



The Effects of Intra-Family Communication Patterns on Marital Satisfaction in Married Couples: An Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) Analysis

Evli Çiftlerde Aile İçi İletişim Kalıplarının Evlilik Doyumuna Etkisi: Aktör-Partner Karşılıklı Bağımlılık Model Analizi

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effects of family communication patterns (conversation and harmony orientation) of married couples on both individual marital satisfaction and their spouses' marital satisfaction within the framework of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM). The sample consisted of 150 married couples selected through convenience sampling. Participants completed a personal information form, the Family Communication Patterns Scale, and the Marital Life Scale. Two separate APIM analyses were conducted: one model tested the effects of harmony orientation, and the other examined on conversation orientation as predictors of marital satisfaction. The results showed that conversation orientation positively predicted both individual and partner marital satisfaction, while harmony orientation had no significant effect. These findings highlight the importance of open communication over traditional harmony in fostering marital satisfaction. The study underscores the relevance of the APIM framework for understanding dyadic processes in Turkish culture and suggests that couple therapy interventions should emphasize conversation-based strategies to enhance relationship quality.

Keywords: Family communication, marital satisfaction, APIM, couple relationships.

Öz

Bu çalışmada evli çiftlerin aile iletişim örüntülerinin (diyalog ve uyum yönelimi) hem bireysel evlilik doyumu hem de eşlerinin evlilik doyumu üzerindeki etkilerini Aktör-Partner Bağımlılık Modeli (APIM) çerçevesinde araştırmak amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın örneklemini kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen 150 evli çift oluşturmuştur. Evli çiftlere kişisel bilgi formu, Aile İletişim Örüntüleri Ölçeği ve Evlilik Yaşamı Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Eşlerin aile iletişim örüntüleri ile evlilik doyumu arasındaki aktör-partner ilişkilerini araştırmak için temel bir APIM modeli kullanılmıştır. Bağımsız değişken aile iletişim örüntülerinin alt boyutları dikkate alınarak iki ayrı APIM modeli analiz edilmiştir. Birinci modelde aile uyum yönelimi değişkeni (yordayıcı değişken) ve evlilik doyumu (sonuç değişkeni) değişkenleri dikkate alınmıştır. İkinci modelde aile diyalog yönelimi değişkeni (yordayıcı değişken) ve evlilik doyumu (sonuç değişkeni) değişkenleri dikkate alınmıştır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma aile iletişim kalıplarının, özellikle diyalog yöneliminin hem bireysel hem de çift düzeyinde evlilik memnuniyetini olumlu yönde etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur. Buna karşılık, uyum yöneliminin evlilik memnuniyeti üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmaması, ilişkisel memnuniyetin yalnızca geleneksel uyuma değil, aynı zamanda açık iletişime ve karşılıklı anlayışa da dayandığını göstermektedir. Bu araştırma bulguları, APIM modelinin Türk kültüründe uygulanabilirliğini göstererek literatüre hem teorik hem de metodolojik katkılar sunmaktadır. Ayrıca çift terapisinde diyalog temelli müdahalelerin önceliklendirilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aile iletişimi, evlilik memnuniyeti, APIM, çift ilişkileri.

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Introduction

Communication is a dynamic and evolving process that is influenced by cultural, social, psychological, and technological factors and is an integral part of human interaction (Babasoy, 2025). It is defined as a social behavior and described as “the exchange of meaning between individuals through a means of communication” (Scherer, 2012). Communication not only facilitates interaction between individuals, but also plays a critical role in the continuity of society and the construction of social structures. One can refer to the concept of society by considering the entirety of interpersonal communication (Cüceloğlu, 2012). Marrying someone and forming a family is often the result of a positive interpersonal communication network.

Marriage is one of the fundamental social structures that affect the life satisfaction, psychological well-being and social connectedness of individuals. Healthy maintenance of this relationship depends largely on the communication dynamics between couples. Intra-family communication encompasses communication between children and their parents, between parents, and between siblings. Healthy family communication requires an environment where every member of the family can freely express themselves, where a democratic mind-set prevails, and where family members trust each other. Family communication not only facilitates the exchange of information, but also contributes to meeting the emotional needs of individuals, developing a sense of belonging, establishing healthy social relationships, and building social skills (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008; Dönmezler, 2009). Healthy communication within the family has a decisive impact not only on the psychological well-being of individuals, but also on marital satisfaction. Children who grow up in an environment of healthy communication will develop into individuals who are confident, who have high self-control and self-esteem, and who are aware of their boundaries and responsibilities. The opposite is true for family environments where unhealthy communication prevails (Dönmezler, 2009; Şahin & Aral, 2012). In particular, communication patterns based on mutual interaction between married couples can affect the satisfaction individuals derive from marriage at both individual and mutual levels (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Falconier et al., 2015).

Along with all this, individuals’ communication with each other follows regular patterns in line with the general structure of the family. Patterns of communication within the family are shaped by how individuals express their feelings and thoughts to each other, how they resolve conflicts, and how they respond to each other. In this context, Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994) examined family communication styles in terms of two basic dimensions: ‘conformity orientation’ and ‘conversation orientation.’ While conversation orientation encourages family members to establish open and supportive communication with each other (Erdoğan, 2020), conformity orientation is based on loyalty to authority and traditional values, obedience to rules, and the restriction of individuality (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). These patterns define the boundaries of family members and provide the necessary environment for expectations to be recognised. The family types that emerge as a result of the interaction of these two dimensions (e.g., consensual, pluralistic, protective and indifferent families) are environmental factors that can directly affect the relational functioning and marital satisfaction of individuals (Chaffee & McLeod, 1972; Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 1997).

In ‘consensual family’ types, which prioritise both orientations (conversation and conformity) equally, both conversation orientation and conformity orientation are high. They accept rules from the past and are also open to innovation. Families with a high conversation orientation but a low conformity orientation have been classified as ‘pluralistic family types’ in the literature. These families are open to innovation and exploration, and they are able to express themselves and engage in discussion without fear of damaging their social relationships. Families with low conversation orientation but high conformity orientation are ‘protective families.’ In these families, family members tend to accept existing rules rather than

discuss them. Different opinions are not welcomed or accepted. In 'indifferent family types' that do not emphasise any particular orientation, both conformity and conversation orientation are low. What individuals do does not concern or affect each other within the family (Chaffee & McLeod, 1972).

The conversation orientation dimension is defined as the extent to which families create an environment where all family members engage in unrestricted interaction on a wide variety of topics, confront conflicts as they arise, and where parents foster openness, independence, and autonomy within their marriage. The conformity orientation dimension, on the other hand, indicates the degree to which family communication emphasizes the homogeneity of attitudes, values, and beliefs (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). The effects of these two fundamental dimensions of family communication on actual family communication are generally interrelated. In other words, rather than having primary effects on family communication, these two dimensions are generally in interaction with one another. Therefore, knowing only one dimension is insufficient to predict how it affects family communication; knowledge of the other dimension is also necessary. For example, to predict a family's communication patterns, it is not sufficient to know that the family scores high on the harmony orientation dimension, because its effect on family communication depends on the family's conversation orientation and its opposite (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Attachment is defined as strong emotional bonds that an individual forms with people who are important to them, involving a search for continuity and security. According to the attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1969), these bonds are shaped particularly through interactions with caregivers in early childhood, laying the groundwork for the formation of "internal working models" that include the individual's expectations of themselves and others. These models determine how the individual experiences fundamental dynamics such as trust, intimacy, and dependence in relationships. Attachment theory was later adapted to adult relationships, and it was argued that romantic relationships are also attachment relationships. Hazan and Shaver (1987) showed that the patterns of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors observed in adult romantic relationships parallel the attachment styles developed in childhood. In this context, secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles explain how individuals regulate their needs for intimacy, emotional sharing, fear of abandonment, and independence in romantic relationships. In terms of couple relationships, attachment is considered a fundamental structure that determines the quality of the emotional bond between partners.

When communication patterns and marital satisfaction are examined from a theoretical perspective, it can be seen that individuals with a secure attachment style are able to communicate more openly and have higher marital satisfaction when evaluated within the context of attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). In contrast, anxious or avoidant attachment styles have been associated with withdrawal or defensive behaviour in communication, which has been found to lead to low marital satisfaction (Simpson & Rholes, 2017). Therefore, attachment styles play a decisive role in the quality, duration, and conflict resolution processes of romantic relationships.

From a systems theory perspective, the family is viewed as a system, and the behaviour of each individual within this system affects the other members (Minuchin, 1974). From this perspective, communication patterns can be decisive not only upon an individual's marital satisfaction but also upon their partner's satisfaction. Marital satisfaction comes not only from individual behaviour but also from mutual interactions between couples (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). It is emphasized that close relationships significantly affect physical health and well-

being, and therefore, dualistic approaches are important in understanding these effects (Kara et al., 2022).

In research on married couples, dual approaches are crucial because relationship outcomes depend not only on individual factors but also on the characteristics of both spouses and the dynamics of the relationship. Özdaş and Akcanbaş (2025), in their study investigating couple compatibility in married couples, found significant differences based on type of marriage, duration of marriage, and number of children, but no significant differences based on gender, education level, and employment status.

The quality of dual relationships affects relationship maintenance, and this is influenced by individual characteristics and subjective perceptions of the relationship. It is important to consider couple effects instead of individual effects and to take measurements from both partners to investigate the impact on the spouse/partner (Cook, 1998). Studies in the literature focus on simultaneous or intra-year effects on both individuals and spouses, and take measurements from both partners (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Therefore, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) is frequently used in research examining interpersonal relationships (romantic couples, parent-child and sibling relationships) (Kenny & Ledermann, 2010).

The importance of actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) (Cook & Kenny, 2005) is emphasised in the literature in order to clarify the interdependence between couples and to test the possible actor and partner effects. APIM bases interactions between couples on two fundamental factors: actor effect and partner effect. Actor effect refers to the impact of one person's behaviour on another person's behaviour, while the partner effect refers to how one person's behaviour influences another person's behaviour. This model provides a powerful methodological framework for understanding the impact of communication on couples' satisfaction levels, particularly in relationships such as marriage where there is a high degree of mutual dependence (Kenny et al., 2006). Recent studies have also shown that communication styles between couples affect marital satisfaction at the couple level. For example, Falconier et al. (2015) showed the effect of stress on marital satisfaction through the quality of communication in couple relationships, while Rogers et al. (2021) emphasised how actor and partner influences change with contextual and cultural factors. This is because cultural values, traditional roles, and social norms have a high potential to shape communication patterns between couples and, consequently, marital satisfaction (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe 2007; Masood & Mazahir, 2015; Lavner et al., 2016; Li et al., 2022).

Parsakia et al. (2023) aimed to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflicts using the APIM. The study's findings show that emotional intelligence has a significant impact on marital conflicts for both men and women. Specifically, women's emotional intelligence was found to have a significant impact on both their own and their spouses' marital conflicts, while men's emotional intelligence had a significant impact on marital conflicts for both men and women. Knox et al. (2023), in their study on the relationship between emotional intelligence and marital conflicts using the actor-partner interdependence model, found that APIM results revealed that spouses' emotional intelligence had a significant actor effect on marital conflicts. It was also found that spouses' emotional intelligence had a significant partner effect on their spouses' marital conflicts.

In Turkish culture, studies using the APIM model with couples and different variables are encountered. Sakmar-Bakan and Fışıloğlu (2017) used the Actor-Partner Dependence Model (APIM) in their study examining the potential mediating role of perceived social support in the relationships between affect, negative life events, and marital adjustment within the

framework of the vulnerability-stress-adjustment model in marriage. A series of path analyses were conducted to test the model by controlling for marriage duration, number of children, and the educational levels of the couples through APIM. As a result, it was found that men with high positive affect and low negative life experiences perceived their social support as high, and this predicted high marital adjustment.

In their study examining the mediating role of marital adjustment in the relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction in terms of actor and partner effects, Ünal and Akgün (2022), found that both spouses' and husbands' positive problem-solving styles predicted their own marital satisfaction through marital adjustment, and that husbands' positive and negative problem-solving styles predicted both their own and their spouses' marital satisfaction through marital adjustment. Kuru (2022), conducted a study aimed at examining the mediating role of relationship satisfaction in the relationship between commitment and emotional manipulation with 221 couples aged 18 to 29, who were in the new adulthood stage and had been dating for at least 6 months. In the study, which applied the Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM), it was concluded that the relationship between commitment and emotional manipulation was partially mediated by relationship satisfaction for both partners. In a study examining the impact of childhood maltreatment on psychological well-being, Erdinç (2025) utilized the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) to analyze the relationship between childhood psychological abuse and depression susceptibility among married couples. The findings revealed significant actor effects for both men and women, indicating that an individual's own history of psychological abuse is a significant predictor of their current depression levels. Furthermore, the study identified significant partner effects, demonstrating that the levels of childhood psychological abuse experienced by one spouse also positively predicted the other spouse's depression susceptibility. In her study titled "Psychological Abuse, Personality Trait Awareness and Marital Quality: Actor-Partner Interdependence Model" Akçıl (2026) found that awareness significantly mediated the relationship between psychological abuse and relationship quality at both the actor and partner levels. In partner effects, one partner's experience of abuse predicted relationship quality through the other partner's awareness. These findings suggest that higher levels of awareness, both individual and partner-focused, can mitigate the negative effects of psychological abuse on relationship quality.

However, studies evaluating the mutual interaction between marital satisfaction and communication patterns by using the APIM model are quite limited in Turkish culture. Although the study conducted by Erkılınç (2020) is one of the pioneering studies in this field, more studies are needed to systematically examine the effect of family communication patterns on marital satisfaction directly at the couple level. In this context, this study aims to address family communication not only as an individual characteristic but also as a dynamic process shaped by mutual interaction between couples, and to provide an analysis based on unique and empirical foundations within a cultural context. In this way, it aims to contribute both theoretically and practically to fields such as couples' therapy, family counselling, and marriage education.

APIM is a model that is used to analyse the interaction between matched data. This model makes it possible to determine not only the effect of an independent variable measurement of one member of a pair on the dependent variable measurement of the same member (actor effect), but also the effect on the dependent variable measurement of the other member (partner effect). Figure 1 shows the APIM diagram. Path A in Figure 1 shows the 'actor

effect' and path P shows the 'partner effect' (Kenny et al., 2006).

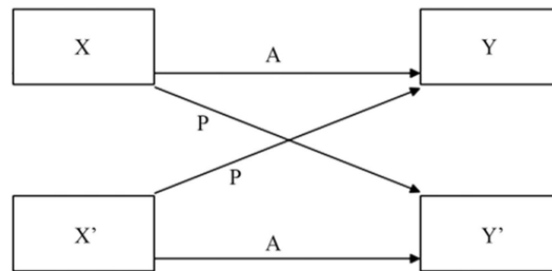


Figure 1. Actor-partner interdependence model

The present study aims to analyse the effects of marital communication patterns (conversation and conformity orientation) among married couples in Turkish culture on both the spouse's own marital satisfaction and the marital satisfaction of their spouses within the framework of APIM. For this purpose, X and X' in Figure 1 represent the intra-family communication pattern variable of two members of a family, while Y and Y' represent the marital satisfaction variable of two members of a family. In line with the defined objective, the following research questions and hypotheses were addressed, taking into account the sub-dimensions of intra-family communication patterns:

Research Question 1: What is the effect of intra-family conversation orientation on marital satisfaction?

Q1.1: Do wives' and husbands' own intra-family conversation orientation patterns have direct effect on their own marital satisfaction (direct actor effect)?

Hypothesis 1a: Wives' intra-family conversation orientation patterns affect their own marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b: Husbands' intra-family conversation orientation patterns affect their own marital satisfaction.

Q1.2: Do wives' and husbands' own intra-family conversation orientation patterns have direct effect on their partners' marital satisfaction (direct partner effect)?

Hypothesis 1c: Wives' intra-family conversation orientation patterns affect their partners' marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1d: Husbands' intra-family conversation orientation patterns affect their partners' marital satisfaction.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of intra-family conformity orientation on marital satisfaction?

Q2.1: Do wives' and husbands' own intra-family conformity orientation patterns have direct effect on their own marital satisfaction (direct actor effect)?

Hypothesis 2a: Wives' intra-family conformity orientation patterns affect their own marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Husbands' intra-family conformity orientation patterns affect their own marital satisfaction.

Q2.2: Do wives' and husbands' own intra-family conformity orientation patterns affect their partners' marital satisfaction (direct partner effect)?

Hypothesis 2c: Wives' intra-family conformity orientation affect their partners' marital satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2d: Husbands' intra-family conformity orientation patterns affect their partners' marital satisfaction.

1. Methods

1.1. Research Model

In this study, the research is in the correlational screening model since it is aimed to reveal the relationships between the family communication patterns of married couples and marital satisfaction variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

1.2. Participants

The sample for the present study consists of 150 married couples selected by using convenience sampling method. Kenny et al. (2006) recommend a minimum sample size of 80 for bivariate analysis. The distribution of participants in terms of age at marriage, duration of marriage, type of marriage, and number of children is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of participants in terms of certain variables

Variable	Distribution	Wife Frequency	Percentage (%)	Husband Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29	44	29.3	34	22.7
	30-39	81	54.0	86	57.3
	40-49	22	14.7	25	16.7
	≥50	3	2.0	5	3.3
Duration of marriage (Years)	1-5	53	35.4	53	35.4
	6-10	38	25.3	38	25.3
	11-15	42	28.0	42	28.0
	≥20	17	11.3	17	11.3
Type of marriage	Marriage of love	125	83.3	125	83.3
	Arranged marriage	25	16.7	25	16.7
Number of children	0	33	22.0	34	22.7
	1	47	31.3	45	30.0
	2	46	30.7	44	29.3
	3	15	10.0	18	12.0
	≥4	9	6.0	9	6.0

When the age distribution of participants is examined, it can be seen that the most common age group for both women (54.0%) and men (57.3%) was 30–39 years old. In terms of marriage duration, the largest group consists of those who were married for 1–5 years (35.4%), while the rate of participants who were married for 20 years or more was 11.3% for both genders. In terms of the type of marriage, it was found that the vast majority of couples (83.3%) married for love, while only 16.7% married through arranged marriages. In terms of

the number of children, the most common group consisted of those with one child (31.3% for women and 30.0% for men), while the rate of those without children was approximately one-fifth (22.0% for women and 22.7% for men). These findings show that the sample consisted largely of middle-aged couples who had been married for a relatively short period of time, those who had married for love, and those who had one or two children.

1.3. Data Collection Tools

Family Communication Patterns Scale (FCPS): Turkish validity and reliability study of the Family Communication Patterns Scale was conducted by Erdoğan and Anık (2018). The scale was first developed by McLeod and Chaffe in 1972. Subsequently, the problems with the scale were identified, and it was revised. In 1990, L. David Ritchie and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick developed the Revised Family Communication Patterns Scale (Erdoğan and Anık, 2018). In the present study, the revised version of the Family Communication Patterns Scale from 1990 was used.

The scale consists of 26 items and includes two sub-dimensions: conversation orientation and conformity orientation. All items on the Family Communication Patterns Scale are five-point Likert type; the rating of the scale ranges from 1-‘Strongly Disagree’ to 5-‘Strongly Agree’. The score obtained from the first 15 items of the 26 items indicates conversation orientation (e.g., “I can tell my parents almost anything”), while the score obtained from the last 11 items indicates conformity orientation (e.g., “My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs”). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the construct validity of the scale. As a result of examining the scale items by using the principal component method, two factors with eigenvalues above 1 were identified. The eigenvalue of the first factor (conversation orientation) was 9.158, explaining 35.218% of the variance. The eigenvalue of the second factor (conformity orientation) was 5.965, explaining 22.946% of the variance. The total variance explained by these two factors was 58.164%. The results of the analysis conducted for criterion-related validity showed that the conversation orientation dimension of FCPS had a positive correlation with the acceptance/interest dimension ($r=0.76$, $p<0.01$) and democracy dimension ($r=0.68$, $p<0.01$) and a negative correlation with authoritarian dimension ($r=0.19$, $p>0.01$), while conformity orientation dimension had a positive correlation with psychological autonomy dimension ($r=0.68$, $p<0.01$) and authoritarian dimension ($r=0.71$, $p<0.01$). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted for construct validity showed that CMIN/DF = 3.849; GFI = 0.913; CFI = 0.948, indicating that these values are acceptable, and RMSEA = 0.053, indicating good fit.

Cronbach’s alpha value was examined to test the reliability of the scale. Cronbach’s alpha value for the conversation orientation dimension was found to be 0.88, while that of the conformity orientation dimension was found to be 0.81. Test-retest results were found to be 0.81 for conformity orientation and 0.71 for conversation orientation.

Marital Life Scale: Marital Life Scale was developed by Tezer (1996) to assess the satisfaction couples derive from marriage. In order not to influence the individuals who will participate in research, the scale was named marital life scale rather than marital satisfaction scale. Except for three items, there are no reverse-scored items. The scale consists of a total of 10 items, all of which are five-point Likert type; they are rated from 1-‘Strongly Agree’ to 5-‘Strongly Disagree’. The highest possible score on the scale is 50, and the lowest possible score is 10. Test-retest reliability of the scale was .85, and the Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient was .91 in the first study and .89 in the second study. A t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the scores of married and divorced individuals, and a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups. This

finding shows that married individuals and divorced individuals differ in terms of their overall level of satisfaction with their marital relationship. In order to examine the extent to which they were affected by the social desirability orientation of the scale, no significant relationship was found between the scores obtained from the Marital Life Scale and the Personal Behaviour Questionnaire ($r = .21$). This finding shows that marital life was only slightly affected by social desirability tendencies.

1.4. Analysis of Data

Data analysis was carried out in two stages: preliminary analysis and APIM analysis. Preliminary analyses included missing data analysis, identification of outliers, normality checks, and correlation coefficients for multicollinearity were calculated.

First, the data set was examined for missing data, and no missing data was found. The Mahalanobis Distance method was used to identify multivariate outliers in the data set, and the results were $\chi^2(6, N=150) = 22.46, p = .001$. Chi-square values were determined according to the critical values of the chi-square table, and p-value was selected as .001 to reduce the margin of error. Since only two pairs had chi-square values above the table chi-square value, the data for these pairs were deleted. Normality of data was examined through descriptive statistics and Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients of variables. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for marital satisfaction and sub-dimensions of family communication, namely intra-family conformity and intra-family conversation scores, separately for women and men.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of scores obtained from women and men

Group	Variable	Min-Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach Alpha
Wives	Marital satisfaction	17-50	42.53	6.22	-0.95	0.82	0.93
	Intra-family conformity	15-55	35.06	8.40	0.06	0.18	0.90
	Intra-family conversation	16-75	47.41	12.77	-0.57	0.14	0.93
Husbands	Marital satisfaction	19-50	43.05	5.67	-0.88	1.72	0.90
	Intra-family conformity	15-75	34.25	9.16	0.34	-0.13	0.92
	Intra-family conversation	15-75	46.82	12.44	-0.31	0.27	0.94

Table 2 shows that the Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients are between the critical values of ± 2 (George & Mallery, 2016). In this context, it can be said that the scores obtained from the scales do not deviate excessively from normality. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was used to examine whether there was a problem of multiple correlation between the variables. The correlation coefficients found are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Marital satisfaction						
1. Wives	-					
2. Husbands	.71**	-				
Intra-family conformity						
3. Wives	-.12	-.05	-			
4. Husbands	-.05	.09	.36**	-		
Intra-family conversation						
5. Wives	.37**	.18*	-.68**	-.16*	-	
6. Husbands	.29**	.33**	-.36**	-.57**	.36**	-

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

When the correlation coefficients in Table 3 are examined, it can be seen that all coefficients are significant ($p < .01$) and that the correlation coefficients do not exceed a value of .90. This indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem.

After preliminary analyses, a basic APIM model was used to examine the actor-partner interactions between spouses' patterns of family communication and marital satisfaction. The actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) is used to analyse paired data because it is a method that takes into account the fact that the data are not independent (Cook & Kenny, 2005). In the present study, two separate APIM models were analysed, taking into account the sub-dimensions of the independent variable of family communication patterns. The first model considered the intra-family conformity orientation variable (predictor variable) and the marital satisfaction variable (outcome variable). The second model considered the intra-family conversation orientation variable (predictor variable) and the marital satisfaction variable (outcome variable).

The web application for dyadic data analysis called APIM_SEM was used to test the APIM, which made use of the lavaan analysis package. The web application APIM_SEM (available at https://apimsem.ugent.be/shiny/apim_sem/) was used because it enables direct performance of the statistical analyses for APIM and the production of figures representing the path diagrams (Stas et al., 2018).

It was deemed ethically appropriate with the letter dated 25.11.2022 and numbered 2022-1032 of Ondokuz Mayıs University Rectorate Ethics Committee.

2. Results

2.1. Research question 1: Intra-family conversation orientation as a predictor of marital satisfaction: An APIM analysis

The relationship between marital satisfaction and the sub-dimension of intra-family conversation orientation, which is one of the sub-dimensions of the intra-family communication patterns variable, was examined by using the APIM model via APIM_SEM. As the first step in the APIM analysis, a model comparison was performed between a model with distinguishable members and a model with indistinguishable members to test whether gender created a statistically significant difference. (Test of Distinguishability: In order to test if Gender makes a statistically meaningful difference, a model comparison is performed between a model with distinguishable members and a model with indistinguishable members. First, the test of distinguishability was considered as the first step of APIM analysis, the test of distinguishability

revealed a significant result, $\chi^2(6, N = 147) = 12.62, p < .05$). This means that wives and husbands were statistically distinguishable from one another in this specific model based on parameters such as actor and partner effects, error variances and means (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Based on the statistically significant results of the distinguishability test, it was concluded that participants could be statistically distinguished by gender.

APIM analysis results for distinguishable pairs is presented in Table 4. Standard model is presented in Figure 2.

Table 4. APIM Results Assuming Different Actor and Partner Effects for Both Roles

Effect	Role	Estimate	95% CI		p value	Beta	Beta	r
			Lower	Upper				
						(o)	(s)	
Intercept	Women	30.89	26.67	35.11	<.001			
Actor	Women	.15	.07	.22	<.001	.64	.30	.30
Partner	M to W	.10	.02	.18	.013	.22	.20	.20
Intercept	Men	35.29	31.57	39.01	<.001			
Actor	Men	.15	.08	.22	<.001	.32	.34	.32
Partner	W to M	.02	-.05	.09	.564	.04	.05	.05

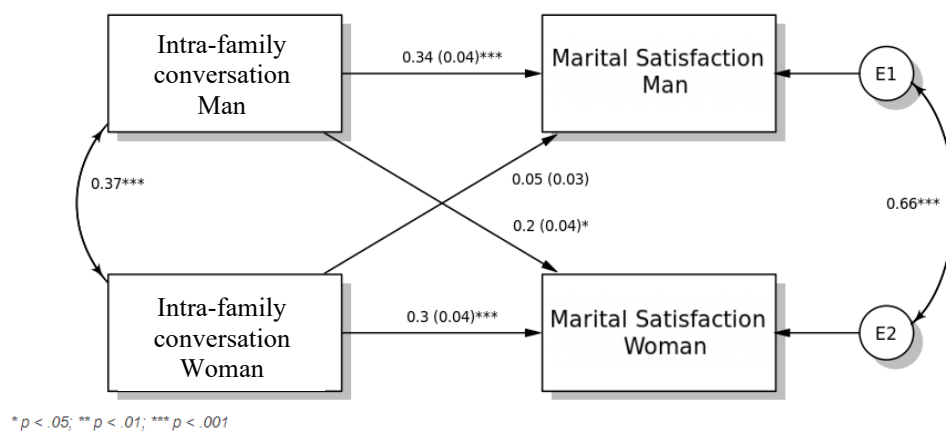


Figure 2. The APIM Models with standardized parameter estimates

The first research question was related to the direct actor effect of both wives and husbands. When the results in Table 4 and Figure 2 are examined, it can be seen that the effect of intra-family conversation orientation on the marital satisfaction of wives ($\beta=.34, p < .001$) and husbands ($\beta=.30, p < .001$) is significant. This result shows that intra-family conversation orientation of both wives and husbands have a positive effect on their own marital satisfaction (actor effect).

The first research question was also related to the direct partner effects of both wives and husbands. When the partner effect was examined, partner effect from husbands to wives was found to be significant ($\beta=.20, p < .05$). This suggests that husbands' intra-family conversation orientation has a positive effect on wives' marital satisfaction. However, the partner effect from women to husbands was not significant ($\beta=.05, p=.56$).

2.2. Research question 2: Intra-family conformity orientation as a predictor of marital satisfaction: An APIM analysis

The relationship between marital satisfaction and intra-family conformity orientation, one of the sub-dimensions of the intra-family communication patterns variable, was examined by using the APIM model with APIM_SEM. As the first step in the APIM analysis, a model comparison was made between a model with distinguishable members and a model with indistinguishable members to test whether gender created a statistically significant difference. (Test of Distinguishability: In order to test if Gender makes a statistically meaningful difference, a model comparison is performed between a model with distinguishable members and a model with indistinguishable members. First, the test of distinguishability was considered as the first step of APIM analysis, the test of distinguishability revealed a significant result, $\chi^2(6, N = 148) = 16.539, p < .05$). This means that wives and husbands were statistically distinguishable from one another in this specific model based on parameters such as actor and partner effects, error variances and means (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Based on the statistically significant results of the distinguishability test, it was concluded that participants could be distinguished statistically by gender.

APIM analysis results for distinguishable pairs is presented in Table 5. Standard model is presented in Figure 3.

Table 5. APIM results assuming different actor and partner effects for both roles

Effect	Role	Estimate	95% CI		p value	Beta	Beta	r
			Lower	Upper				
Intercept	Women	45.82	40.67	50.97	<.001			
Actor	Women	-.09	-.23	.05	.170	-.16	-.12	-.11
Partner	M to W	-.01	-.13	.11	.93	-.01	-.01	-.01
Intercept	Men	42.54	38.07	47.01	<.001			
Actor	Men	.08	-.02	.18	.15	.11	.13	.12
Partner	W to M	-.07	-.19	.05	.26	-.10	-.10	-.09

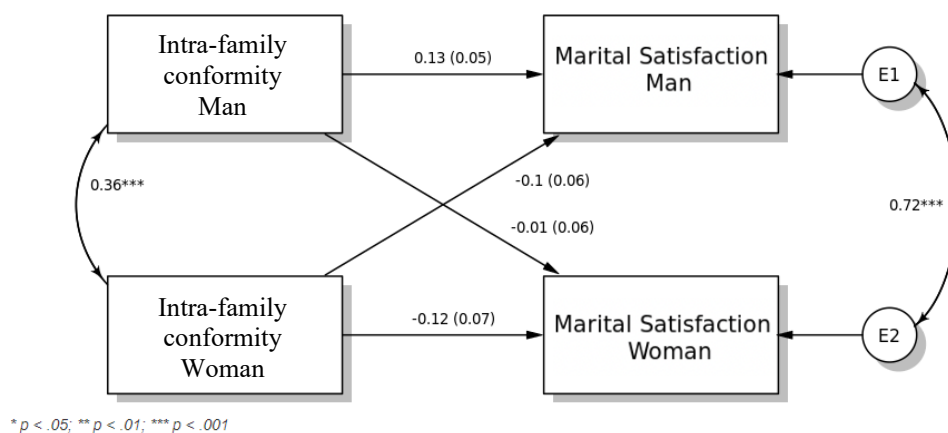


Figure 3. The APIM Models with standardized parameter estimates

When the results in Table 5 and Figure 3 are examined, it can be seen that the effect of intra-family conformity orientation on marital satisfaction of wives ($\beta = -.12$, $p > .001$) and husbands ($\beta = .13$, $p > .001$) is not significant. This result can be interpreted as indicating that neither women's nor men's intra-family conformity orientations have any effect on their own marital satisfaction (actor effect).

When the direct partner effects of both wives and husbands are examined, it can be seen that the partner effect of husbands on wives ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .001$) and the partner effect of wives on husbands ($\beta = -.10$, $p > .001$) is not significant. This suggests that the intra-family conformity orientations of wives and husbands have no effect on their partners' marital satisfaction.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, the effects of married couples' intra-family communication patterns (conversation and conformity orientation) on both their individual marital satisfaction and their spouses' marital satisfaction were examined within the framework of the APIM. APIM offers an important methodological advantage in terms of data analysis in couple relationships because it is based on the assumption that individuals are affected not only by their own characteristics but also by their interactions (Cook & Kenny, 2005; Kenny et al., 2006). In conclusion, this study revealed that family communication patterns, especially conversation orientation, positively affect marital satisfaction at both the individual and couple levels. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that open and two-way communication is a determinant of relational satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 1997; Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2007).

The results of the present study showed that intra-family communication patterns, particularly conversation orientation, positively influenced marital satisfaction at both individual and couple levels. This is consistent with the view that conformity orientation may limit the individual's autonomy and thus negatively affect relational satisfaction (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). In contrast, the lack of a significant effect of conformity orientation on marital satisfaction suggests that relational satisfaction is based not only on traditional conformity but also on open communication and mutual understanding.

The findings indicate that conversation-based interventions should be prioritised in couples therapy and contribute to the literature both theoretically and methodologically by demonstrating the applicability of the APIM model in Turkish culture.

One of the most striking findings of the study was that both women and men reported that intra-family conversation had a significant and positive effect on their marital satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that open and mutual intra-family communication increases marital satisfaction (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Fitzpatrick & Koerner, 1997; Rogers et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with the literature, which emphasises that communication is not only a means of interaction but also a fundamental element in the construction of satisfaction. (Lavner et al., 2016). Fitzpatrick and Ritchie's (1994) theory of family communication patterns argues that open and free communication strengthens family bonds, increases mutual understanding and empathy, and supports the satisfaction individuals derive from relationships. It is well known that in families with a high level of conversation orientation, individuals are able to freely express their feelings and thoughts, participate in decision-making processes, and resolve conflicts through open communication (Chaffe & McLeod, 1972). Similarly, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) argued that individuals in conversation-oriented families are able to express their thoughts clearly, actively participate in decision-making processes, and that this increases the level of emotional

closeness. This is considered an important factor in increasing mutual understanding and satisfaction in marital relationships.

In the present study, the finding that conversation orientations of husbands/men had a significant partner effect on the marital satisfaction of their wives/women provides important insights into the role of interpersonal communication dynamics in marital satisfaction, which is frequently mentioned in the literature (Gottman & Silver, 1999). This finding shows that men's communication skills are decisive in terms of the functionality of marital relationships. Similarly, the literature contains findings which indicate that the way men communicate in marriage has a more pronounced effect on relationship satisfaction of women (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). In particular, men's openness to sharing their feelings makes it easier for women to feel emotionally secure and increases the emotional resilience of the relationship (Fincham & Beach, 1999). This finding is a sign of significant change in societies dominated by patriarchal structures, such as Turkey. In a context where traditional roles encourage men to suppress their emotions and resolve problems internally, men's openness to communication has a healing effect on relationships (Erdoğan, 2020).

However, it is noteworthy that conversation orientation of women does not have a significant partner effect on marital satisfaction of men. Although the literature indicates that conformity orientation is functional in preserving family unity, especially in relationships based on traditional values and authority (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002), it may not be sufficient to explain individual perceptions such as marital satisfaction. Since elements of conformity such as uniform thinking and expectations of obedience can limit individual autonomy, they can negatively affect the perception of satisfaction (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). This result may point to differences in the perception of communication between genders in cultural contexts where traditional gender roles prevail. Men may be less inclined to express or notice their relational satisfaction, and it is possible that the factors determining men's marital satisfaction are related to functional elements (sharing of domestic responsibilities, sexual satisfaction, social support) as well as emotional closeness (Markman et al., 2001). In addition, men's tendency to be less inclined to verbally express their marital satisfaction may be one of the underlying reasons for this difference. Indeed, it can be seen that in Turkish culture, men's emotional expressions and ways of articulating their relational needs are seen to be more limited than those of women (Erdoğan, 2020; Erkilinç, 2020).

The fact that neither the actor nor the partner effect of intra-family conformity orientation on marital satisfaction was found to be significant shows that, contrary to expectations, conformity based on traditional values does not automatically contribute to relational satisfaction. In family structures based on conformity, characteristics such as obedience to authority and suppression of individual opinions may be insufficient to meet the needs for autonomy and individuality within the relationship (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Indeed, Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002) argued that for conformity orientation to have positive outcomes in marital relationships, it must be accompanied by a high level of conversation orientation. In this sense, it is thought that a communication style based solely on conformity may suppress women's individual needs in particular, and that this situation may negatively affect marital satisfaction over time (Kurdek, 2005).

In collectivist cultures such as Turkish society, family values are generally based on hierarchical and traditional structures. In this context, the expected function of communication is usually to ensure 'smoothness.' However, this understanding can hinder open communication and prevent individuals from expressing their own needs. The findings of the present study

show that this structure is changing and that conversation-oriented communication offers a more satisfying structure in marital relationships.

Furthermore, the fact that the study was conducted by using the APIM model also contributes significantly to the literature from a methodological perspective. While traditional analyses take an individual-centred approach, APIM provides a more dynamic analysis by addressing peer-to-peer interactions (Kenny et al., 2006). The adaptation of this model to the Turkish sample is also noteworthy in terms of cultural specificity.

3.1. Limitations and Suggestions

Although the present study provides significant insights into the effects of family communication patterns on marital satisfaction within the framework of the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), it has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, this study was conducted using a cross-sectional design, meaning the data were collected at a single point in time. Consequently, the observed relationships between variables cannot be interpreted on a causal basis. To better establish causality and observe how communication dynamics and marital satisfaction evolve over the duration of a marriage, future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal designs.

Second, the study sample consisted of 150 married couples selected through convenience sampling. This method limits the representativeness of the sample and poses challenges for generalizing the findings to the broader Turkish population. Future research utilizing more extensive, systematic, and diverse sampling methods including couples from various socio-cultural backgrounds would significantly enhance the generalizability of the results.

Third, the data relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias or subjective reflections of the participants. To achieve a deeper and more objective understanding of dyadic processes, future research could benefit from incorporating qualitative data collection methods, such as behavioral observations or in-depth interviews, alongside quantitative scales.

Finally, while this research offers an important local perspective by applying the APIM framework within Turkish culture, the findings reflect the unique values and family structures specific to this society. Therefore, conducting cross-cultural comparative studies would be beneficial in distinguishing the universal versus culture-specific dimensions of the relationship between communication patterns and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the mediating or moderating roles of different psychological variables to provide a more comprehensive theoretical framework for marital quality.

Ethics Committee Approval Certificate/ *Etik Kurul İzni*: It was deemed ethically appropriate with the letter dated 25.11.2022 and numbered 2022-1032 of Ondokuz Mayıs University Rectorate Ethics Committee. / *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu'nun 25.11.2022 tarih ve 2022-1032 sayılı yazısı ile etik açıdan uygun görülmüştür.*

Declaration of the contribution rate of the researchers/ *Araştırmacıların Katkı Oranı Beyanı*: The first author contributed 40%, the second author 40%, third author %20. / *Birinci yazar % 40, ikinci yazar % 40, üçüncü yazar %20 oranında katkı sağlamıştır.*

Declaration of conflict of interest/ *Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı*: There is no potential conflict of interest in this study / *Bu çalışmada herhangi bir potansiyel çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.*

Use of Artificial Intelligence/ *Yapay Zekâ Kullanımı*: Artificial intelligence tools were used in the literature review phase of this study / *Bu çalışmanın literatür tarama aşamasında yapay zeka araçları kullanılmıştır.*

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