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The ill fortune of attachment insecurity and dyadic distrust in marital satisfaction: a dyadic perspective in Turkish couples

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Abstract

Objective The objective of the current study is to explore the actor, partner and mediating effects of dyadic trust in the relationship between insecure romantic attachment and marital satisfaction in a Turkish sample of heterosexual married couples.

Background Although the vital role of dyadic trust in a romantic relationship has been recognized for many years, the mediating role of dyadic trust in the relationship between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction has not been explored much in previous research.

Method The sample comprised 174 married couples living in suburban areas in the central Anatolian region of Türkiye. Couples were recruited through personal networks and online mailing lists of local governmental institutions. Two Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model analyses were carried out to estimate mediation with dyadic data using MEDYAD.

Results The actor effects between insecure romantic attachment and marital satisfaction were found to be mediated by dyadic distrust. Moreover, two partner mediating effects were found significant. Husbands' anxious attachment predicted wives' dyadic distrust, which in turn predicted wives' marital dissatisfaction. Likewise, husbands' anxious attachment also predicted their own dyadic distrust, which in turn predicted their wives' marital dissatisfaction.

Conclusion The findings show that for insecurely attached individuals, dyadic trust has an important role in marital satisfaction and thus should be the central topic in couple counseling.

Keywords Insecure attachment, Dyadic trust, Satisfaction, Actor partner interdependence mediation model, Non-WEIRD sample

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Introduction

A rewarding marriage relationship is one of the commonly shared life pursuits, and satisfaction in a marital relationship predicts relationship stability and survival [1] and thus diminishes the likelihood of marital discord. The ebb and flow of everyday life occurs naturally, and marriages get their share of ups and downs from those tides as well. Even so, some couples have more satisfying marriage experiences than others as a result of a variety of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental factors. Among these, delineating the source of individual differences in intimate relationships, attachment in adulthood [2, 3, see also 4 for a comprehensive review of adult attachment research]—an extension of Bowlby's attachment theory [5]—holds a special place in understanding the complex dynamics of intimate romantic relationships. Studies have yielded robust empirical evidence supporting secure and insecure romantic attachment as an explanatory framework for relationship satisfaction [see a review by 6 and a meta-analysis by 7]. Expectations, attitudes, beliefs about and perceptions of romantic relationship interactions are strongly affected by attachment (in) security [8].

Attachment (In)security

The activation and operation of the adult attachment model were proposed by Mikulincer and Shaver [8, 9]. Based on the extent of the availability and responsiveness of the attachment figure in times of need and distress, an individual may either experience a sense of security, call for attention, make strong attempts to maintain emotional and physical proximity to the attachment figure, or inhibit proximity seeking and deny feelings of intimacy towards the attachment figure. According to the adult attachment theory, two dimensions determine individual differences in attachment orientations: anxiety and avoidance [see 10]. People who have lower scores on both dimensions are presumed to have secure attachment, characterized by feelings of comfort, closeness, and intimacy in relationships. Those who have high scores on the avoidance dimension tend to strive for psychological and emotional detachment from their partners. On the other hand, those with higher scores on the anxiety dimension are generally preoccupied with worries about being rejected or abandoned by their partners [11]. Anxious individuals are believed to be highly sensitive to perceiving and interpreting daily interactions with their partners as threatening to proximity maintenance due to their high rejection sensitivity [for example, 12]. In contrast, avoidant individuals are less likely to perceive negativity because they do not want to activate attachment-related feelings and prefer to withdraw from emotional investment in their partners. Moreover, avoidant individuals do not want to depend on their partners for emotional

support and are also likely to be reluctant to provide emotional support to their partners in general. This reluctance helps them maintain their sense of autonomy and independence [4].

Actor/Partner effects of attachment (In)security

The high dependence needs of anxious partners, combined with doubts about their partners' trustworthiness and intrusiveness, can interfere with enjoying a satisfying marriage [9]. Moreover, anxiously attached partners tend to interpret events in their relationships more negatively, view their partners' behaviors more critically, and report higher levels of emotional distress [13]. Collins and Read's [14] finding on dating partners showed that men with more anxious partners and women with more avoidant partners reported less relationship satisfaction and more conflict. A recent meta-analysis by Candel and Nicoleta-Turliuc [7] of 132 studies on attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance and relationship satisfaction, reported that actor effects were stronger than partner effects, yet both were significant and equally strong for both sexes. However, in married couples, the association between attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction was stronger for Western samples, and weaker for Asian samples. Another two meta-analyses [15, 16] with 57 and 73 studies respectively showed that compared to attachment anxiety, avoidance was more negatively associated with general relationship satisfaction, whereas attachment anxiety was more positively associated with general relationship conflict.

Actor and partner effects of attachment insecurity on marital satisfaction have yielded mixed results. For example, avoidant attachment has been found to be associated with low relationship satisfaction for both women and men, but anxious attachment was only associated with women's satisfaction [for example, 17]. Kane et al. [18] reported that husbands were less satisfied in their marriage when their wives were anxiously attached, but wives were less satisfied when their husbands were avoidant. In contrast, Banse [19] reported that men (but not women) were less satisfied when their partners were more avoidant. Butzer and Campbell [20] found both actor and partner effects for attachment anxiety and for both women and men, but attachment avoidance was significant for partners' own marital dissatisfaction. Harma and Sümer [21], using a large sample of married Turkish couples, found that attachment avoidance was a primary risk factor for marital dissatisfaction in both men and women. However, neither actor nor partner effects of anxious attachment were significant in relation to marital satisfaction. A more recent study by Thibodeau and Bouchard [22] with married heterosexual couples in the empty-nest stage of the family cycle found that attachment anxiety was negatively associated with both partners'

marital satisfaction, as well as with the individual's own marital satisfaction. In contrast, attachment avoidance only had an effect on the individual's own marital satisfaction. Therefore, mixed findings are evident regarding the impact of attachment dimensions on relationship satisfaction.

Cultural context

Regarding cultural variations in relationship satisfaction outcomes as a function of attachment (in)security, Western and Eastern samples have shown differential patterns. Western populations have shown a stronger association between attachment anxiety and relationship dissatisfaction. However, Harma and Sümer [21] expected women's attachment anxiety to be the strongest predictor of relationship functioning, based on the conclusion that extreme closeness in relationships may not be detrimental and could even be a highly valued asset in collectivistic cultures. Moreover, due to cultural incongruence, men's attachment anxiety was considered a risk factor for marital functioning. Overall, their findings provided support for their anticipations that attachment avoidance (particularly women's avoidance), rather than attachment anxiety, along with men's attachment anxiety, would be the predominant risk factors for relationship functioning.

Meanwhile, Ataca [23] argued that rather than the attachment anxiety of women, men's attachment anxiety would be riskier for marital satisfaction in Turkish families because the clingy behaviors and extreme closeness needs of men are culturally incongruent. Men in Turkish families are expected to act avoidant to some extent by force of the gender roles, but also they are motivated to exhibit at least some attachment anxiety to sustain a marriage [21]. On the other hand, women's attachment anxiety in marriage is culturally congruent, but the attachment avoidance of women in relationships is deemed highly unacceptable, at odds with gender role conformity. The Anatolian city where the data for the current study were collected is quite conservative, known for its extreme emphasis on traditional gender roles, and where marriages are mostly arranged. The city is also known with radical nationalism as well as hometown bias. For example, one of the most important criteria for a couple to be married is the condition that both woman and man should be born and live in this city. Especially, groom candidates who are not from the city are generally not welcomed to marry women from this hometown. The culture is quite insular and has unique rules and regulations regarding marriages. Women are expected to serve their husbands, husbands' family members (especially mother and father in laws), and their children. Most of the families in this city are large families, and nuclear families are very rare. Daughter-in-laws are watched closely for their behaviors in the family by their

mother-in-laws and husband's-sister-in laws. Therefore, being a married woman in this region brings about so many challenges.

Educational level is another cultural factor that might influence marital satisfaction through different mechanisms, including attachment and dyadic trust. To our knowledge, it is so rare to come across illiterate and/or undereducated Western samples in marriage literature. Even a meta-analysis with 226 independent studies on marital satisfaction [24] coded the educational level of the participants as no high school diploma, high school diploma, and higher education, which might imply that most of the people completed at least primary or middle school. In Anatolian suburban areas of Turkey, although the school enrollment rates have been increasing in recent years, the literacy rates among previous generations are quite low. On the other hand, invariance of adult attachment across socioeconomic status (SES) has been rejected many times [e.g., 25, 26], and the findings showed that low SES is related to attachment insecurity through various factors.

Dyadic trust

Over and above these considerations, the potential underlying mechanisms linking the romantic attachment styles and marital satisfaction of couples remain rather vague [27, 28]. Some studies have suggested that the link between anxious and avoidant attachment and marital functioning is mediated or moderated by other variables, such as negative emotions, cognitions, and attitudes [e.g., 29, 30]. This link is commonly understood as a two-way process between parties. Among these, dyadic trust is considered the most important factor for the development and maintenance of satisfying intimate relationships in adulthood [31, p. 264]. Trust is based on the belief and expectation that partners put the relationship first with good intentions and motivations [32]. Four basic principles of interpersonal trust emerged out of a review of the interpersonal trust literature, and one of them pertains to the attachment orientation of the individual [31]. The review concluded that people with secure attachments were more likely to trust and be trusted in their relationships. Attachment theory conceptualizes interpersonal trust as not something that develops through experience in relationships, but rather an individual difference shaped with one's attachment pattern. In this sense, dyadic trust is not an independent construct, but a component of attachment representations [33].

The significant role of dyadic trust in satisfying romantic relationships has been consistently shown in various studies [for example, 34–37]. The experience of trust in a relationship is considered an important relational process, a definitional element of the intimacy component

of love [38] and its association with attachment styles is evidentiary [For example, 28, 39, 40]. Mikulincer's [40] findings showed that securely attached partners felt more trust towards their partners, had higher accessibility of positive trust-related memories, used more constructive strategies to restore trust when damaged, and mentioned more positive trust episodes over three weeks in their relationships than insecurely attached partners. Only two studies [33, 39] were found to have examined the link between the attachment orientations and relationship satisfaction of heterosexual couples as mediated by dyadic and interpersonal trust respectively. The participants in the first study were required to have been involved in a romantic relationship for at least twelve months. They showed significant partner effects of husbands' anxious and avoidant attachment on wives' relationship satisfaction via the low dyadic trust of husbands, but no partner effect was found for women in the same mediational model. In other words, husbands' higher scores on anxious and avoidant attachment decreased the relationship satisfaction scores of their wives via the mediating effect of the husbands' own low dyadic trust. Actor effects were significant for attachment avoidance and anxiety in husbands, as men with higher scores on attachment avoidance or anxiety reported more dyadic distrust and, in turn, lower relationship satisfaction. For women, this mediational association was significant only for attachment avoidance. That is to say, women with higher scores on attachment avoidance reported lower relationship satisfaction, as mediated by less dyadic trust. The second study with married individuals found that anxious or avoidant attachment in both men and women was associated with low relationship quality (measured as the sum of marital satisfaction, personal commitment and dedication commitment) via their own low interpersonal trust, on both actor and partner levels [33]. The current study aimed to merely retest the mediational model of Fitzpatrick and Lafontaine [39] in a different context.

Current study

Understanding the dyadic pathways to marital satisfaction could offer a rich perspective by looking at the roles of partners' attachment security and dyadic trust. The aim of the current study is to explore the actor and partner direct and indirect effects (by dyadic trust) in the relationship between insecure romantic attachment and marital satisfaction with a Turkish sample of heterosexual married couples living in suburban areas, mostly under-educated women compared to men, and of more than half made arranged marriages. In line with this aim, we hypothesized that both anxious and avoidant attachment styles will significantly be related to marital satisfaction

directly and indirectly via dyadic trust for both genders on both actor and partner levels.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and fifty married individuals were identified as appropriate for the study. Fifty-seven couples did not want to take part in the survey and 19 participants did not complete the measures. The participants in the study were therefore 174 married couples ($n=348$) who were living in suburban areas in the central Anatolian region of Türkiye and had been married for at least one year. Of them, 46.3% were aged between 19 and 35, 44.5% between 36 and 50, and 9.2% were over 51. The mean age of the husbands was 39.3 ($SD=9.7$) and the mean age of the wives was 35.5 ($SD=9.2$). The mean length of marriage was 13.5 years ($SD=10.2$), as reported by wives and husbands. A total of 15.5% of the participants had no children, 19% had one child, 43.1% had two children and 22.4% had three or more children. More than half of the participants (57.5%) stated that their marriage had been arranged and 42.5% stated that it was a love marriage. In all, 35.6% of the participants stated that their economic status was good, 62.1% stated that it was medium and 2.3% stated that it was bad. An analysis of the educational levels among the couples revealed that 28.2% of the women completed primary education, 17.2% completed middle school, 19.5% attained a high school diploma, and 35.1% held a university degree. In contrast, 12.6% of the men completed primary education, 5.7% completed middle school, 29.9% attained a high school diploma, and 51.7% held a university degree.

Procedure

Before the data collection process, we completed all the ethical requirements. We reached married individuals through personal networks and the online mailing lists of some local governmental institutions. We informed the married individuals about the study process and asked for their consent to be involved in the study as a couple. We asked them to inform their spouses about the research and to complete the informed consent forms. Finally, we sent two separate envelopes or e-mails containing the matched set of measures to couples. We asked them to complete the measures independently in a quiet place. The participants filled out the measures and returned them via e-mail or regular mail.

Measures

Anxious and avoidant attachment

The Turkish adaptation [41] of the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) scale which was developed by Fraley et al. [42] was used in the study to measure anxious and avoidant attachment. The ECR-R consists of

two scales, one measuring anxious attachment (18 items) and the other measuring avoidant attachment (18 items). The avoidance subscale assesses individuals' discomfort with closeness, dependence and self-disclosure (for example, 'I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down'). The anxiety subscale reflects individuals' strong need for closeness, fear of rejection and abandonment (for example, 'I worry a lot about my relationships'). The ECR-R has a seven-point Likert-style response format (1: *Strongly disagree* to 7: *Strongly agree*). A higher mean score on each scale is suggestive of either higher anxious attachment or avoidant attachment. In the Turkish adaptation study [40], the relationship between avoidance and anxiety dimensions and other related variables (self-esteem, relationship satisfaction, separation anxiety, and approval anxiety) supported the validity of ECR-R. The internal consistency of both scales is satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha scores varying between 0.83 and 0.88.

Dyadic trust

The Turkish adaptation [43] of the Dyadic Trust Scale (DTS) developed by Larzelere and Huston [44] was used in the study to measure married couples' dyadic trust. The Turkish adaptation of the DTS consists of seven items (the original DTS has eight items) (for example, 'My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me'). The DTS also has a seven-point Likert-style response format (1: *Very strongly disagree* to 7: *Very strongly agree*). Higher scores are indicative of the participant having higher trust in their spouse. In the adaptation, item 6 of the original scale was excluded due to its low item loading. In the Turkish adaptation study [39], the relationship between dyadic trust and related variables (marital satisfaction and emotional dependency) supported the validity of DTS. The DTS had satisfactory internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The split-half test reliability was reported as 0.86.

Marital satisfaction

The Marital Life Scale (MLS) developed by Tezer [45] was used in the study to measure the overall satisfaction of married individuals. The scale consists of ten items (for example, 'Most of what I expected from marriage came true'). The MLS has a five-point Likert-style response format (1: *Completely disagree* to 5: *Completely agree*). Higher scores suggested higher relationship satisfaction. In the scale development study [45], the significant differences between the scores obtained from married and divorced individuals from the scale and the low correlation coefficient obtained between the scale and the scores of the social desirability measure were stated as evidence for the validity of the scale. The scale had satisfactory internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 and 0.89 for two consecutive studies [45]. Test-retest

reliability over three-month intervals was reported as 0.85.

Data analysis

We started with correlation analyses to reveal the associations among variables and decide if demographics such as age, marriage length, and the number of children would be the control variables. To assess the normality of the data before correlation analysis, we utilized graphical methods such as histogram and the Q-Q plot as in the larger samples tests of normality such as Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics are not recommended to judge normality [46]. The visual inspection of the histogram and Q-Q plot suggested normal distribution, supporting the normality assumption. None of the variables, age, marriage length, and number of children, were related to the main variables in the model, so we excluded them from the subsequent analyses.

Following, we carried out two Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM; 47) analyses to estimate mediation with dyadic data via MEDYAD (Beta V1.1). MEDYAD, an add-on macro for SPSS, is an easy-to-use regression-based computational tool that conducts mediation analysis with distinguishable dyadic data [48]. MEDYAD assesses the direct and indirect effects of each actor's X (independent variable) on their own and their partner's Y (independent variable) through their own and their partner's mediator M [48]. MEDYAD does not offer an omnibus measure of model fit like structural equation modeling programs do. "However, this is not as large of a disadvantage as it may seem, as all of the models that MEDYAD can estimate are saturated, meaning that fit is perfect (fully saturated, $\chi^2(0) = 0.00$, RMSEA = 0.00, and CFI = 1.00) by many measures used in SEM" [48, p. 27]. In our study, anxious attachment or avoidance attachment was the independent variable, dyadic trust was the mediator, and marital satisfaction was the dependent variable. We tested the proposed model using 10,000 bootstrap samples both for direct and indirect effects.

As recommended by Kenny and Cook [49], we adhered to sample size guidelines for multiple regression analyses since our study utilized APIMeM without latent variables. A power analysis via G*Power 3.1 [50] revealed that, with two independent variables, two mediators, two dependent variables, and a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed), a minimum of 68 couples was required to achieve sufficient power (0.80) for detecting a medium effect size.

Results

Correlation analysis

As Table 1 shows, all the correlations among the major study variables for actor, partner, and cross-partner were significant. To name a few, the anxious attachment,

Table 1 Cronbach alphas, means, standard deviations, and correlations (Women above, men below, and between women and men Along the Diagonal) for study variables

	Men			Women			Correlations			
	M	SD	α	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4
1. Anxious Attachment	3.03	0.93	0.78	3.77	0.79	0.67	0.42**	0.42**	-0.29**	-0.44**
2. Avoidance Attachment	2.32	1.03	0.88	2.76	0.89	0.80	0.67**	0.57**	-0.60**	-0.57**
3. Dyadic Trust	6.04	1.12	0.87	5.53	1.38	0.87	-0.52**	-0.597**	0.47***	0.60**
4. Marital Satisfaction	3.93	0.73	0.87	3.80	0.87	0.90	-0.48**	-0.59**	0.52**	0.44**

Note. We present correlations between the dyad members in bold along the diagonal

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed)

Table 2 Indirect effects of Actor-Partner interdependence mediation model for anxious attachment as the independent variable

	Bootstrapping			
	Product of coefficients		BC 95% CI	
	β	Boot SE	Lower	Upper
H Anxious Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction*	-0.142	0.037	-0.222	-0.079
H Anxious Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.009	0.011	-0.033	0.013
H Anxious Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction*	-0.065	0.035	-0.141	-0.013
H Anxious Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction*	-0.076	0.039	-0.163	-0.010
W Anxious Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.003	0.033	-0.080	0.050
W Anxious Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.012	0.018	-0.059	0.014
W Anxious Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction	-0.001	0.016	-0.036	0.029
W Anxious Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction*	-0.109	0.056	-0.225	-0.006

Note. Reported BC intervals are the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval of estimates resulting from the bootstrap analysis—10,000 bootstrapped samples

Table 3 Summary for the indirect effects of Actor-Partner interdependence mediation model for avoidant attachment as independent

	Bootstrapping			
	Product of coefficients		BC 95% CI	
	β	Boot SE	Lower	Upper
H Avoidant Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction*	-0.103	0.039	-0.182	-0.030
H Avoidant Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.004	0.008	-0.019	0.014
H Avoidant Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction	-0.060	0.042	-0.147	0.020
H Avoidant Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction	-0.026	0.027	-0.081	0.027
W Avoidant Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.012	0.017	-0.049	0.020
W Avoidant Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → H Marital Satisfaction	-0.026	0.038	-0.098	0.052
W Avoidant Attachment → H Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction	-0.007	0.011	-0.028	0.017
W Avoidant Attachment → W Dyadic Trust → W Marital Satisfaction*	-0.185	0.051	-0.297	-0.098

Note. Reported BC intervals are the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval of estimates resulting from the bootstrap analysis—10,000 bootstrapped samples

[$r=.43, p<.01$], dyadic trust, [$r=.43, p<.01$] and marital satisfaction, [$r=.44, p<.01$] of husbands and wives associated with each other. Husbands' anxious attachment was negatively related to their dyadic trust, [$r=-.54, p<.01$] and marital satisfaction, [$r=-.48, p<.01$]. The same pattern was observed for the wives Tables 2 and 3.

Actor-Partner interdependence mediation model
Anxious attachment as the independent variable

As presented in Fig. 1, the model, in which husband dyadic trust was the outcome was significant, $R^2=0.274, F(2, 171)=32.240, p<.001$. Only husband anxious attachment was a significant predictor of husband dyadic trust, [$\beta = -0.660, t(171) = -7.213, 95\% \text{ CI } (-0.840, -0.479)$].

When the wife dyadic trust was the outcome, the model was also significant, $R^2=0.144, F(2, 171)=11.039, p<.001$. Both wife anxious attachment, [$\beta = -0.389, t(171) = -2.775, 95\% \text{ CI } (-0.666, -0.112)$] and husband anxious attachment, [$\beta = -0.273, t(171) = -2.254, 95\% \text{ CI } (-0.511, -0.2034)$] were significant predictors of wife dyadic trust.

When the husband marital satisfaction was analyzed as the outcome variable, the model was significant, as well, $R^2=0.347, F(4, 169)=22.419, p<.001$. Husband anxious attachment [$\beta = -0.209, t(169) = -3.362, 95\% \text{ CI } (-0.331, -0.086)$], and husband dyadic trust, [$\beta=0.215, t(169)=4.328, 95\% \text{ CI } (0.117, -0.314)$] significantly predicted husband marital satisfaction. The model, in which wife marital satisfaction was the outcome, was significant,

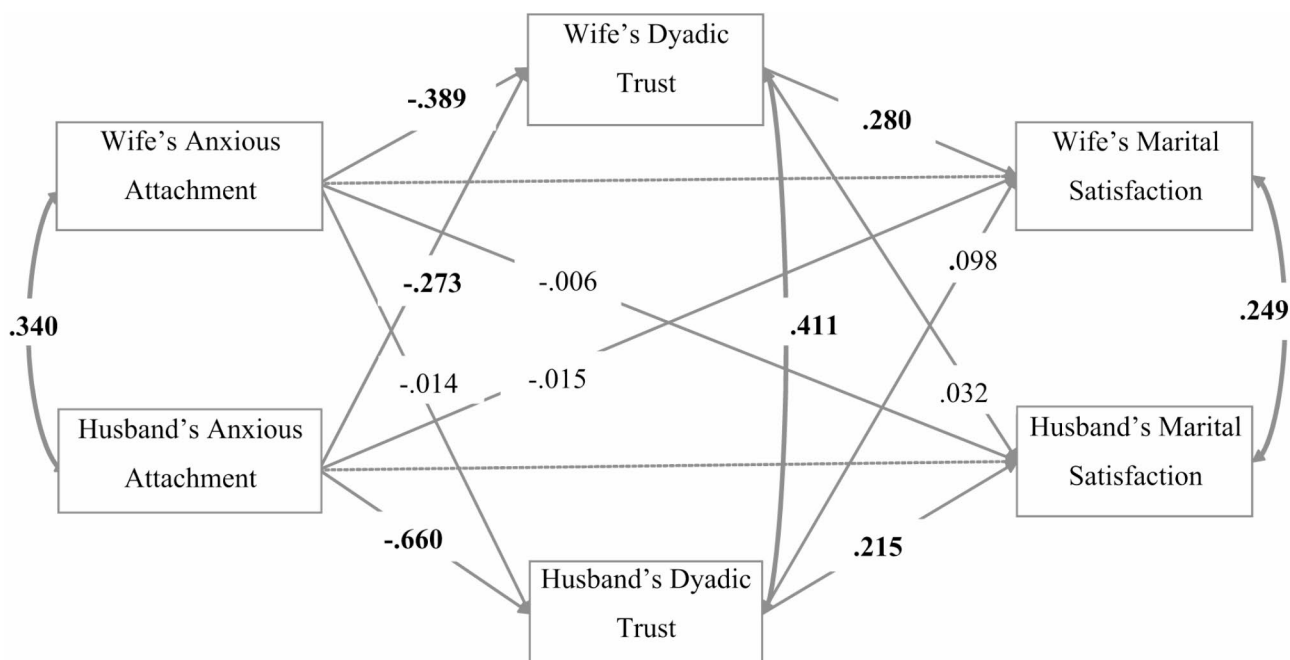


Fig. 1 Proposed actor-partner interdependence mediation model for anxious attachment as the independent variable

as well, $R^2 = .464$, $F(4, 169) = 36.557$, $p < .001$. Wife anxious attachment, $[\beta = -0.294, t(169) = -4.220, 95\% \text{ CI} (-0.431, -0.157)]$, and wife dyadic trust, $\beta = 0.280$, $t(169) = 7.185$, $95\% \text{ CI} (0.213, 0.374)$ significantly predicted wife marital satisfaction.

Regarding the indirect effects, for the wives, only the actor indirect effect from the wife's anxious attachment to the wife's marital satisfaction via wife's dyadic trust was significant, $\beta = -0.109$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.225, -0.006)$. For the husbands, the indirect effects were more than one and salient. As with the wives, the actor indirect effect from the husband's anxious attachment to his own marital satisfaction via his own dyadic trust was significant, $\beta = -0.142$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.222, -0.079)$. Furthermore, there were two significant indirect partner effects. The indirect effect of husbands' anxious attachment to their wives' marital satisfaction via their own dyadic trust was significant, $\beta = -0.065$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.141, -0.013)$. The indirect effect of husbands' anxious attachment to their wives' marital satisfaction via their wives' dyadic trust was significant, $\beta = -0.076$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.163, -0.010)$, as well.

Avoidant attachment as the independent variable

As illustrated in Fig. 2, the model, in which husbands' dyadic trust was the outcome was significant, $R^2 = 0.359$, $F(2, 171) = 47.950$, $p < .001$. Husbands' avoidant attachment significantly predicted their own dyadic trust, $[\beta = -0.645, t(171) = -7.616, 95\% \text{ CI} (-0.813, -0.478)]$. The model, in which wife dyadic trust was the outcome, was also significant, $R^2 = 0.380$, $F(2, 171) = 52.292$, $p < .001$. Wife avoidant attachment significantly predicted wife

dyadic trust, $[\beta = -0.877, t(171) = -7.627, 95\% \text{ CI} (-1.102, -0.652)]$.

The model, in which husband marital satisfaction was the outcome, was significant, as well, $R^2 = .399$, $F(4, 169) = 28.018$, $p < .001$. Husband avoidant attachment, $[\beta = -0.326, t(169) = -5.458, 95\% \text{ CI} (-0.444, -0.208)]$ and husband dyadic trust, $[\beta = 0.160, t(169) = 3.251, 95\% \text{ CI} (0.063, 0.257)]$ emerged as significant predictors of husband marital satisfaction. The model, in which wife marital satisfaction was the outcome, was significant, as well, $R^2 = .458$, $F(4, 169) = 35.717$, $p < .001$. Wife avoidant attachment, $[\beta = -0.297, t(169) = -3.851, 95\% \text{ CI} (-0.450, -0.145)]$ and wife dyadic trust, $[\beta = 0.212, t(169) = 4.503, 95\% \text{ CI} (0.119, 0.304)]$ emerged as significant predictors of wife marital satisfaction.

Considering the indirect effects, for the husbands, we found that the association between husbands' avoidant attachment and marital satisfaction was mediated by their own dyadic trust, $\beta = -0.103$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.182, -0.030)$. For the wives, only the actor indirect effect from the wife's avoidant attachment to the wife's marital satisfaction via their own dyadic trust was significant, $\beta = -0.185$, $95\% \text{ CI} (-0.297, -0.098)$.

Discussion

Although the importance of dyadic trust in close relationships has long been emphasized theoretically [5, 44], it has not often been included in empirical studies [28]. Current study investigated the actor, partner and mediating effects of dyadic trust in the relationship between anxious and avoidant attachment and marital

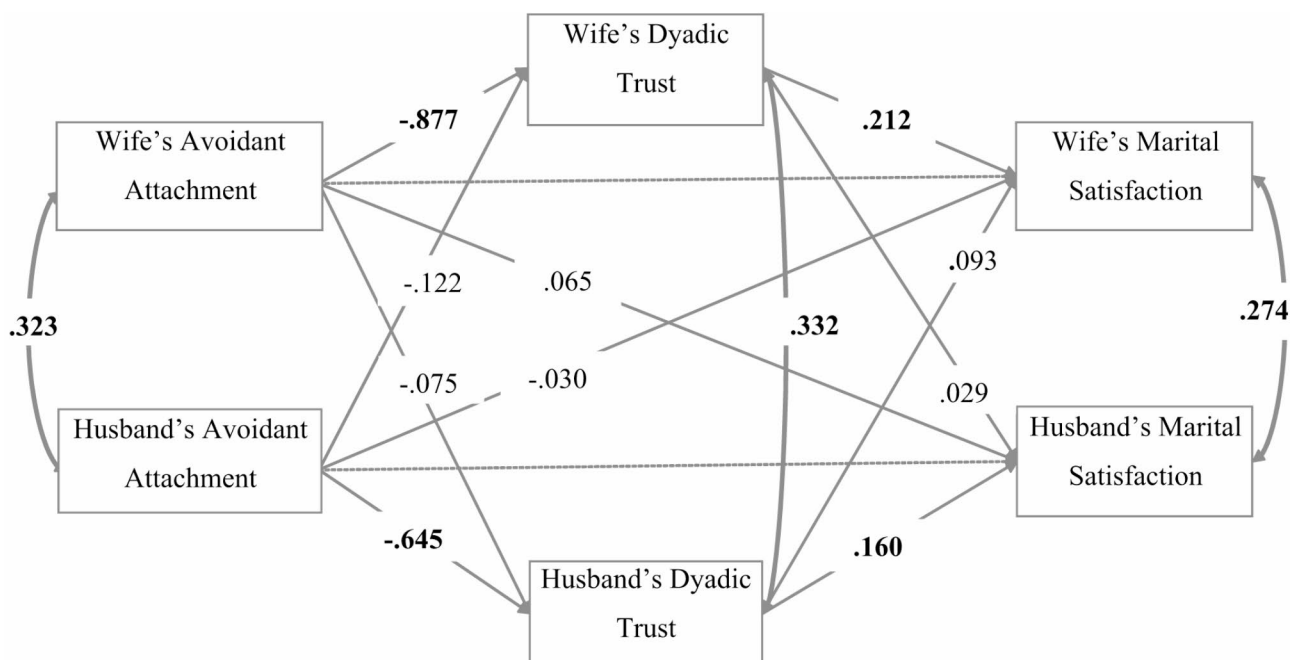


Fig. 2 Actor-partner interdependence mediation model for avoidant attachment as the independent variables

satisfaction with a Turkish sample of heterosexual married couples. Attachment and relationship satisfaction have been amply studied so far, but the underlying mechanisms connecting the two have not been thoroughly investigated [28], and most of the previous studies were conducted at the individual level of analysis [51]. In particular, we tested two models to examine whether and how husbands' and wives' insecure attachment (Model 1: Anxious attachment, and Model 2: Avoidant attachment) were related to their own and their spouse's marital satisfaction, directly and indirectly, mediated by their own and their spouse's dyadic trust.

We found significant correlations between husbands' and wives' anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, dyadic trust and marital satisfaction. Husbands' and wives' anxious attachment was negatively correlated with their own dyadic trust and marital satisfaction. Additionally, dyadic trust was positively related to marital satisfaction. These findings demonstrated similar trends to those of previous studies [for example, 3, 35], which stated that anxiously and avoidantly attached individuals have difficulty in trusting significant others and developing and maintaining satisfying romantic relationships. All the partner effects in the correlation matrix were also found to be significant although they seemed to be less robust than the actor effects. As Simpson [35] indicated, a person's perceived relationship variables (dyadic trust and relationship satisfaction) were more strongly and directly related to their own attachment style and dyadic trust rather than the partner's.

Anxious attachment, dyadic trust, and marital satisfaction
Direct effects

Regarding the direct effects, the findings showed that husbands and wives who were higher in anxious attachments had lower dyadic trust in their relationships. In addition to these actor effects, there was a partner effect stating that husbands' anxious attachment was a significant predictor of wives' dyadic distrust. The actor effects which we found supported the findings of previous research on married or dating couples [for example, 52–55]. Fitzpatrick and Lafontaine [39], however, observed this actor effect only in men, not in women.

Other findings concerning the direct effects on marital satisfaction showed that all the actor effects were significant, which means that both husbands' and wives' anxious attachment and dyadic distrust were significant predictors of their own marital satisfaction. Results of the study was in line with the literature which stated that individuals who were higher in anxious attachment had lower marital satisfaction than securely attached ones [for example, 3, 27, 34, 56, 57]. However, studies conducted in Türkiye reported that anxious attachment was not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction [21, 58]. This difference may have been due to the demographic structure of the samples in which the studies were conducted.

The partner effect, stating that husbands' anxious attachment was a significant predictor of wives' marital satisfaction, differed from the findings of previous studies conducted in Western samples. For instance, Simpson [35] found that women's anxious attachment was negatively correlated with men's relationship satisfaction.

Likewise, Davis and Oathout [59] reported that female possessiveness tended to be negatively associated with men's relationship satisfaction, but male possessiveness did not tend to be associated with women's relationship satisfaction.

Our finding that individuals with higher dyadic trust had more relationship satisfaction in heterosexual romantic relationships paralleled the findings of previous studies (for example, 60, 61). Furthermore, a significant partner effect was found, suggesting that wives whose husband were more trusting were more satisfied with their marriages. Considering the limited literature on the partner effects of dyadic trust on relationship satisfaction, no similar findings were found in previous studies. For instance, Campbell et al. [62] reported a partner effect opposite to that found in the current study, which stated that men who had more trusting wives had greater relationship satisfaction.

Indirect effects

The results regarding mediation in the anxious attachment model revealed that two mediational actor and two mediational partner effects were significant. Mediational actor effects showed that anxiously attached husbands and wives tended to have lower dyadic trust, leading to greater marital dissatisfaction. These findings aligned with existing literature on anxious attachment, dyadic trust, and marital satisfaction [14, 63]. The findings were in line with Givertz et al.'s [34] comparable study, in which the dependent variable was relationship quality. Some other studies have reported this actor mediational effect for one partner but not for both partners [39, 53].

We also found two mediational partner effects showing that not only wives' anxious attachment and dyadic trust but also husbands' anxious attachment and dyadic trust could contribute to wives' marital satisfaction. The first was that wives' dyadic trust mediated the relationship between husbands' anxious attachment and wives' marital satisfaction. In other words, wives whose husbands were anxiously attached had lower dyadic trust, which in turn made them more dissatisfied with their marriages. To the authors' knowledge, this finding had not been reported in previous studies. Friedman et al. [64] stated that the predictive power of attachment dimensions varied in collectivist cultures. The second was that husbands' dyadic trust mediated the relationship between husbands' anxious attachment and wives' marital satisfaction. That is to say, husbands who were anxiously attached also had lower dyadic trust, and this in turn made their wives more dissatisfied with the marriage. Similar mediational partner effects were found by other researchers [34, 39, 53].

Partner effects obtained from this study showed that wives' marital satisfaction and dyadic trust were affected

by their husbands' anxious attachment and dyadic trust. An explanation for this finding might be related to gender roles. This gender difference might have occurred because women tend to be more relationship-oriented and interdependent, while men are more task-oriented and independent. Maddux and Brewer [65] argued that women seek more interdependent relationships that involve greater trust. Since approximately 60% of our sample had arranged marriages, we assume that they held traditional values. In Türkiye, husbands are traditionally expected to behave in accordance with masculinity expectations [66]. They should keep their distance both emotionally and physically and avoid open sharing to maintain their authority [66]. They are also regarded as responsible for maintaining their wives' monogamy and monitoring their behavior with other men. Harma and Sümer [21] acknowledged that husbands being anxiously attached and wives being avoidantly attached are particularly in contrast to their gender roles in Türkiye. Husbands' anxiety-related behaviors might, therefore, be related to wives' dyadic distrust and marital dissatisfaction because they are asymmetrical to the expected male gender roles, especially in traditional parts of Türkiye. When it comes to male attachment in romantic relationships, Harma and Sümer [21] pointed out that there is a two-way situation in Türkiye. On the one hand, some anxiety is required to establish intimacy; on the other hand, they are expected to be avoidant due to their gender roles. Thus, husbands being anxious, needy, and distrusting might be the factors that are affecting wives' dyadic trust and also their marital satisfaction. Sümer and Kağıtçıbaşı [68] underlined the effect of culturally incongruent gender-based attachment patterns on relationships and stated that women with anxious partners and men with avoidant partners can perceive more conflict in their relationships.

Another possible explanation for this dyadic level finding might be related to the 'culture of honor' or 'honor-based collectivism' in Türkiye. The attachment literature has shown that collectivism is positively related to anxious attachment [69, 70] and that people in collectivist societies are more fearful of rejection or the loss of loved ones. Sorensen and Oyserman [71] explained that honor-based collectivism is present in many Mediterranean, Latin American, and Middle-Eastern countries, including Türkiye. In an Argentinian honor-based collectivist sample, Hanono [72] reported higher rates of anxiety and lower rates of avoidance. Agishtein and Brumbaugh [69] also found that honor-based collectivism only either promotes higher anxiety or promotes higher anxiety and lower avoidance. Considering this, it is plausible that honor-based collectivism is putting extra pressure on men in Türkiye, which affects husbands' anxiety-related thoughts and feelings. This pressure could also guide

husbands' behaviors (such as constantly controlling their wives' activities and mobile phone use), which in turn could have an impact on wives' dyadic trust and marital satisfaction. The district where the data of the current study were collected is also known for its conservative and patriarchal culture.

Finally, traditionally in Türkiye, husbands are seen as 'breadwinners'. According to the results of the 2023 household labor force survey [73] conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the employment rate is 30.4% for women and 65.0% for men. In our sample, women are mostly undereducated compared to men and 65% of the participants stated that their economic situation was at medium or low level. Although the number of working women in Türkiye is increasing, especially among the educated population, and the responsibility of taking care of the family's economic situation is now shared more than in the past, in the more traditional sample of the research, the task of providing for the household may mostly belong to men and men may be living their lives under this pressure. Economic hardship may also cause stress and anxiety. Schmitt et al. [74] also stated that individuals from regions with lower levels of HDI (Human Development Index) and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) were more likely to have greater attachment related anxiety and avoidance in adulthood. Literature also states that financial difficulties increase stress and tension within family units, potentially impairing communication, support and trust between partners [75]. As a result, this economic stress may also have an impact on husbands trust in their relationship and marital satisfaction.

Avoidant attachment, dyadic trust, and marital satisfaction

Direct effects

Regarding the direct effects on dyadic trust, the findings showed that avoidantly attached husbands and wives had lower dyadic trust toward their own relationships. These findings were consistent with those of many previous studies that revealed avoidant attachment guides romantic partners toward perceptions of untrustworthiness [39, 52, 55]. Bartholomew and Horowitz [76] also showed that avoidant (fearful and dismissing) individuals displayed problems in becoming close to and relying on others. In our model, we did not find any significant partner effect. Theoretically, high attachment avoidance is expected to affect partners' sense of dyadic trust. Simpson [31] stated that deactivating strategies (distancing emotionally, physically, and cognitively) used by avoidantly attached individuals may also imply a lack of dyadic trust.

However, some other studies have also found one-sided partner effect between avoidant attachment and dyadic trust rather than reciprocal [39, 53].

Other findings concerning direct effects on marital satisfaction show that only actor effects were significant,

which means that husbands' avoidant attachment and dyadic trust were significant predictors of their marital satisfaction. Likewise, wives' avoidant attachment and dyadic trust were significant predictors of their marital satisfaction. These results align with some of the previous research that found actor effects in the relationship between avoidant attachment, dyadic trust and marital satisfaction [39]. Some others have reported this actor mediational effect for one partner but not for both partners [34, 53].

Indirect effects

The results regarding mediation in the avoidant attachment model show that only mediational actor effects were significant. That is to say, the relationship between husbands' and wives' avoidant attachment and husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction are mediated by their own dyadic distrust but not by their spouses' dyadic distrust. Other research, which tested very similar models to our model, reported similar findings [34, 39, 53] about these actor effects. Yet some of them also reported mediational partner effects. For instance, Givertz et al. [34] reported two partner effects stating that wives' and husbands' dyadic trust were found to mediate the relationship between their own avoidant attachment and their spouses' relationship quality. Likewise, Karantzas et al. [53] found that women's attachment avoidance was negatively associated with men's trust, which in turn was positively associated with men's destructive conflict management and women's relationship satisfaction respectively. However, our study's findings demonstrated that avoidantly attached individuals do not necessarily have lower levels of marital satisfaction when their partners have low levels of trust in them, or they have low levels of trust in their partners.

This result is unexpected for this sample because especially avoidant attachment of wives were culturally incongruent in marital relationships in Turkish families. The low mean score of avoidance attachment for both women and men in the study sample might clarify this finding. Compared to anxious attachment, participants reported lower attachment avoidance. Hence, the study sample appears to exhibit more attachment anxiety than avoidance.

Limitations and further directions

As is the case with many studies, this study has several limitations to consider while interpreting the results. To begin with, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow us to interpret the mediational results causally. Longitudinal studies are needed to clarify the direction of these causal links. Second, the data from couples' self-report questionnaires was the sole data we used in this study. According to theoretical arguments, subjective

data may actually have more weight than objective evaluations [77] nonetheless, behavioral observations may have provided additional data. In this study, as a strength, we gathered dyadic data to measure each couple's perceptions and identify actor and partner effects. Third, there may be limitations in the generalizability of the findings due to certain peculiarities of the sample in the district.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study indicate that dyadic trust plays a significant role in marital satisfaction, particularly for individuals with insecure attachment styles. Regarding research, while this study's correlational nature provides valuable insights, a more detailed understanding could be gained through longitudinal research design. Similarly, Campbell and Stanton [33] suggested that the relationship between insecure attachment and dyadic trust might be a cyclic one and, hence, deserves a closer look at complex longitudinal research designs. Moreover, future studies could consider including gender roles in the hypothesized model to clarify the results in the relationships between insecure attachment, dyadic trust, and marital satisfaction.

Regarding counseling practice, the results of the current study highlight working with attachment insecurities and strengthening dyadic trust to increase marital satisfaction. Keelan et al. [78] demonstrated that insecurely attached individuals exhibited a decrease in commitment, satisfaction, and trust over four months. Campbell et al. [62] similarly reported that people who more distrusted their romantic partners reported greater variability in the perceptions of relationship quality, greater self-reported distress, and more negative behavior. Canary et al. [79] found that couples who trust each other tend to resolve conflicts constructively. Thus, attachment-based therapies [80] might be beneficial in helping married couples' insecure attachment and trust-related issues. Another suggestion might be to teach couples to be responsive to their spouses, as research has shown that people indicated reduced attachment insecurity when they were together with responsive partners [81]. Hence emotion-focused couple therapy [82] might help to increase couples' secure attachment by improving their responsiveness to each other's weaknesses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights how attachment insecurity, in the form of anxious and avoidant attachment, may undermine marital satisfaction in Turkish couples through the pivotal role of dyadic trust, revealing significant actor, partner, and mediating effects. The results of the study, which examined a sample of Turkish heterosexual married couples from Central Anatolia, were mostly in line with the Western literature and highlighted the fundamental role of dyadic trust in the relationship between insecure attachment and marital satisfaction. In

addition, the partner effect, which differs from the literature and states that men's anxious attachment negatively affects women's dyadic trust and marital satisfaction, was discussed from the perspectives of gender roles, 'culture of honor', and men's being the "bread winners" of the family in the Turkish cultural context.

Abbreviations

APIMeM	Actor-Partner Interdependence Mediation Model
HDI	Human Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

Author contributions

E.Ç.Y. designed and collected the data. A.A.I. and E.Ç.Y. wrote the introduction and discussion. E.T.D. did the analyses. E.Ç.Y. and E.T.D. wrote the method. E.T.D. wrote the results. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Funding

The authors did not receive support from any organization for the submitted work.

Data availability

The datasets are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request for research purposes.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Permission was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of the Akdeniz University (2021G148/156). Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Received: 28 June 2024 / Accepted: 9 April 2025

Published online: 22 April 2025

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