

## Predictive Role of Attachment Styles and Personality Traits in Marital Adjustment

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### Abstract

*In this study, it was aimed to examine the predictive role of attachment styles and personality traits on marital adjustment. 247 married individuals (127 women, 120 men) participated in the study. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale, Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory, Five Factor Personality Scale and Personal Information Form prepared by the researcher were used as data collection tools. The obtained data were analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient, one-way MANOVA and multiple regression analysis methods. Neuroticism and insecure forms of attachment (anxious and avoidant) were found to be significant predictors of marital adjustment. It was determined that women had a higher level of anxious attachment style. In addition, there was a negative relationship between anxious attachment style and neuroticism and marital adjustment, while a positive significant relationship was found between avoidant attachment style and marital adjustment. The results obtained contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between marital adjustment, attachment and personality traits. Once again, the effect of attachment style on emotional relationship has been revealed. Those working in the field of family and marriage counseling may benefit from these results. While working with couples or married clients, considering their attachment patterns and personality traits can contribute significantly to the therapeutic process. In studies with parents, awareness studies can be conducted on how to develop secure attachment in children.*

**Key Words:** *Marital Adjustment, Attachment Styles, Personality Traits.*

## Baęlanma Biçimleri ve Kiřilik Özelliklerinin Evlilik Uyumunu Yordayıcı Rolü

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### Öz

*Bu çalışmada, bağlanma biçimleri ve kişilik özelliklerinin evlilik uyumunu yordama rolünün incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Arařtırmaya 247 evli birey (127 kadın, 120 erkek) katılmıştır. Arařtırmada veri toplama aracı olarak Çift Uyum Ölçeęi, Yakın İliřkilerde Yařantılar Envanteri, Beř Faktör Kiřilik Ölçeęi ve arařtırmacı tarafından hazırlanan Kiřisel Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler Pearson korelasyon katsayısı, tek yönlü MANOVA ve çoklu regresyon analizi yöntemleri ile incelenmiştir. Nörotiklik özellięi ile kaygılı ve kaçınmacı bağlanma biçimlerinin evlilik uyumunun anlamlı yordayıcıları olduęu sonucuna ulařılmıştır. Kadınların daha yüksek düzeyde kaygılı bağlanma biçimine sahip oldukları saptanmıştır. Ayrıca, kaygılı bağlanma biçimi ve nörotiklik ile evlilik uyumu arasında negatif iliřki bulunurken, kaçınmacı bağlanma biçimi ile evlilik uyumu arasında pozitif yönde anlamlı iliřki bulunmuştur. Elde edilen sonuçlar, evlilik uyumu ile bağlanma ve kişilik özellikleri arasındaki iliřkilerin daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamaktadır. Bir kez daha bağlanma biçiminin duygusal iliřki üzerindeki etkisi ortaya konulmuştur. Bu sonuçlardan aile ve evlilik danışmanlıęı alanında çalışanlar yararlanabilirler. Çiftlerle veya evli danışanlarla çalışırken onların bağlanma örüntülerinin ve kişilik özelliklerinin dikkate alınması terapötik sürece önemli katkı sağlayabilir. Anne-babalarla yapılan çalışmalarda çocuklarda güvenli bağlanmayı nasıl geliřtirebileceklerine dair farkındalık çalışmaları yapılabilir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Evlilik Uyumunu, Bağlanma Biçimleri, Kiřilik Özellikleri.*

## **Introduction**

Although individuals develop many interpersonal relationships in the development process, marriage is accepted as the most important interpersonal relationship throughout life and is universally considered an essential structure for every society (Gottman, 1993; Kelly and Conley, 1987). In this context, marriage is regarded as a critical experience in individuals' lives. It is defined as the most basic human relationship on establishing family relationships and creating future generations (Larson and Holman, 1994).

Marital satisfaction and marital adjustment emerge as a widely studied research topic in family and marriage therapies (Goldberg, 1992). According to Burgess, Locke and Thomes (1963), marital adjustment is primarily an agreement between men and women on the most fundamental issues. In this context, issues such as budget, common interests, goals, value judgments, expressing feelings, and trust come before us as a priority. Besides, compatible couples complain little or no about their marriage. When research on marital adjustment is examined, we conclude that many variables impact marital adjustment. In recent years, studies in domestic have been investigating variables in relationships such as relationship beliefs (Hamamcı, 2005), value adaptations and conflict resolution styles (Özen, 2006), emotional intelligence (Baba, 2010), attachment (Sığircı, 2010), temperament and character traits (Kansız and Arkar, 2011), marital conflict (Öner, 2013).

In this context, many variables have an impact on marital adjustment. Among these variables, some of the most notable are the attachment patterns and married individuals' personality traits. The current research aims to examine the relationships between attachment forms and personality traits from variables that are thought to be associated with marital adjustment.

## **Relationship between personality traits and marital adjustment**

Attachment is a strong emotional bond that is felt for special people in our life, allowing us to enjoy when interacting with them and relax with their intimacy in our troubled times (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall,

2015). Studies on attachment have primarily focused on infancy and early childhood periods. However, with the development of attachment theory in recent years, a remarkable increase has been observed in studies on attachment styles in adulthood. Given the principle that attachment relationships, one of the most basic principles in attachment theory, continue throughout life, the importance of close interpersonal relationships—such as marriage—and the phenomenon of attachment for adulthood is once again seen. Bowlby (1977) states that attachment is not limited to the childhood period and argues that this period constitutes an infrastructure for establishing close emotional bonds in adult life. He states that childhood attachment styles are significant for many problems such as adult anxiety symptoms, personality disorders, and marital problems. Contemporary models of adult attachment styles deal with theoretical differences regarding attachment in two dimensions. These are anxious attachment and avoidant attachment. Anxiety and avoidance reflect different forms of insecure attachment experienced. Individuals who are prone to anxious attachment are concerned that their partners will reject them, abandon them, or be judged for the worthlessness of their love and interest. On the contrary, individuals prone to avoidant attachment style feel uncomfortable about intimacy and commitment. They have strong negative beliefs about others and their relationships that they develop. These people do not acknowledge the importance of intimacy and interdependence in close relationships and instead argue for independence and self-confidence (Locke, 2008). However, in recent conceptualizations, individual differences regarding adult attachment do not reflect a categorical form but reflect the differences between the two dimensions of insecurity. These are attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Selcuk, Zayas, and Hazan, 2010). In the first dimension, attachment anxiety, there is a strong desire for intimacy, self-protection from romantic relationships, and excessive anxiety about the suitability of the spouse (partner). In the second dimension, the avoidance of attachment makes it possible to feel uncomfortable with intimacy and prefer emotional distance. Similarly, Hazan and Shaver (1994) state that relationship adjustment can be affected from different angles based on attachment styles. Accordingly, it is evaluated that individuals with a predominant anxious attachment style may have doubts and emotional instability about being abandoned by their spouses. For this

reason, they tend to be inconsistent in close relationships and have ideas that their surroundings are similarly inconsistent. The avoided attachment style manifests itself as avoiding close relationships and developing relationships within a certain distance and limits. On the other hand, individuals who have developed a secure attachment generally perceive the outside world in a reliable way that they can be loved and live their close relationships in a consistent, safe, empathetic and supportive manner within this framework. In fact, attachment theory focuses on understanding the nature of our close relationships that last throughout life; in this context, it focuses on different components such as maintaining proximity, seeking security, a secure base, and separation anxiety. Accordingly, within the theory, it is suggested that there will be individual differences in terms of attachment styles, and individuals may have different orientations towards attachment figures. According to attachment theory, the bond between couples and institutional marriage are prototypical attachment relationships experienced in adulthood. Empirical studies show that all adult attachment behaviours such as maintaining intimacy, seeking security, a secure base, and separation anxiety are met. According to the results of the research conducted among different age groups and individuals who have different relationship statuses such as married, living together, dating, fully developed attachment and attachment behaviours are observed more in our relationships with parents and romantic partners (Fraley and Davis, 1997; Trinke et al. Bartholomew, 1997). In adulthood, romantic attachment is at a higher level than parent attachment, and it is suggested that spouses replace parents as the primary attachment figure in this period (Feeney, 2002). In this context, studies on separation also support that the marital relationship is an attachment relationship. According to the study's findings, the reactions individuals show when they are separated from their spouses in the marriage relationship are similar to the reactions shown when the caregiver is separated in the early period (Feeney, 2002; Fraley and Davis, 1997).

Studies have emphasized that attachment styles are effective on the quality of the marital relationship. In general, there are explanations that people with a secure attachment style have a higher marital adjustment (Erbek, Beştepe, Akar, Eradamlar, and Alpkan, 2005; Heene, Buysse, and Van Oost, 2007). In the study of Hazan and Shaver (1994), it was stated

that the marital adjustment of couples with secure-secure attachment styles was much higher than couples with secure-insecure or insecure-insecure attachment. Besides, it is suggested that the reactions of insecurely attached individuals are related to situations such as fear of closeness, pessimism, desperation, and inadequate trust in themselves and others (Waring, Patton, Neron, and Linker, 1986). Senchak and Leonard (1992) state that spouses who show secure attachment can establish closeness in their relationships and experience less verbal aggression and conflict. Similarly, securely attached individuals tend to be able to mutually share their feelings and develop supportive and harmonious relationships with their spouses (Solmuş, 2010). Sümer (2006) states that individuals who have developed secure attachment shape their relationships on the basis of trust and positive emotions, and therefore have low levels of anxiety and avoidance. On the other hand, Mikulincer and Florian (2003) state that individuals who have developed avoidant attachment are not sufficiently compatible in a low trust relationship and avoid relating to the idea that close relationships are unnecessary. On the other hand, Saavedra, Chapman, and Rogge (2010) show in their study that individuals who use anxious and avoidant attachment styles have low relationship adjustment. Similarly, studies are showing that as the level of anxious attachment, which is included in insecure attachment patterns, increases, the marital adjustment levels of spouses decrease (Mondor, McDuff, Lussier, and Wright, 2011; Pollard, Riggs, and Hook 2014; Tulum, 2014; Young, Riggs, and Kaminski, 2017).

### **Personality Traits and Marital Adjustment Relation**

Personality traits, another variable of the research, has an important place in the psychology literature. Many studies suggest that personality traits and attachment styles are highly interrelated variables (Collins and Read, 1990; Nettle and Shaver, 2006). The relevant literature states that personality structure generally has a strong effect on interpersonal relationship dynamics. Personality traits have been discussed in various studies as a fundamental factor in explaining the relationships of couples. Research results suggest an association between personality traits and significant life events such as spouse selection, marital adjustment, and divorce

(Craig and Olson, 1995; Nemecek and Olson, 1999). Researchers have tried to determine which personality traits are related to marital adjustment. It is stated that having some personality traits leads to a decrease in marital adjustment and more conflict (Craig and Olson, 1995). Karney and Bradbury (1995) emphasized that having healthy personality traits of spouses causes an increase in the level of harmony and satisfaction in the marital relationship. Studies on marital adjustment and personality traits started with Terman's research in the 1940s. Since those years, studies on personality traits and marital adjustment have concentrated on three groups. In the first group, how personality traits of individuals predict marital adjustment and the relationships between them; in the second group, similarities and differences between spouses' personality traits and their relationship with marital adjustment; The last group focused on the relationships between the personality trait and marital adjustment of the spouse (Chen et al. 2007). In a study conducted by Kely and Conley (1987), the most important predictor of divorce or non-divorce and marital dissatisfaction was determined as neuroticism. In another study conducted in Japan (Kitamura et al. 1995), it was found that low emotional balance in women and low psychoticism in men are associated with a higher level of marital adjustment. When the literature is examined, there are studies showing that there is a positive relationship between dyadic adjustment and compliance and responsibility characteristics (Cundiff, Smith, and Frandsen, 2012; Gattis, Berns, Simpson and Christensen 2004). O'Rourke, Claxton, Chou, Smith, and Hadjistavropoulos (2011) and Özaydınlık (2014) showed in their study that extraversion and dyadic adjustment are related. There are also studies showing that there is a negative relationship between neuroticism and dyadic adjustment (Bouchard, Lussier, Sabourin, 1999; Denizci, 2015; Fisher Terri, and McNulty James, 2008).

Personality traits are critical in understanding the wishes of the spouses. In the context of measuring basic personality traits, the Five-Factor Model has become a widely used and accepted model. In the context of the Five-Factor Model, personality traits consist of five dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. A significant relationship was found between the dimensions of neuroticism and extraversion and marital adjustment. Low

emotional balance indicates poor marital adjustment. The low marital adjustment was also associated with anxiety, poor impulse control, inferiority complex, and hypersensitivity to criticism. Different results were obtained in studies on the dimension of extraversion (Nemechek and Olson, 1999). Low agreeableness and high neuroticism were considered as problems causing problems between spouses. The agreeableness feature appears as a feature that increases marital adjustment in terms of providing skills such as cooperation and making decisions together in close relationships (Somer, Korkmaz, and Tatar, 2002). When the relevant studies are examined, studies that show that there is a positive relationship between agreeableness, emotional stability, and marital adjustment of the spouses stand out in the literature (Cundiff, Smith, and Frandsen, 2012; Gattis, Berns, Simpson, and Christensen, 2004). Similarly, according to another research result, it is seen that there is a positive relationship between extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness factors and marital adjustment. It is observed that individuals with a high level of neuroticism also have an increased tendency to perceive life events negatively, and their marital adjustment is lower in this context (Denizci, 2015; Fisher and McNulty, 2008; Özyaydınlık, 2014; Erişti, 2010; Tuzcu, 2017). Claxton, O'Rourke, Smith, and DeLongis (2012) examined the relationship between personality traits and marital adjustment of married individuals in their study. According to the results, it was seen that there was a negative relationship between marital adjustment and the neuroticism factor. In the study conducted by Özden and Çelen (2014), it was determined that there is a positive relationship between extraversion and openness to experience and marital adjustment and a negative relationship neuroticism and marital adjustment. In another study by Lester, Haig, and Monello (1989), a significant relationship was found between the male being introverted and the female being extroverted and marital adjustment. In addition, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience sub-dimensions were determined as dimensions related to marital adjustment (Nemechek and Olson, 1999). Some researchers have emphasized the importance of being similar in terms of personality traits in choosing a partner. According to the research results in this context, the similarity, especially in the conscientiousness dimension, was found to be highly correlated with the choice of partner in terms of men and women.



Apart from the conscientiousness dimension in which individuals tend to choose their spouses from people with similar personality traits, agreeableness and openness to experience dimensions are also found to be highly correlated (Nemeczek and Olson, 1999). In another study by Zoby (2005), a negative relationship was found between neuroticism and marital adjustment and a significant relationship between openness to experience and agreeableness sub-dimensions.

The low marital adjustment and the intense emergence of problems lead to the wear of marriages and an increase in divorce rates (Fincham and Bradbury, 1987). Therefore, a better understanding of the factors that affect marital adjustment will contribute to establishing healthier and long-lasting marriages.

**The research questions developed concerning the general purpose of the research are listed below.**

1. Is there a significant relationship between attachment styles and personality traits, and marital adjustment?
2. Is there a significant difference in terms of attachment styles, personality traits and marital adjustment according to the gender variable?
3. Do attachment styles predict marital adjustment significantly?
4. Do personality traits predict marital adjustment significantly?

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This research is descriptive research questioning the current situation and is designed in relational scanning model. Descriptive studies are carried out to enlighten a situation, make evaluations and reveal possible relationships between events, explain and describe the situation under study (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak-Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, 2016). The study's primary purpose is to examine the relationships among the variables that are thought to affect the marital adjustment of married individuals, attachment styles, and personality traits. The predicted variable of the study is

marital adjustment, and the predictive variables are attachment styles and personality traits.

## **Participants**

The study population of the research consists of married individuals who live in the city centre of Diyarbakır and have spent at least one year in their marriage. The convenience sampling method was used in determining the study group. The convenience sampling method is to select the sampling from easily accessible and practicable to eliminate the limitations in terms of time and workforce (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak-Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, 2012). The data of 22 participants were not included in the analysis due to various reasons such as incomplete and incorrect filling and extreme values. 51% (127) of the participants are female, 48% (120) are male participants. The average age of the participants was found to be 38.6 (SD = 9.9).

## **Data Collection Tools**

In the study, "Personal Information Form" was used to determine the characteristics of the participants regarding their personal information, the "Experiences in Close Relationships Scale" to assess adult attachment styles, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale to determine the marital adjustment levels, and the Five-Factor Personality Scale to assess personality traits.

***Personal Information Form:*** The Personal Information Form was prepared to obtain information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants and their marriages.

***Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS):*** Dyadic Adjustment scale, the 32-item consisting of 4 sub-dimensions, developed by Spainer in 1976 to evaluate the quality, harmony and quality of a marriage or emotional relationships of individuals, can be used for both married and unmarried couples. The scale is Likert type, and its scoring is 0-4; 0-5; It ranges from 0-6. Items 1-22, 25-28, and 32 are scored on a scale from 0 to 5. Items 23 and 24 are scored on a scale from 0 to 4. Items 29 and 30 are scored on a scale from 0

to 1. Item 31 is scored on a scale from 0 to 6. Also, two items were arranged as yes / no questions. Two types of scores are obtained from the scale as sub-dimension scores and total score, and the total score range varies between 0 and 151. High scores indicate that relationship quality is perceived as high. In the standardization study conducted by Fıfılođlu and Demir (2000) in our country, the Cronbach alpha value obtained for the total score from the scale was .92, for the satisfaction of the couple .83; .75 for the couple's cohesion; .75 for the consensus of the couple; It was determined as .80 for affectional expression. Split half method validity of the test was .86, and the criterion-related validity value was .82. Within the scope of this research, the Cronbach alpha value made over the total score of the scale was determined as .85.

***The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR):*** The Experiences in Close Relationship Scale (ECR), developed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998), measures the anxiety experienced in close relationships (self-model) and avoidance of others (others- model), which are two fundamental dimensions of attachment. It contains a total of 36 items, 18 items for each dimension. Participants evaluate each item's extent using seven-point scales (1 = does not describe me at all; 7 = completely describes me). The adaptation of the ECR, which will be used in the research, into Turkish and the validity and reliability studies were carried out by Sumer and Gungor (1999). Cronbach alpha coefficients for avoidance and anxiety dimensions of ECR were found as .90 and .86. Within the scope of this research, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the avoidance and anxiety dimensions of the scale were determined as .81 and .83.

***Big Five Inventory (BFI):*** Big Five Personality Scale was developed by Benet-Martinez and John (1998) and consisted of 44 items. This scale, which was prepared briefly in terms of practical and rapid evaluations by researchers, measures the dimensions of "emotional balance (neuroticism)", "extraversion", "openness to experience", "agreeableness", and "conscientiousness". The adaptation of the scale to Turkish is a study (Schmitt, Allik, McCrae, and Benet-Martinez, 2007) on the self-definition profiles and patterns of people in 56 countries. The Turkey scope of the study was made by Sumer, Lajunen, and Ozkan (2005). In another study,

it was stated that Cronbach's alpha reliability values of the five-factor personality dimensions ranged from .64 to .77. Within the scope of this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the sub-dimensions of the scale were found as .65 for the neuroticism sub-dimension, .69 for the extraversion sub-dimension, .64 for the agreeableness sub-dimension, .67 for the conscientiousness sub-dimension, and .72 for the openness to experience sub-dimension. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient calculated over the total score of the scale was found to be .72.

### **Data Analysis**

The data obtained from the research were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 package program. The operations performed in the results section can be summarized as follows: In the first section, the mean and standard deviation values of the scale scores obtained from the scales applied in the research are included. In the second part, the correlation between attachment styles, personality traits and marital adjustment scores were examined. In the third part, necessary analyzes were made using the one-way Manova technique to determine whether men and women differ in attachment styles, personality traits and marital adjustment. In the last part, standard multiple regression and hierarchical regression analysis were used to determine the variables that predict marital adjustment. Before performing the multiple regression analysis, the assumptions were tested, and extreme values were determined. When the correlations between the predictor and the predicted variables were examined, it was seen that there was no multicollinearity problem; when the scatter diagram was examined, the linearity condition was met, there was no singularity problem, and the distribution showed a normal distribution. The extreme values were determined, taking into account the Mahalanobis criterion value. Before the regression analysis, it should be evaluated whether there is a multicollinearity problem between the independent variables. The multicollinearity problem arises when the correlation coefficient between variables is  $r = .09$  and above. However, if the tolerance value is lower than .20 and the variance amplification factor (VIF) value is higher than .10, there is a multi-connection problem. The study determined that the assumption that there were no multiple connections was verified by controlling the

VIF and tolerance values. The tolerance values of the variables are between .50 and .95; VIF values vary between 1.20 and 1.75.

In Table 1, the mean and standard deviation of the participants' scores from all scales are given.

*Table 1. Average and standard deviation values*

Scales		N	$\bar{x}$	Ss
ECR	Anxious Attachment	247	6.03	.95
	Avoidant Attachment	247	5.13	1.32
DAS	Couple Satisfaction	247	26.69	6.86
	Couple cohesion	247	17.77	5.96
	Couple Consensus	247	22.19	5.24
	Affectional Expression	247	1.18	0.73
BFI	extraversion	247	2.69	.49
	agreeableness	247	3.61	.45
	conscientiousness	247	3.58	.55
	neuroticism	247	2.37	.56
	Openness to experience	247	3.62	.71

In Table 2, Pearson correlation coefficient values are given, showing the relationship level of all variables of the study

*Table 2. Correlation values between variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Anxious Attachment	1											
Avoidant Attachment	-.04	1										
Couple Satisfaction	-.28**	.16*	1									
Couple cohesion	-.23**	.33**	.61**	1								
Couple Consensus	-.23**	.18*	.63**	.57**	1							
Affectional Expression	-.26**	-.00	.37**	.32**	.32**	1						
Couple adjustment total	-.30**	.32**	.87***	.83**	.83**	.39**	1					
extraversion	-.17*	.04	.01	.03	.06	-.07	.06	1				
agreeableness	-.20	.30*	.09	.12	.22**	.15*	.22**	.16*	1			
conscientiousness	-.30**	.14	.15*	.20**	.25**	.15*	.22**	.32**	.37**	1		
neuroticism	.37**	.08	.08	-.19**	-.16	-.12	-.22**	-.33**	-.13	-.24**	1	
Openness to experience	-.12	.11	.11	.17*	.09	.17*	.18*	.38**	.37**	.40**	-.20**	1

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there are significant relationships between marital adjustment and attachment styles and personality traits. There is a significant negative correlation between couple satisfaction ( $r = -.28, p < .01$ ), couple adjustment ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ), couple consensus ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ), affectional expression ( $r = -.26, p < .01$ ) and anxious attachment. In addition, the relationship between anxious attachment and couple adjustment score ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ) is negative and significant. The relationship between avoidant attachment and couple satisfaction ( $r = .16, p < .01$ ), couple cohesion ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), couple consensus ( $r = .18, p < .01$ ) is positively significant. It is seen that there is a positive and significant relationship between avoidant attachment and couple adjustment score ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ). On the other hand, there is a positive and significant relationship between anxious attachment and negative and neuroticism ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ), extraversion ( $r = -.17, p < .01$ ), agreeableness ( $r = -.20, p < .01$ ), conscientiousness ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ). The relationship between avoidant attachment and cohesion ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ) is positive and significant.

One-way Manova technique was used to determine whether men and women differ in terms of attachment styles. The values obtained to test Manova's assumptions (such as normality, linearity, multiple connections) show no serious negligence. As a result of the analysis, the gender variable joint effect is significant [Wilks'  $\lambda = .96, F(2, 176) = 4.03, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ ], there is a significant difference between the genders in the context of the anxious attachment sub-dimension [ $F(1, 177) = 7.48, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04$ ] and it is seen that this difference is in favor of women. In other words, women show more anxious attachment tendency than men. Again, as a result of the one-way Manova analysis conducted to determine whether the couple satisfaction and of all sub-dimensions of couple satisfaction women and men differ or not, the gender variable joint effect is found not to be significant [Wilks'  $\lambda = .95, F(2, 176) = 1.82, p > .05, \eta^2 = .05$ ]. Similarly, as a result of the one-way Manova analysis applied to determine whether men and women differ in terms of personality traits, it has been seen that the gender variable joint effect is not significant [Wilks'  $\lambda = .90, F(5, 154) = 1.12, p > .05, \eta^2 = .04$ ].

**Table 3. Manova Analysis Results to Determine Whether Attachment Styles, Couple Satisfaction and Personality Traits Scores Differentiate According to the Gender Variable**

Source	Variables	Wilks' λ	Sd	Hypothesis (sd)	F	p	η <sup>2</sup>
Gender	Attachment style	.96	732.755	2	4.03	.04*	.04
	Attachment style sub-dimensions	.93	652.452	1	7.48	.005**	.04
	Couple satisfaction	.95	302.552	2	1.82	.071	.05
	Personality traits	.90	300.458	5	1.12	.066	.04

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01

One of the main questions of the study is to determine to what extent different attachment styles predict dyadic adjustment. For this purpose, a standard multiple regression analysis method was used. The results obtained are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Regression analysis results regarding the prediction of attachment styles on dyadic adjustment**

Variables	B	Sd	β	t
Anxious attachment	-.42	.11	-.29	-3.87***
Avoidant attachment	.66	.16	.30	4.13***

Multiple *R* = .42, *R*<sup>2</sup> = .18, Adjusted *R*<sup>2</sup> = .17, *F*(2, 150) = 16.78

\*\*\**p* < .001

When we included anxious and avoidant attachment together into the model, it was seen that the model was significant (*F* (2, 150) = 16.78). Both variables together explain 18% of the variance change in couple adjustment scores. When the contributions of each variable are examined separately, it is seen that both anxious attachment (β = -.29, *p* < .001) and avoidant attachment (β = .30, *p* < .001) significantly predict dyad adjustment. When partial correlations are examined, it is seen that avoidant attachment predicts the couple satisfaction at a higher rate.

So as to determine to what extent different personality traits predict dyadic adjustment, the standard multiple regression method was used. The results obtained are shown in Table 5.

When all the Five-Factor Personality Scale (FFPI) sub-dimensions are taken into the model together, the model is seen to be significant (*F* (5, 152) = 3.77). However, it is seen that only the emotional balance (neuroticism)

dimension ( $\beta = -.19, p < .05$ ) from the sub-dimensions significantly predicted marital adjustment. FFPI scores explain 11% of the variance change in marital adjustment scores. In terms of personality traits, it was seen that the sub-dimension that best predicted marital adjustment was emotional balance. Multiple regression analysis results show that both attachment styles and emotional balance personality traits significantly predict dyadic adjustment.

**Table 5. Regression analysis results on the prediction of personality traits on marital adjustment**

Variables	B	Sd	$\beta$	t
extraversion	-.40	.41	-.08	-.98
agreeableness	.71	.44	.13	1.61
conscientiousness	.50	.37	.11	1.31
neuroticism	-.80	.34	-.19	-2.37*
Openness to experience	.26	.29	.08	.88

Multiple R: .33,  $R^2 = .11$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .08$ ,  $F(5, 152) = 3.77$

\* $p < .05$

## Discussion

The results obtained from the study show that attachment styles and personality traits have an important place among the factors that predict individuals' marital adjustment. In our study, the relationships between marital adjustment and attachment styles and personality traits were examined. In this context, negative relationships were found between anxious attachment and marital adjustment and positive relationships between avoidant attachment and marital adjustment. When the related literature is examined, it has been found that individuals with a secure attachment style generally experience higher marital adjustment than individuals with both anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Cobb, Davila, and Bradbury, 2001; Crowell and Treboux, 1995; Kobak and Hazan, 1991). Regarding the result obtained, it is thought that individuals with an avoidant attachment style prefer to stay away from discussion about the problems they experience or postpone the conflict issue to a later date. As a result of these behaviors, temporarily postponing the problems or not addressing them for a certain period of time can have a positive effect on marital adjustment.



Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) stated that there is a significant relationship between the secure attachment style of both spouses and marital adjustment, and individuals who are securely attached produce more constructive solutions in solving marital problems compared to individuals who are insecurely attached. Lussier, Sabourin, and Turgeon (1997) concluded that avoidant and anxious spouses express more stress related to marriage than those who are securely attached. On the other hand, Senchak and Leonard (1992) stated that both securely attached couples experienced more intimacy and less verbal violence and divorce than couples with mixed attachment styles, such as securely attached and the other insecure.

In studies examining the relationship between attachment styles and marital adjustment, it is seen that although the negative relationship between anxious attachment style and marital adjustment is generally compatible with the relevant literature, there are few different results in terms of the relationships between avoidant attachment and marital adjustment. Similarly, in the studies conducted by Sümer and Güngör (1999), which examined the psychometric evaluation of adult attachment styles scales on the Turkish sample, the researchers discussed the results opposite to what was expected among the variables related to the indifferent attachment style. The authors found that apart from the indifferent attachment style, the findings were consistent with the studies conducted in the west. Still, in the international literature, the indifferent attachment style was similar to the secure attachment style with the variables examined (such as self-esteem, sociotropy-autonomy, trait anxiety). In this context, it was concluded that the indifferent attachment style could not be clearly defined in the Turkish sample. One of the questions for which an answer was sought in the study is whether there are significant differences between the two genders in terms of attachment styles, marital adjustment and personality traits. As a result of the Manova analysis, it was found that women tend to attach more anxiously in terms of attachment styles. This result is consistent with the current research results on the subject (Collins and Read, 1990; Hazan and Shaver, 1994; Karney and Bradbury, 1995). It is claimed that women with anxious attachment experience intense jealousy, insecurity, separation anxiety, anger and abandonment anxiety in their relationships with their partners. In addition, it is among

the results that women experience intense emotional ups and downs and are more sensitive to their partners' emotional expressions and body language movements. On the other hand, there is a case of inconsistent interpersonal experiences in the form of anxious attachment and constant hesitations about the loyalty of spouses. In addition, individuals with an anxious attachment tend to live their relationships faster and more intensely. Similarly, it is thought that anxious attachment individuals' tendency to exaggerate the small, insignificant, short-term events they experience may affect their relationship satisfaction and marital adjustment in general, and this situation will have adverse effects on their marital adjustment (Locke, 2008).

In a study conducted by Mikulincer and Erev (1991), it was found that individuals with a secure attachment style attach more importance to the concepts of intimacy and passion than individuals with avoidant attachment styles, and they experience more intimacy than individuals with anxious and avoidant attachment style. It was found that individuals with the avoidant attachment style showed more attachment to the relationship with the individuals with the secure attachment style than the individuals with the anxious attachment style. These findings can be explained as individuals with the avoidant attachment style are happy because they want to be away from their partners due to low intimacy, and anxious individuals are unhappy because they prevent establishing safe and warm relationships in terms of the same variable. In the intimacy dimension, which is one of the most fundamental concepts in terms of attachment, it is thought that not meeting this dimension in terms of anxious attachment and negative self-model, meeting this dimension in terms of avoidant attachment and positive self-model has important implications in terms of marital adjustment.

Baucom, Epstein, Sayers, and Sher (1989) defined five cognitive categories that affect marital adjustment and marital satisfaction. These are; selective attention, uploads, expectations, assumptions and standards. In this context, many studies have shown that anxious attachment affects relationship satisfaction more than avoidant attachment. These people, who always need to seek closeness in the form of anxious attachment and seek constant approval of their love, exaggerate the negative experiences they

have with their spouses more, prefer more emotional methods when solving problems, and instead of solving the problem by using these emotional methods, they make the situation even more severe. Therefore, it is thought that people with high attachment anxiety have more conflict with their partners and have lower relationship satisfaction. In the form of avoidant attachment, there are studies in which results that do not correspond to our research results are obtained. In a study conducted by Kirkpatrick and Davis (1994), it was found that individuals with avoidant attachment style experienced less relationship commitment and satisfaction than individuals with secure attachment style.

Between personality traits, another variable of the study, and marital adjustment, it was seen that only neuroticism, among the dimensions of BFI, contributed to predicting the decline in marital adjustment. As a result of the hierarchical regression analysis, it was found that when attachment styles were taken under control, the neuroticism dimension still significantly predicted marital adjustment. This result obtained between the neuroticism dimension and marital adjustment is consistent with the results of the related literature. In addition, positive correlations were found between the neuroticism sub-dimension and anxious attachment and between the dyadic adjustment, dyadic consensus, and dyadic adjustment sub-dimensions negatively. Personality traits that include the neuroticism sub-dimension include being anxious, insecure, nervous, changing quickly, and excited. The scope of attachment theory states that individuals with anxious attachment style have similar characteristics (Barelds, 2005). In a 50-year longitudinal study conducted by Kelly and Conley (1987) with 300 married couples, the neuroticism dimension was associated with low marital satisfaction and high marital separation and relationship deterioration levels. In many studies, negative results were obtained between marital adjustment and neuroticism (Kitamura et al., 1995; Shaver and Brennan, 1992; Snyder and Regts, 1990). Neuroticism sub-dimension is evaluated concerning anxiety, poor impulse control, hypersensitivity to criticism, and feelings of worthlessness (Snyder and Regts, 1990).

There are different explanations about how the neuroticism dimension affects marital adjustment or negatively affects marital adjustment. It has

been suggested that anxious, insecure, self-dealing, angry, anxious, inadequate coping mechanisms can give hostile reactions tend to overreact to adverse events in marital relationships (Bradbury and Fincham, 1993). It is stated that constantly making negative attributes of events and individuals can negatively affect marital adjustment. In addition, it is noted that the neuroticism dimension is closely related to insecure attachment styles, especially anxious attachment, so it will negatively affect marital adjustment (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). The negative effect of personality traits on marital adjustment has been explained with the "Tendency Stress Adaptation Model". This model suggests that three main factors affect marital adjustment. These factors are stressful life events, adaptation process and vulnerability dimensions. In this context, it has been recommended that neurotic individuals have a poorer ability to cope with stress in their daily lives. On the other hand, the dimension of extraversion is positively associated with positive emotions and problem-focused coping (Karney and Bradbury, 1995). The negative relationship between anxious attachment and extraversion from the results obtained in our study supports this result.

As with every research, this research has some limitations. The first of the limitations is that the sample size is low. The study was conducted with individuals from a certain geographic region and culture with a relatively high level of education. This situation limits the generalizability of the research findings. Another limitation is that the data were collected from married individuals. If data were collected from married couples, it would be better to understand how mutual attachment patterns affect marital adjustment. Finally, the research data were obtained with self-report tools and had specific limitations to self-report instruments.

## **Results**

In conclusion, in the present study, it was found that the anxious attachment style, avoidant attachment style, and neuroticism personality dimension were strong predictors of marital adjustment. Another result is that there is a difference between men and women in terms of attachment styles in terms of gender, and women tend to attach more anxiously. While the negative relationship between anxious attachment style and the

dimension of neuroticism and marital adjustment is consistent with the findings of the current literature, the positive relationship between avoidant attachment style and marital adjustment is not compatible with the findings of the current literature. It can be evaluated that the differences between east-west culture, gender role patterns and expectations may be effective on the results obtained with avoidant attachment. Focusing on the attachment patterns and personality traits of mental health professionals working with individuals who have problematic emotional relationships, whether married or not, may contribute positively to the success of the process. It is thought that sharing about the importance of the attachment pattern and how it may affect the future relationships of the individual in parent education and informing them about what they can do for the development of secure attachment behaviour in their children will make a significant contribution to the quality of emotional and social relationships that individuals will experience in the future.

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