




Research Article

Development and Validation of the Empathy Scale in Marriage for Turkish Cultural Context*

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Abstract

The study aims to develop the scale of empathy in marriage. For the validity and reliability analysis of the scale, 638 data were collected from three different sample groups. To test the construct validity of the scale, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Criterion validity analysis were performed. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated for reliability. Result of the EFA indicated that the scale is one-dimensional and has good load values. The one-dimensional structure of the scale explains 50% of the total variance. Acceptable fit indices [$\chi^2/df = 2.977$, RMSEA= .075, SRMR= 0.05, CFI= 0.954, RFI= 0.897, IFI= 0.954] was obtained in CFA. Criterion validity analysis shows that the scale has criterion validity ($r = .472$; $p < .001$). The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient (.876) of the scale shows that the reliability of the scale is high. The results obtained from the study show that the marital empathy scale is valid and reliable.

Keywords:

Empathy • Empathy in marriage • Scale development

Türkiye Kültürü Bağlamında Evlilikte Empati Ölçeğinin Geliştirilmesi ve Geçerliliği

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı evlilikte empati ölçeğinin geliştirilmesidir. Ölçeğin geçerlik ve güvenilirlik analizleri için üç farklı örneklem grubundan toplam 638 veri toplanmıştır. Ölçeğin yapı geçerliğini test etmek için Açıklayıcı Faktör Analizi (AFA), Doğrulayıcı Faktör Analizi (CFA) ve Ölçüt geçerliği analizi yapılmıştır. Güvenirlik için Cronbach Alpha iç tutarlık katsayısı hesaplanmıştır. Açıklayıcı faktör analizi sonucunda ölçeğin tek boyutlu olduğu ve iyi yük değerlerine sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Ölçeğin tek boyutlu yapısı toplam varyansın %49,984'ünü açıklamaktadır. Doğrulayıcı faktör analizinde kabul edilebilir uyum indeksleri [$\chi^2/sd = 2.977$, RMSEA= .075, SRMR= 0.05, CFI= 0.954, RFI= 0.897, IFI= 0.954] elde edilmiştir. Ölçüt geçerliği analizi ölçeğin ölçüt geçerliğine sahip olduğunu göstermektedir ($r = .472$; $p < .001$). Ölçeğin Cronbach Alpha iç tutarlık katsayısı (.876) ölçeğin güvenilirliğini yüksek olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlar evlilikte empati ölçeğinin geçerli ve güvenilir olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Empati • Evlilikte empati • Ölçek geliştirme

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An indispensable feature of healthy interactions, empathy is a concept making it easier to understand, to be understood, and to establish effective communication in interpersonal relationships. Empathy indicates the ability to sense the situations others experience (Maibom, 2014), to see their emotions and thoughts from their point of view (Bellet & Maloney, 1991), and to react suitably, going beyond merely understanding emotions (Carrol, 2014). The capacity to consider oneself in the circumstances of another person, to comprehend their thoughts and feelings, and to imagine the things they go through constitute the general characteristics of empathy (Coplan, 2011).

Since the concept of empathy includes understanding each other and sharing each other's feelings, it has a strong connection with culture. The cultural and social characteristics that make up the cultural structure of society shape the way of living and expressing the emotions in that society. For this reason, it is easier for individuals in the same culture to understand each other. From this point of view, to understand cultural differences in psychotherapy, the relationship between empathy and culture (Ridley & Lingle, 1996; Dyche & Zayas, 2001; Chung & Bemak, 2002) and the relationship between spiritual values, which are an element of culture, and empathy (Bradley, 2009; Huber & MacDonald, 2012; Giordano, Prosek, & Lankford, 2014). Rogers stated that the relationship between empathy and culture should be considered in psychological counseling. While empathizing with the client, trying to understand the client's worldview and cultural values will facilitate empathy (Rogers, 1961). According to Kağıtçıbaşı (2000), human development should be evaluated together with the culture in which they live. Because the culture in which a person grows up provides an important idea in understanding his behavior and the reasons for his behavior. Therefore, the spiritual values in our (Turkey) culture, close relationships, people coming together in situations such as illness and mourning, sharing each other's troubles, sharing each other's joys are features that require measuring empathy specific to our culture. Likewise, marriage and family relations are also affected by these characteristics of the culture. For this reason, developing an empathy scale in marriage will make it easier to accurately measure empathy in a marriage relationship. At the same time, since this scale was developed in our society, it will enable us to determine communication and empathy within the family in culturally sensitive interventions more accurately.

As far as marriage relationships are concerned, the interaction of spouses with one another plays a crucial role in the evaluation of the quality of the marriage concerned. Since communication is a vital component of marriage; having good communication skills, understanding one another, and sharing the feelings of one another would make the marriage better and more meaningful. Owing to the importance of empathy in marriage, there is a considerable body of research dealing with empathy in marriage. There are studies dealing with empathy in marriage within the context of

communicative skills, conflict resolution styles (Soylu & Kağnıcı, 2015), marriage satisfaction (Blackmon 1999), marriage compatibility (Dağlı, 2017; Tutarel-Kışlak & Göztepe, 2017), altruism (Yeşilkayalı, 2015), and forgiveness (Alpay, 2009; Fincham, Paleari & Regalia, 2002; Paleari, Regalia & Fincham, 2005). One can see that these studies make use of empathy scales. The review of the existing literature reveals various scales such as an empathy scale for children (Yılmaz Yüksel, 2003), for prospective teachers (Koçak & Önen, 2013), within the sports environment (Erkuş & Yakupoğlu, 2001), for children and adolescents (Gürtunca, 2013), and a basic empathy scale (Topçu, 2008). However, in the search conducted in Google Scholar and EBSCO, no measurement tool was found to specifically measure empathy in marriage. It is known that empathy, which is encountered in all areas of life and enables people to understand each other, is important in marriage relations. Considering the importance of empathy in the marital relationship, which enables spouses to understand each other better and to intervene more easily and constructively on the problems they face, the lack of a measurement tool that will directly measure empathy in marriage is the main reason why this study is necessary. In addition, the fact that this scale will be developed taking into account the family structures in our culture will be beneficial for culture-sensitive interventions in family therapy. For this reason, this study aims to develop the scale of empathy in marriage and bring it to the literature. It is planned to develop an empathy scale in marriage to help the psychological counseling process and facilitate the work of researchers who will work on the marriage.

Methodology

Study Group

The study group consists of married individuals. During the scale development stage, the data required was collected from 351 people (214 women and 137 men) for the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), from 242 people (155 women and 87 men)

Table 1.
Demographic information of the participants.

	Groups	Exploratory Factor Analysis		Confirmatory Factor Analysis		Criterion Validity	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex	Female	214	61	155	64	22	48.9
	Male	137	39	87	36	23	51.1
	Total	351	100	242	100	45	100
Duration of marriage	0-5 years	132	37.6	104	43	17	37.8
	6-10 years	113	32.2	65	26.9	21	46.7
	11-20 years	76	21.7	53	21.9	5	11.1
	21 years or longer	30	8.5	20	8.3	2	4.4
	Total	351	100	242	100	45	100
Number of Children	None	65	18.5	46	19	12	26.7
	1	115	32.8	63	26	13	28.9
	2	114	32.5	86	35.5	12	26.7
	3 or more	57	16.2	47	19.4	8	17.8
	Total	351	100	242	100	45	100

for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and from 45 people (22 women and 23 men) for criterion validity. In line with the purpose of the study, a voluntary consent form was obtained from the participants to collect data in 2019. Ethics committee approval was not required due to the approval of the participant. Information on the data collected for analysis is given in the table.

Item Writing Process and Content Validity

A pool of 23 items was created for the empathy in marriage scale. The scale items created for the empathy in marriage scale were sent to 15 people consisting of Associate Professors in the field of measurement and evaluation as well as Professors and Assistant Professors in the field of Psychological Counselling and Guidance (PCG), all of whom are at least in the doctoral thesis stage. 13 of these individuals reviewed the items in line with the guidelines provided by the researcher and provided feedback. Based on the feedback given by the experts, the content validity of the scale items was calculated. The Lawshe (1975) technique was used for the calculation of content validity. At the end of the evaluation by 13 experts, 4 items were excluded from the pool. To examine the remaining 19 items in terms of language and comprehensibility, the items were applied to 30 university students. Then, the scale was prepared for use based on the feedback provided.

Measuring Tools

Toronto Empathy Scale: Developed by Spreng and colleagues (2009), the “Toronto Empathy Scale” was adapted for the Turkish language by Totan, Doğan and Sapmaz (2012). Originally consisting of 16 items and based on a 5-point Likert structure (1: Not suitable at all, 5: Completely suitable), the scale was edited to be 13 items in the Turkish adaptation with the exclusion of 3 items with factor loads below .30. The EFA and CFA analyses revealed the scale to be a unidimensional scale fit to the original structure of the scale. The internal consistency reliability coefficient was calculated as .79. The reliability coefficient after the test-retest method with 2-week intervals was found to be .73. Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12 are scored reversely. The maximum possible score on the scale is 65. A higher score signifies a higher level of empathy and vice versa.

Findings

Validity

Exploratory Factor Analysis: Firstly, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to test the structure validity of the empathy in marriage scale. In order to do so, the initial step was to examine the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett values

to see whether the scale is suitable for the exploratory factor analysis [(Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient = .897, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (χ^2) = $\chi^2 = 2686.559$; $p < .001$)]. The KMO and Bartlett values show that the scale data is suitable for factor analysis. The factor analysis conducted after this confirmation reveals that the scale is unidimensional. Figure 1 shows the unidimensional structure of the scale. The unidimensional structure of the scale explains 49.984% of the total variance. Figure 2 shows the factor loads for scale items (the lowest load: .574; the highest load: .801).

Table 2.
Scree Plot Chart

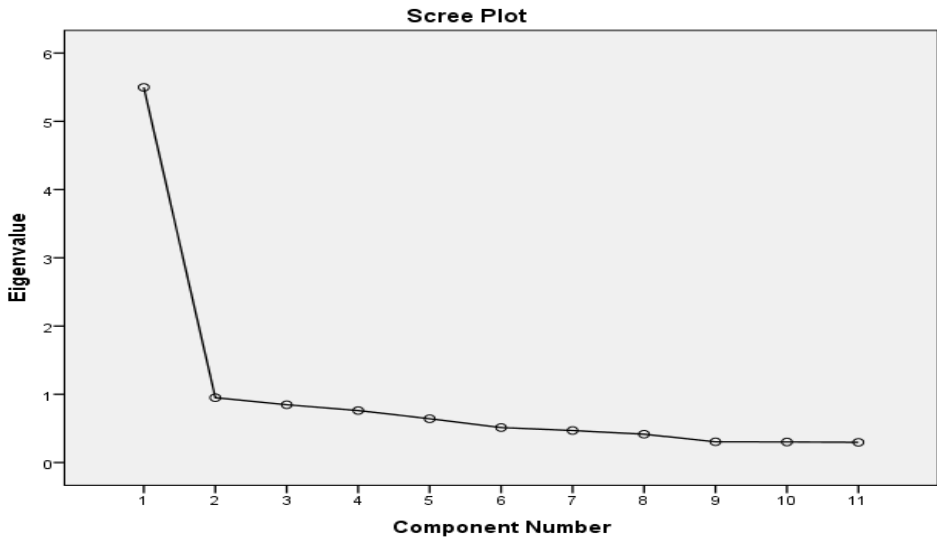


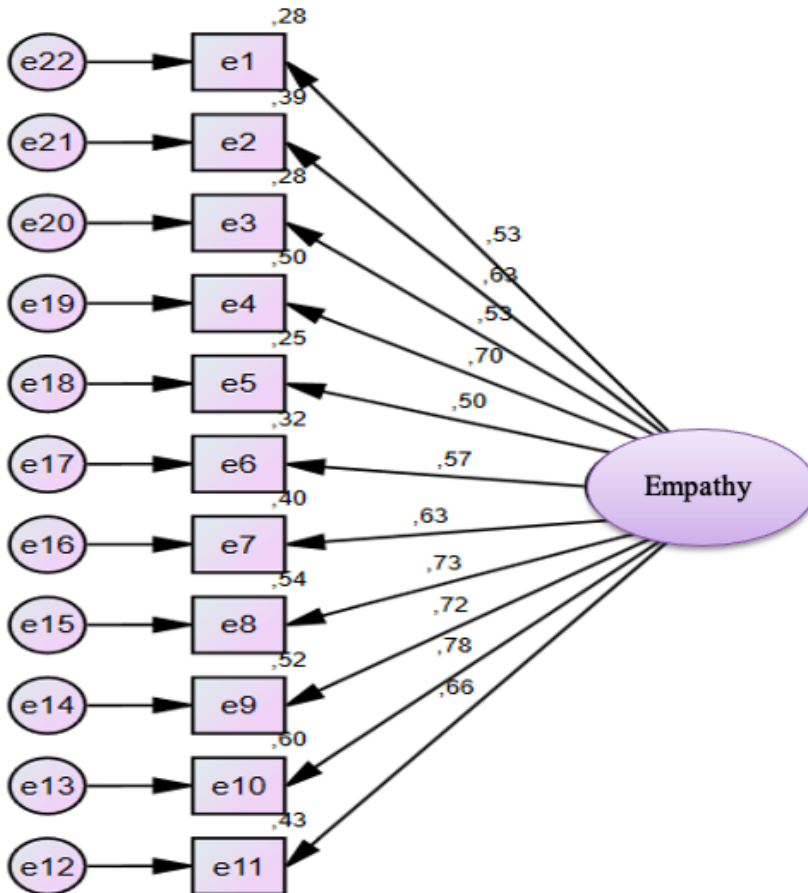
Table 3.
Item Load Values

Items	Item Loads
Empathy17	.801
Empathy19	.782
Empathy4	.758
Empathy18	.754
Empathy6	.747
Empathy16	.729
Empathy2	.698
Empathy3	.646
Empathy15	.626
Empathy1	.622
Empathy10	.574

Confirmatory Factor Analysis: This section discusses the confirmatory factor analysis conducted to test the unidimensional structure of the empathy in marriage scale consisting of 11 items resulting from the exploratory factor analysis. The findings of the confirmatory factor analysis show that the scale displays good fit

and acceptable fit values [$\chi^2 / sd = 2.977$, RMSEA = .075, SRMR = 0.05, CFI= 0.954; RFI= 0.897, IFI= 0.954]. Figure 2 shows the path diagram generated for the confirmatory factor analysis. These results show that the unidimensional structure of the scale is verified through the confirmatory factor analysis.

Model 1.
Empathy in marriage scale CFA results



Criterion Validity: The empathy in marriage scale was applied along with the Toronto empathy scale on a sample group of 45 individuals. The analyses revealed a significant positive relationship between the total scores obtained from the Toronto Empathy Scale and those from the Empathy in Marriage Scale ($r = .472$; $p < .001$). These results indicate that the Empathy in Marriage Scale developed here displays criterion validity.

Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the empathy in marriage scale developed in the study was calculated as .876. Furthermore, the item-total test correlation and the score differences between top and bottom groups of 27% were examined to identify the distinctive power of the items. The correlation coefficient values between items and the overall test seemed to be greater than .40 for all items (lowest: .472; highest: .686). Furthermore, as the score averages of the top and bottom groups of 27% displayed a significant difference, it can be claimed that the distinctive power of the items is high ($p < .001$).

Conclusion and Discussion

The concept of empathy is an important element of interpersonal communication and the quality of communication. With this feature, empathy also has an important place in the marriage relationship. The family structure is affected by the culture of the society in which it is located. The fact that empathy is also related to culture (Dyche & Zayas, 2001; Chung & Bemak, 2002) and spiritual values (Bradley, 2009; Huber & MacDonald, 2012) shows that culture can be taken into account in studies on marriage and empathy. Human development is not independent of culture (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000). The personal characteristics of individuals are affected by the cultural structure they are in (Egan, 2011). Culture has an important role in the successful execution of psychological counseling (Erdur-Baker, 2007). This role of culture in the development of the individual should also be taken into account in family structure and family therapy. In this study, a scale was developed to measure empathy in family relations, taking into account the family structures in our society. Since this scale aims to measure empathy directly in the marital relationship, it will make an important contribution to studies on understanding empathy in marriage. Family relationships and communication styles are features that are directly affected by the cultural structure of society. For this reason, it is thought that this scale, which was developed in the context of family structures in our society, will be useful in culturally sensitive family therapies.

The first analysis conducted on the empathy in marriage scale was the exploratory factor analysis. Initially, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett values were examined, which are prerequisites for the analyses. Büyüköztürk (2002) considers the load values of 0.60 or greater to be high and values ranging between 0.30 and 0.59 as mid-level. Based on this consideration, particular attention was paid so that each item would display a value greater than 0.50, which led to the exclusion of lower-value items. The analyses revealed that the scale is unidimensional and that its items display acceptable load values (Lowest: 574; Highest: 801). The results indicate that the single dimension constituting the empathy in marriage scale explains 49.984% of the total variance. This value is between the threshold between 40% and 60%, which is acceptable in the field of Social Sciences (Tavşancıl, 2010). The scale consists of 11 items in total. The score obtained within the

scope of the scale indicates the total score in terms of empathy in marriage. Considered to be acceptable for the overall scale in values greater than .70, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient exceeded this threshold for the scale with a value of .876. The internal consistency coefficient is usually deemed acceptable when it is .70 or higher (Büyüköztürk, 2015; Kalaycı, 2010). As the value approaches 1, internal consistency increases. Furthermore, the results obtained for criterion validity ($r=.472$; $p<.001$) indicate the satisfaction of this condition. The confirmatory factor analysis results for the empathy in marriage scale validates the structure validity of the scale. The CFA shows that all items display load values greater than .50. This indicates that all items on the scale bear sufficient amounts of loads. In addition, the values obtained from the confirmatory factor analysis show that the scale has good fit and acceptable fit values. χ^2/sd ratio is less than 5, IFI and CFI values are greater than 0.90, RMSEA and SRMR values are lower than 0.10 are considered as appropriate values for model fit of the scale (Schermelell-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003; Şimşek, 2007; Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, Büyüköztürk, 2007). The confirmatory factor analysis confirms the results of the exploratory factor analysis, revealing that the scale satisfies the condition of structure validity.

Analyzes made with a data group of 638 people in this study show that the "Empathy in Marriage Scale" is a valid and reliable scale to measure empathy in marriage. However, collecting the data with the help of an online form and the lack of test-retest reliability are the limitations of this study. The validity and reliability of the scale can be retested by using other data collection methods. In addition, it can be investigated whether the scale gives similar results at different times by performing test-retest reliability.

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