital adjustment have an impact on nutrition?
3. Does marriage duration have an effect on nutritional attitude?
4. Is there a correlation between nutritional adaptation and marital adjustment?

MATERIAL AND METHOD
Study Design

The aim of this research is to investigate the effects of marital adjustment on eating attitudes and habits on couples. By considering this purpose, the married people, on whom the study was conducted, were determined by simple random sampling method. Research; is in the qualitative research model. Qualitative research is a type of research created with data collection methods such as observation and document analysis. It represents the process of examining events and facts in a holistic way in a realistic environment (Karasar, 2005).

Sample

Participants were determined by simple random sampling method. The study was conducted 326 married individuals between the ages of 22-65, with different socioeconomic levels, and located in the central districts of Konya.

Data Collection Tools

The sample data collection phase was based on the volunteering of the participants. A survey and the "Renewed Near East Marital Adjustment Scale" were used as data collection tools.

Socio-demographic and food preferences form: The questionnaire form consists of 13 questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as 11 questions of food preferences, 10 questions of food preferences before and after marriage and a " Revised Near East Marital Adjustment" scale comprising 42 questions.

Near east marriage adjustment questionnaire: The research data were collected by conducting a face-to-face questionnaire with couples. In the research, the "Near East Marriage Adjustment Questionnaire" was used. The questionnaire was adapted into Turkish by Bayraktaroglu et al. (2017). The research data were obtained by conducting a face-to-face questionnaire with couples living in Konya between the ages of 22-65 and over five years of marriage. "The Near East Marriage Adjustment Scale has 4 sub-items: satisfaction in marriage (16 questions), communication in marriage (9 questions), empathy in marriage (10 questions), and relationships with root families (7 questions). The questions regarding the items in the Near East Marriage Adjustment Questionnaire have been asked in the form of a 4-point Likert scale which refers to "1" = "Never", "2" = "Occasionally", "3" = "Mostly", "4" = "Always". In addition, the answers to the questions measuring food preferences have been scaled in three-points: "1 = No", "2 = Sometimes", "3 = Yes". The answers to a total of 20 questions that measure food preferences before and after marriage are 5-Likert type referring to "1" = "Never", "2" = "Rarely", "3" = "Sometimes", "4" = "Frequently", "5"= "Always".

Analysis

In the analysis of the data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov goodness-of-fit test was used to determine the suitability of the scales and demographic variables for normal distribution. Levene test was used for the homogeneity of the variances.

Ethical Aspect of the Research

First of all, approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of KTO Karatay University (26.11.2019 and 2019/011) for this study. Participants were informed about the research, and data collection forms were applied to individuals who agreed to participate in the research.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of the participants in the study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	162	49.7
	Male	164	50.3
Marriage type	Dating	154	47.2
	Arranged	172	52.8
Family type	Extended family	45	13.8
	Nuclear family	281	86.2
Duration of Marriage	5-8 years	75	23.0
	8-10 years	47	14.4
	10-12 years	22	6.7
	12-14 years	25	7.7
	14-16 years	157	48.2
Blood group	A+	136	41.7
	B+	50	15.3
	Ab+	25	7.7
	0+	74	22.7
	A-	14	4.3
	B-	12	3.7
	Ab-	6	1.8
	0-	9	2.8
Age	20 and under	2	0.6
	21-25 years	15	4.6
	26-30 years	36	11.0
	30-36 years	46	14.1
	36-40 years	78	23.9
	40 and over	149	45.7
Occupation	Housewife	76	23.3
	Officer	86	26.4
	Self employed	39	12.0
	Private sector	73	22.4
	Retired	24	7.4
	Unemployed	8	2.5
	Other	20	6.1
Educational status	Primary school	40	12.3
	Secondary school	27	8.3
	High school	79	24.2
	University/ postgraduate	180	55.2
Total		326	100

Reliability analysis results measured by scale and sub-dimensions are given in Table 2. Reliability coefficients for the scale and sub-dimensions are presented in Table 2. The Near East Marriage Adjustment Scale had the Cronbach Alpha value of 951, which seemed to be the highest reliability coefficient in the literature. The overall reliability of the coefficient questionnaire was determined as, 918. Thus, it can be assumed that 91.8% of the participants gave reliable answers to the questions.

Table 2. Reliability analysis results based on the scale and sub-dimensions

Scales and Sub-Dimensions	Cronbach Alpha
Pre-Marital Food Choices	0.676
Post-Marital Food Choices	0.708
Near East Marital Adjustment	**0.951**
Satisfaction in marriage	0.907
Communication in marriage	0.846
Empathy in marriage	0.811
Relations with the root family	0.775
Total	**0.918**

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics regarding the questions in the food preferences scale. The expression with the highest mean score in the scale was "being satisfactory". It can be said that the participants generally attach importance to being satisfied when choosing foods. The expression "high water content" draws attention to the one with the lowest mean score of 2.128 points. The overall scale mean score was found as 2.539, and the standard deviation for this mean was 0.302.

Table 3. Descriptive results on food preferences

	M	*SD*
Being easy to prepare	2.484	0.635
Cooking method (grill, roast, steam, etc.)	2.542	0.629
Being economical	2.404	0.745
Being filling	2.809	0.496
Being delicious	2.954	0.237
Subjective quality criteria (taste, odor, consistency, color, etc.)	2.757	0.531
Not containing additives	2.472	0.742
Having high water content	2.128	0.808
Having low fat	2.398	0.744
Being low in calories, high in nutritional value	2.352	0.757
Providing food diversity	2.628	0.622
Overall Score	**2.539**	**0.302**

Table 4 shows the statistical findings regarding the questions in the scale of food preferences before marriage.

Table 4. Descriptive results on pre-marital food preferences

	Ort	*SS*
I ate vegetables	3.561	1.047
I ate fruit	3.779	1.052
I had various types of beverages	3.665	1.011
I had milk and dairy products	3.496	1.072
I ate honey	3.282	1.046
I ate eggs	3.788	0.970
I had meat and meat products	3.908	0.839
I had chicken and chicken products.	3.800	0.891
I consumed bread	4.018	0.954
I ate pastries and cake, etc.	3.601	1.026
Total	**3.690**	**0.502**

On this scale, 326 participants were asked whether they agreed with the statements about the foods they preferred before getting married. The statement "I ate meat and meat products" had the highest reported mean score with 3,908 points. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I had various types of beverages" with 3.282 points. The overall mean score of the scale was found as 3.690, and the standard deviation for this mean was 0.502. Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of the scale questions regarding the post-marital food preferences.

Table 5. Descriptive statistical results on post-marriage food preferences

	Ort	*SS*
I eat vegetables	3.880	0.870
I eat fruit	3.954	0.925
I consume various types of drinks	3.506	1.066
I consume milk and dairy products	3.779	0.948
I eat fish	3.493	0.994
I eat eggs	3.975	0.904
I eat meat and meat products	4.018	0.853
I eat chicken and chicken products.	3.809	0.905
I consume bread	3.766	1.032
I eat pastries and cake etc.	3.592	1.005
Overall score of the scale	**3.777**	**0.499**

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics regarding the questions in the marital satisfaction item. As can be seen in the statement "I think I would be happier if I married someone else" had the highest score average (4.650±0.796). Since this statement item was a reverse-worded question, those who disagreed with this statement were found to be the majority. Therefore, this situation can generally be interpreted as the participants scored the most commonly on this question. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I agree with my spouse to participate in social activities such as entertainment, invitations, visits" (3.036±0.883). This statement was found to be the most negatively rated item by the participants on the scale. The overall mean

score of the scale was 3.591±0.539. When the marital satisfaction factor is examined, it can be observed that the couples reported on the statement "I think that I would be happier if I married someone else" which got the highest mean score with 4.650±0.796. Being a reverse-worded question, this statement reached the majority by the participants. In other words, it can be concluded that the couples seem to be happy with the individuals they are currently married to. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I agree with my spouse to participate in social activities such as entertainment, invitations, visits" with 3.036±0.883. It was the most negatively rated statement by the participants on this scale. Thus, it can be claimed that couples are not in harmony when it comes to participating in social activities. One can see that the statement "I think I would be happier if I married someone else" had the highest score average with 4.650 points. Since this statement item was a reverse-worded question, those who disagreed with this statement were found to be in the majority.

Therefore, this situation can generally be interpreted as the participants having scored the most commonly on this question. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I agree with my spouse to participate in social activities such as entertainment, invitations, visits" with 3.036 points. This statement was found to be the most negatively rated item by the participants on the scale. The overall mean score of the scale was 3.591, and the standard deviation for this mean was 0.539.

Table 6. Descriptive statistical results based on marital satisfaction subscale

	M	*SD*
I think I have married the right person	3.447	0.823
I agree with my spouse about participating in social activities such as entertainment, invitations, and visits.	3.036	0.883
Small conflicts in our marriage turn into big problems.	4.352	0.849
I think our marriage is going well.	3.377	0.797
There are times when I think of divorce from my spouse.	4.589	0.801
We resolve disputes with my spouse in a short time.	3.070	0.893
I think I would be happier if I married someone else.	4.650	0.796
When we face problems in our marriage, we discuss the solutions with my spouse.	3.539	0.725
In the face of problems, we act together with my spouse	4.113	0.857
My spouse takes enough time to listen to me.	3.138	0.839
My spouse is my best friend.	3.128	0.812
I like to take care of my spouse.	3.067	0.874
My spouse has a caring attitude towards me.	3.260	0.871
I feel offended when we argue with my spouse.	3.377	0.781
Overall score	**3.591**	**0.539**

Descriptive findings on the item of communication in marriage, which include statements about communication in marriage, are presented in Table 7. In this scale consisting of nine statements, the one with the highest average score was "I can understand the feelings of my spouse's facial expression" with 3.521 points. In addition, the statement "I feel relaxed when my spouse listens to me" seems to draw attention as the second most preferred statement with a mean score of 3.383. The statement "I share the things that upset me with my spouse" was determined as the one with the lowest preferred option with a mean score of 2.871. Considering the overall mean score of the scale, it appears that the scale has a mean score of 3.161 and this value is lower than the mean scores of all other subscale in the questionnaire.

Table 7. Descriptive statistical results for the marriage communication scale

	M	*SD*
I share the things that upset me with my spouse.	2.871	0.874
We make decisions together with my spouse in solving the problems that occur in our marriage.	3.058	0.818
We make decisions with my spouse in the arrangement of the family budget.	3.027	0.971
I am frank with my spouse	3.343	0.751
I can understand the feelings of my spouse's facial expression	3.521	0.645
I feel relaxed when my spouse listens to me	3.383	0.746
I can easily express my thoughts to my spouse	3.251	0.825
I share my problems with my spouse	3.076	0.857
I share my secrets with my spouse	2.923	0.920
Overall mean score	**3.161**	**0.554**

Table 8 illustrates the results of the Wilcoxon test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference between food preferences before and after marriage. According to the table, there was a statistically significant difference between food preferences before and after marriage ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). This situation may be interpreted as changing food preferences before and after marriage.

Table 8. Wilcoxon test findings for food preferences before and after marriage

Variable		N	M	SD	Wilcoxon Test Test score	p
Food Preferences	Pre-marriage	326	3.6902	0.5025	-3.231	**0.001***
	Post-marriage	326	3.7775	0.4991		

*: Referring to statistical significance ($p < 0.05$); M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation

Table 9 illustrates the Spearman Rho correlation coefficients calculated in order to determine the relationship between Near East Marriage Adjustment Scale with its sub-dimensions and food preferences. We revealed that all sub-dimensions of the marital adjustment scale had statistically significant and positive relationships with each other. There was a stronger relationship between marital adjustment and marital satisfaction compared to other subscales (Rho = 0.926; p <0.01). It was also found that statistically significant but weakly positive correlation between empathy and food preferences in the marriage (Rho = 0.132; p = 0.017 <0.05). However, there was no statistically significant relationship between relationships with root families and food preferences (p = 0.587 > 0.05).

Table 9. Spearman Rho correlation analysis results for the relationship between food preferences and marital adjustment with its sub-items

	1	2	3	4	5
Marital Adjustment	0.926** (p<0.01)	0.847** (p<0.01)	0.856 (p<0.01)	0.646 (p<0.01)	0.117* 0.035
Marital Satisfaction (1)		0.685** (p<0.01)	0.737** (p<0.01)	0.532** (p<0.01)	0.110* 0.047
Communication in Marriage (2)			0.713** (p<0.01)	0.421** (p<0.01)	0.162* 0.003
Empathy in Marriage (3)				0.398** (p<0.01)	0.132* 0.017
Relationships with root families (4)					-0.030 0.587
Food Preferences (5)					

**: ($p<0.01$),*: ($p<0.05$)

DISCUSSION

This research aims to investigate the effects of marital adjustment on eating attitudes and behaviors in couples. Considering the studies on nutrients, it appears that the good taste of foods as well as their health is very important in terms of consumption. Brug et al. (1995) has found that satisfaction, especially taste is an important factor associated with fruit and vegetable consumption. The most important criterion while deciding to buy a certain food tends to be taste buds (Holm & Kildevang, 1996). In a study conducted by Contento et al. (1998), it was revealed that people who are fond of the palate pay attention to the taste, while those who care about health in general pay attention to the health of their food (transmitted by Sezek et al., 2008). In this study, married couples prefer to have satisfaction in their food preferences. Especially from an economical point of view, food can be considered within the scope of nutrients which is consumed for living rather than the necessity of a healthy life for individuals. In this regard, it can be claimed that married couples attach importance to food satisfaction in their food preferences.

Considering the food group consumed by couples before and after marriage, meat and meat products seem to have been mostly consumed before marriage, but their preferences have not changed after marriage in the research. In other studies, findings of participants have revealed that the fruit, vegetables, milk, and dairy products are consumed less before marriage,

whereas they tend to increase after marriage (Banovic et all, 2018). Marriage tends to create an order in individuals' lives (Gregerson & Gilliath, 2020). Therefore, it can be stated that individuals who adopt the habit of eating regularly seem to be more conscious about healthy eating.

There has been a statistically significant difference between the food preferences of the participants before and after marriage. When we examine the rates among the participants, we have revealed that the fruit, vegetables, milk, and dairy products are consumed less before marriage and they increase after marriage. Marriage tends to create an order in individuals' lives. Therefore, we may state that individuals who adopt the habit of eating regularly are more conscious about healthy eating.

When the marital satisfaction factor is examined, it is observed that the couples have reported on the statement "I think that I would be happier if I married someone else" which has got the highest mean score with 4.650 points. Being a reverse-worded question, this statement has reached the majority by the participants. In other words, it can be concluded that the couples seem to be happy with the people they are currently married to. The statement with the lowest mean score was "I agree with my spouse to participate in social activities such as entertainment, invitations, visits" with 3.036 points. It was the most negatively rated statement by the participants on this scale. Thus, it can be claimed that couples are not in harmony when it comes to participating in social activities.

Considering the communication in marriage; the statement "I can understand the feelings of my spouse from his/ her facial expression" was the most reported answer. According to this finding, one can conclude that the participant couples tend to regulate their emotions. In a study on the marital communication by Montenegro (2015), it has been concluded that couples who are open to communication, can share their feelings and thoughts, can cope with problems together, and can support each other in all matters, are more compatible and adjusted in their marriages. Based on this study, it can be pointed out that couples understand each other via their communication and emotions with facial expressions.

The statement with the highest mean score to the questions measuring empathy in marriage was "We cannot argue with my spouse without getting angry" with 3.720 points. The statement "I understand my spouse's point of view on events" was determined as the one with the lowest mean score of 3.138 points. According to this result, couples always find themselves in a state of anger whenever they argue. Empathy is being able to feel the emotions of the other person sincerely and experience them "as if they were in their shoes"(Akkoyun, 1982). However, it can also be stated that couples do not tend to have empathy in considering their perspective on There is a statistically significant difference found in food preferences between the group of 5-8 years of marriage and the group of 14-16 years in terms of marital duration. In addition, food preferences seem to have differed between the age group of 5-8 years of marriage and the age group between 10-12 years as well. Regarding the groups that may differ in nutritional preferences according to their educational status, food preferences have been revealed to differ between the university and graduate group and the primary school graduate group. Thus, it can be claimed that educational background is important in nutritional preferences.

Considering the marital adjustment, couples appear to have a high rate of going out for dinner and socializing before marriage. According to this ratio, nutritional education starts before marriage in the family, which is the smallest building block of society, and the individuals maintain such habits for the rest of their lives. In this respect, nutritional training in a family to be given to couples will also constitute the building block of prospective healthy generations.

CONCLUSION

According to the research results, education background is important in healthy nutrition. In this respect, nutritional education in the family can be expanded and this education can be considered in interdisciplinary scopes. The study was conducted in Konya province. A similar study can also be performed by expanding the number in other provinces based on the relevant universe all over Turkey.

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