

## The Mediating Role of Experiential Avoidance in the Relationship Between the Focus on Child and Marital Satisfaction

Mustafa Alperen Kurşuncu<sup>1\*</sup> Şule Baştemur<sup>2</sup> and Enes Kalkan<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

Individuals' attitudes towards their spouses and relationship, including the emotional climate of the marriage are essential for a satisfying marriage. In an unhealthy emotional climate, on the other hand, severe symptoms may emerge. One of these symptoms is the focus-on-child, where child-related issues often cause marital conflicts. The marital conflicts due to focus-on-child may also increase experiential avoidance as a coping style in the relationship. The purpose is to examine the mediating role of experiential avoidance in the relationship between the focus on child and marital satisfaction. One hundred fifty-nine married dyads participated in the study. They completed the Family Genogram Interview Form which consists of Focus on Child Subscale, Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II, Relationship Assessment Scale, and Demographic Information Form. Findings of the Common Fate Mediation Model indicated that focus on child and experiential avoidance explained 55% of the variance in marital satisfaction. Experiential avoidance has fully mediated the relationship between focus on the child and marital satisfaction. Findings indicate maladaptive coping methods (i.e., focus-on-child) may trigger the avoidance behaviors of spouses and negatively affect their marital satisfaction. To improve marital satisfaction, we propose that spouses' psychological flexibility and self-differentiation (less focus on the child) levels should be enhanced.

### Keywords

Marital satisfaction  
Differentiation of self  
Focus on child  
Experiential avoidance

### Article Info

Received  
August 12, 2022  
Accepted  
December 06, 2022  
Article Type  
Research Paper

## Çocuk Odaklılık ve Evlilik Doyumu Arasındaki İlişkide Deneyimsel Kaçınmanın Aracı Rolü

### Öz

Eşlerin birbirlerine ve ilişkilerine yönelik tutumları ile eşler arasındaki duygusal iklimin doğası evlilik doyumu için önemlidir. Eşler arasında sağlıklı bir duygusal iklimin sağlanamadığı durumlarda, şiddetli duygusal düzensizlikler veya bazı semptomlar çekirdek ailenin duygusal sistemi içinde ortaya çıkabilir. Çekirdek ailede duygusal süreçler olarak da bilinen bu belirtilerden biri, çocuklarla ilgili konuların sıklıkla çiftler arasında çatışmalara neden olduğu çocuk odaklılıktır. Bununla birlikte, çocuk odaklılık nedeniyle çiftlerin deneyimledikleri çatışmalar, bir baş etme biçimi olarak deneyimsel kaçınma davranışlarının ilişki bağlamında sıklığı da artırabilir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, çocuk odaklılık ile evlilik doyumu arasındaki ilişkide deneyimsel kaçınmanın aracı rolünün incelenmesidir. Çalışmaya 159 evli çift katılmıştır. Katılımcılar Aile Dizimi Görüşme Formuna ait Çocuk Odaklılık Alt Ölçeği, Kabul ve Eylem Anketi-II, İlişki Değerlendirme Ölçeği ve Demografik Bilgi Formu'ndan oluşan anketi yanıtlamışlardır. İkili (Dyadic) Aracılık Modeli'nin bulguları, çocuk odaklılık ile deneyimsel kaçınmanın evlilik doyumundaki varyansın %55'ini açıkladığını göstermiştir. Çocuk odaklılık değişkeni ile evlilik doyumu arasındaki ilişkiye deneyimsel kaçınma tam aracılık etmiştir. Bulgularımız, eşlerin kaçınma davranışlarının, çocuk odaklılık gibi uyumsuz başa çıkma yöntemlerini nasıl etkilediğini göstermektedir. Bulgularımız, çocuk odaklılık gibi uyumsuz başa çıkma yöntemlerinin, eşlerin kaçınma davranışlarını tetikleyerek evlilik doyumlarını olumsuz etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Evlilik doyumunu artırmak için eşlerin psikolojik esneklik ve benlik ayrımlaşması (çocuğa daha az odaklanma) düzeylerinin artırılması hedeflenmelidir.

### Anahtar Sözcükler


Evlilik doyumu  
Benlik ayrımlaşması  
Çocuk odaklılık  
Deneyimsel kaçınma


### Makale Hakkında


Gönderim Tarihi  
12 Ağustos 2022  
Kabul Tarihi  
06 Aralık 2022  
Makale Türü  
Araştırma Makalesi

**Citation:** Kurşuncu, M. A., Baştemur, Ş., & Kalkan, E. (2023). The mediating role of experiential avoidance in the relationship between the focus on child and marital satisfaction. *Ege Journal of Education*, 24(1), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.12984/egjef.1161512>

\* Corresponding Author / Sorumlu Yazar

<sup>1</sup>  Ordu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye, [mustafalperenkursuncu@hotmail.com](mailto:mustafalperenkursuncu@hotmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>  Ordu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye, [sulebastemur@odu.edu.tr](mailto:sulebastemur@odu.edu.tr)

<sup>3</sup>  Gazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences, Türkiye, [ensklkn@gmail.com](mailto:ensklkn@gmail.com)



## Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet

### Giriş

Çiftler için doyum düzeyi yüksek bir evlilik, aynı zamanda çiftlerin sorun yaşadıkları bir bağlamı da temsil edebilir. Evlilik doyumu, evliliklerde olumlu özelliklerin baskın olduğu ve olumsuzlukların nadiren ortaya çıktığı tek boyutlu bir yapı da olmayabilir (Bradbury, Fincham ve Beach, 2000). Evlilik doyumu, bireylerin eşlerine ve ilişkilerine karşı tutumlarını vurgular (Bradbury ve diğ., 2000; Fincham ve Beach, 2010). Araştırmalar, evliliklerin duygusal ikliminin bir göstergesi olarak örneğin çiftlerin iletişim stilleri veya problem becerileri gibi başlıkları evlilik doyumu bağlamında ele almaktadır (Hou, Jiang ve Wang, 2019; Lavner, Karney ve Bradbury, 2016; Ünal ve Akgün, 2022). Bu çalışmada da evliliklerdeki sağlıklı duygusal iklimin evlilik doyumu için bir ön koşul olduğu varsayılmaktadır. Evlilikler belirli işleyiş kalıplarıyla duygusal semptomlara karşı daha savunmasız hâle gelebilmektedir. Bu duygusal işlevsellik bağlamını düzenleyen faktörlerden biri de aile sistemindeki düşük düzey benlik ayrımlaşması nedeniyle ortaya çıkan çocuk odaklılıktır (Bowen, 1978). Benliğin ayrımlaşması, yakın ilişkilerde bireysellik (özerklik) ve birliktelik dengesini korumayı gerektirir. Benliğin ayrımlaşma düzeyinin düşük olması, aile sisteminde ortaya çıkan kronik kaygıyla birlikte aile üyelerinin duygusal işleyişindeki düzensizlikleri tetiklemektedir (Kerr ve Bowen, 1988). Aile sisteminde benliğin ayrımlaşma düzeyi ne kadar düşükse çocuk odaklılık gibi işlevsel olmayan örüntülerin çiftlerin ilişkilerinde görülme düzeyi de o kadar yüksek olacaktır. Eşler kaçınılmaz olarak birbirlerine karşı daha katı, hoşgörüsüz ve duygusal olarak tepkisel hâle gelirler (Papero, 2014), bu da eşlerin evlilik doyumu düzeylerini etkileyebilecek ilişkisel bir duyarlılığa neden olabilir.

Ayrımlaşmamış bir aile sistemindeki bir veya daha fazla üye, bozulmuş duygusal işleyişleriyle aile içindeki kronik kaygıyı kendi üzerine çeker (Kerr ve Bowen, 1988). Böyle bir örüntü çocuklarla ilgili birçok sorunu ortaya çıkarabilir, ebeveynler daha çocuk odaklı bir hâle gelebilir ve çocuklarla ilgili sorunlar kolayca evlilik çatışmasına yol açabilir (Kerr ve Bowen, 1988). Çocukların çekirdek aileye katılımıyla aile sistemindeki kronik kaygı -düşük düzeyde ayrımlaşmanın bir sonucu olarak- her zamankinden daha fazla yoğunlaşmış olabilir (Kerr ve Bowen, 1988). Eşler çocuğa odaklanma deneyimlerinde istenmeyen veya bunaltıcı duygularla başa çıkmak zorunda kaldıklarında (deneyimsel) kaçınma davranışlarını artırarak ilişkideki yönlerini kaybedebilirler.

Deneyimsel kaçınma, bireylerin acı veren içsel deneyimlere (örneğin duygular, düşünceler, anılar) karşı kalıcı duygusal, davranışsal veya bilişsel kaçınma stratejilerini yansıtır (Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette ve Strosahl, 1996). Gelişimsel deneyimler (çocuk yetiştirme gibi), bir çiftin ilişkisinde zor duygular üretebilir. Deneyimsel kaçınma ile ilgili temel sorun, bireylerde yaratmış olduğu kısa süreli ve yanıltıcı rahatlama hissidir. Bu kısa süreli rahatlattıcı etki, bireyleri sahip oldukları kaçınma stratejilerini değiştirmek adına daha isteksiz ve patolojik bir hâle getirebilir (Hayes ve diğ., 1996; Hayes ve diğ., 2004). Bu çalışmada, çocuk odaklılık ile çiftlerin evlilik doyumu düzeyleri arasında bir ilişki olduğunu varsayıyoruz. Ayrıca, deneyimsel kaçınmanın, çiftlerin çocuk odaklılıktan kaynaklanan rahatsız edici içsel deneyimlerini yansıtabilme potansiyeline sahip bir değişken olduğunu bu model kapsamında değerlendirmekteyiz. Çünkü çiftlerin ilişkisindeki kaçınma davranışları çocuk odaklılığın ilişkide yaratmış olduğu gerilimle daha görünür ve kalıcı hâle gelebilir. Bu anlamda çiftin ilişkisi, yaşadıkları zorlayıcı duygular nedeniyle duygusal veya fiziksel yakınlıktan kaçınmayı içerebilir. Mevcut çalışma, çocuk odaklılık (Bowen Aile Sistemleri Kuramı), deneyimsel kaçınma (Kabul ve Kararlılık Terapisi) ve evlilik doyumu arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlayan bütünlük bir kuramsal yapıya sahip olup iki temel hipotezi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır:

Hipotez 1: Çocuk odaklılık düzeyi yüksek olan çiftlerin evlilik doyumları daha düşük düzeyde gerçekleşmektedir.  
Hipotez 2: Deneyimsel kaçınma, çocuk odaklılık ve evlilik doyumu arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmektedir.

### Yöntem

Bu çalışmada, çocuk odaklılık ve evlilik doyumu arasındaki ilişkide deneyimsel kaçınmanın aracılık etkisi Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi (YEM) kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi ile iki ebeveynli (en az bir çocuklu), heteroseksüel bir çekirdek aile üyesi olan 159 evli çift (318 kişi) araştırmaya katılmıştır. Çiftler, Türkiye genelindeki farklı illerden (Ordu, Amasya, Van, Samsun, Gaziantep, İstanbul) çalışmaya katılmışlardır. Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 37.75 ( $SD = 8.14$ )'tir. Katılımcıların ağırlıklı olarak ilk evlilikleri ( $n = 313$ , %98.4) içerisinde oldukları görülmüştür. Katılımcılar evlilik sürelerini 6-10 yıl (108, %34), 16+ yıl (82, %26), 1-5 yıl (71, %22), 11-15 yıl (54, %17) ve bir yıldan az (1 ve 2 eksik, %1) olarak bildirmiştir. Eşler, bir çocuğu (151, %47.5), iki çocuğu (118, %37.1), üç çocuğu (41, %12.9) ve 4+ çocuğu (8, %2.5) olduğunu belirtmiş olup ilk doğan çocukların ortalama yaşı da 9.61 ( $SD = 8.69$ ) olarak belirlenmiştir. Veri seti Aile Dizimi Görüşme Formu'na ait Çocuk Odaklılık Alt Ölçeği (Platt ve Skowron, 2013), Kabul ve Eylem Anketi-II (Bond ve diğ., 2011), İlişki Değerlendirme Ölçeği (Hendrick, 1988) ve Demografik Bilgi Formu kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında bulguların değerlendirilmesinde kullanılan model uyum indeksleri,  $\chi^2/df < 5$  (Schumacker ve Lomax, 2004); .95 veya üzeri CFI, .08 veya altı SRMR (Hu ve Bentler, 1999) ve .08 < RMSEA < .10 (MacCallum, Browne ve Sugawara, 1996) olarak belirlenmiştir.

## Bulgular

Çocuk odaklılığın evlilik doyumu üzerindeki doğrudan etkisini inceleyen ilk modelde (common fate model) RMSEA = .137 (% 90 CI = .015, .290) ile önerilen kesme değeri üzerinde kalmıştır. Bunun dışında  $\chi^2(1) = 3.98$ ,  $p = .046$ , CFI = .98, SRMR = .039 değerleri dikkate alındığında modelin verilere iyi bir uyum gösterdiği söylenebilir. Bununla birlikte “küçük *df*'ye sahip modeller için, RMSEA, model doğru bir yapıyı tanımlıyor olsa bile önerilen kesme noktalarını sıklıkla aşabilmektedir” (Kenny, Kaniskan ve McCoach, 2015, s. 501). Deneysel kaçınma olmadığında çocuk odaklılığın evlilik doyumu üzerindeki doğrudan etkisi anlamlıdır ( $\beta = -.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Bu model evlilik doyumundaki varyansın %23'ünü açıklamıştır. Bir sonraki aşamada da görülebileceği gibi modele deneysel kaçınmanın da dâhil edilmesiyle *df* değeri yükselmiş ve RMSEA değeri de önerilen aralıkta yer almıştır.

Aracılık modeli verilere iyi uyum göstermiştir:  $\chi^2(3) = 2.16$ ,  $p = .091$ , CFI = .99, SRMR = .043 ve RMSEA = .086 (%90 CI = .000, .178). Çocuk odaklılık deneysel kaçınmayı ( $\beta = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ) ve deneysel kaçınma evlilik doyumunu ( $\beta = -.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ) modelde anlamlı olarak yordamıştır. Çocuk odaklılık, deneysel kaçınmada varyansın %20'sini açıklarken çocuk odaklılık deneysel kaçınmayla birlikte evlilik doyumunda varyansın %55'ini açıklamaktadır. Deneysel kaçınmanın aracı etkisi hesaba katıldıktan sonra çocuk odaklılığın evlilik doyumunu üzerindeki doğrudan etkisinin daha fazla anlamlı olmadığı ( $\beta = -.20$ , ns) görülmüştür, bu da deneysel kaçınmanın modele tam olarak aracılık ettiğini göstermektedir. Çocuk odaklılığın evlilik doyumunu üzerindeki dolaylı etkisi deneysel kaçınma aracılığıyla anlamlıdır ( $\beta = -.36$ ,  $p < .01$ ) ve %95 güven aralığı sıfırı içermemektedir. Spesifik olarak evli bireyler daha yüksek çocuk odaklılık bildirdiklerinde daha fazla deneysel kaçınmaya sahip olabilirler ve böylece daha az evlilik doyumunu hissedebilmektedirler.

## Tartışma ve Sonuç

Bulgular daha yüksek düzeydeki çocuk odaklılığın, daha düşük evlilik doyumunu ile sonuçlandığını göstermektedir. Çocuk odaklılık, Kerr ve Bowen (1988) tarafından çiftlerin ilişkilerinde deneyimledikleri kronik kaygıyla baş etme yollarından biri olarak belirtilmektedir. Mevcut araştırmanın bulguları doğrultusunda katılımcıların, ilişki uyumunu dengelemek amacıyla çocuk odaklılığı kullandıklarında bu durumun evlilik doyumlarını yine de kaçınılmaz olarak azalttığı söylenebilir.

Ayrıca çalışmanın bulguları daha yüksek düzeydeki çocuk odaklılığın daha yüksek deneysel kaçınma ile ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. İki değişken arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen herhangi bir çalışma olmamasına rağmen önceki araştırmalar işlevsel olmayan çocuk yetiştirme uygulamalarının daha yüksek deneysel kaçınmayı öngördüğünü göstermektedir (Shea ve Coyne, 2011). Ebeveynlerin deneysel kaçınma örüntüleri, ebeveynlik kaygısı ile ilgili sorunlar düşünüldüğünde ebeveynin kendi iç dünyasıyla nasıl başa çıktığını göstermektedir (Emerson, Ogielka ve Rowse, 2019). Deneysel kaçınma; ebeveynlerin daha fazla korumacı, müdahaleci veya aşırı kontrolcü davranışlar sergilemesine yol açabilmektedir (Tiwari ve diğ., 2008). Ancak bu ilişkinin evlilik doyumuna nasıl yol açabileceği incelenmemiştir. İki değişken arasındaki mekanizmanın, eşlerin çocuk yetiştirmeyle ilgili evlilik çatışmalarıyla sonuçlanan duygularını bastırma eğilimlerinde yattığı düşünülmektedir. Bu mekanizma, örnekleminizdeki çiftlerin çocuk yetiştirme konusundaki anlaşmazlıklarını ve çatışmalarını yönetemediklerini gösterebilir. Katılımcılar bu çatışmalarda ortaya çıkan duyguları ifade etmekten veya işlemektense bastırmayı tercih etmiş ve bu duygular çiftlerin ilişkisindeki kronik kaygıyı da beslemiş olabilir.

Bulgular daha yüksek çocuk odaklılığın, evlilik doyumunu azaltarak daha yüksek deneysel kaçınma kullanımını öngördüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Önceki araştırmalar, bu değişkenler arasındaki etkileşimleri ayrı ayrı göstermiştir ancak bu çalışma yapısal eşitlik modellemesi yoluyla üç değişken arasındaki ilişkileri araştıran ilk çalışmadır. Örneklemin çocuk yetiştirme uygulamalarının, bu bulgunun kültürel bağlamda daha anlaşılır olmasını sağladığı düşünülmektedir. Çünkü çocuk yetiştirme uygulamaları Türk orta sınıf ailelerinde kafa karıştırıcı disiplin stratejilerini içerebilmektedir (Sunar ve Fişek, 2005) ve bu stratejiler aile sistemlerinde kişisel özerklikten daha çok kuşaklar arasında duygusal bir iç içe geçmeye (füzyon) neden olabilir. Bu nedenle araştırmanın örneklemini için en zorlu engel, daha fazla deneysel kaçınma ve çocuk odaklılık ile sonuçlanan çocuk yetiştirme uygulamalarında duygusal iç içe geçme riski olabilir. Aynı zamanda katılımcıların aralarındaki çatışma nedeniyle evlilikleri risk altına girebilmektedir. Mevcut bulgularımız, deneysel kaçınma ile çocuk odaklılığın evlilik doyumunu üzerindeki doğrudan etkisini teorik olarak pekiştirmiştir. Kuşaklar arası iç içe geçmeye dayalı çocuk odaklılık ve çocuk yetiştirme uygulamalarının örneklemindeki kronik kaygıyı artırdığı düşünülebilir. Eşler çocuklarla ilgili konuları çözmek zorunda kaldıklarında düşük benlik ayrımlaşması düzeyleri (ve daha yüksek çocuk odaklılık) ve yoğun zorlayıcı duyguları (hayal kırıklığı, suçluluk veya öfke gibi) nedeniyle ilişkilerindeki kronik kaygı düzeyi de artıyor olabilir. Bununla birlikte evlilik doyumuyla ilgili istenmeyen duyguları (kronik kaygı) maskeleyen için kaçınma, suçlama, eleştiri veya alaycılık gibi deneysel kaçınmayı işaret eden davranışlarıyla evlilik çatışmaları ortaya çıkabilir ve evlilik doyumlarını olumsuz etkiliyor olabilir. Sonuç olarak evlilik doyumunun güçlendirilmesine yönelik çalışmalarda eşlerin benlik ayrımlaşması (daha düşük düzey çocuk odaklılık) ve psikolojik esneklik düzeylerinin artırılmasına odaklanılmasını öneriyoruz.

## Introduction

Defining and studying marital satisfaction (MS) is a complex task for researchers because a satisfying marriage may also represent a context in which couples experience stress or dissatisfaction. Moreover, MS is not a one-dimensional structure in which positive features are dominant in marriages and negatives rarely emerge (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), and maintaining long-lasting assumptions in MS-related literature has become more challenging (Karney & Bradbury, 2020). MS in Turkish culture also seemingly reveals a multi-dimensional factor structure with contradictory features such as conflict and anger versus closeness and harmony (Canel, 2013). A clear definition of MS emphasizes the attitude of individuals towards their spouse and relationship (Bradbury et al., 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2010). Nevertheless, the latest research often focuses on the relationship between MS and the communication styles or problem-solving abilities of couples in their marriages' emotional climate (Hou, Jiang, & Wang, 2019; Lavner, Karney, & Bradbury, 2016; Ünal & Akgün, 2022) utilizing dyadic data.

In the current study, we similarly assumed that a healthy emotional climate is a prerequisite for a healthy marital relationship, and marriages with a particular pattern of behavior may become more susceptible to emotional disorders. One of the factors that regulate this context of emotional functioning (or MS) is the focus on child (FC), as an indicator of low-level differentiation of self (DoS) (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The DoS is inherently paradoxical; it requires the achievement of genuine intimacy with family members and significant others (togetherness) while individuals maintain an emotionally self-determined position (separateness) in their close relationships (e.g., marriage). In the case of a low level of DoS, chronic anxiety triggers more extreme dysregulation in the family members' emotional functioning (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The lower the DoS level in the family system, the higher the FC. Thus, spouses inevitably become more rigid, intolerant, and emotionally reactive towards each other (Papero, 2014), which may cause a relational intolerance that may affect the MS levels of the spouses.

One or more members in an undifferentiated family system absorb chronic anxiety with impaired emotional functioning (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Such a pattern can reveal many child-related problems, parents can be child-oriented, and children-related issues can easily lead to marital conflict, as parents focus on child-oriented issues unconsciously (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). FC is one of the variables in conjunction with DoS and MS, which we aimed to investigate. The construct is the distinct sub-dimension of the nuclear family emotional functioning (NFEF) concept in Bowen Family System Therapy (BFST; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The NFEF's other sub-dimensions are *symptoms in spouses*, *marital conflict*, and *emotional cutoff*, as we discussed in the next section. We suggest that FC is the most reflective variable that mirrors the spouses' aversive inner experiences on their emotional functioning contributing to the level of their MS. Because young offspring's joining the nuclear family is one of the developmental stages, chronic anxiety (as a result of low-level DoS) in the family system may have intensified more than ever (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Among NFEF variables, we assume that FC is the most comprehensive variable that assesses all family members' functioning (including children) instead of a dyadic relationship. Moreover, FC provides a context in which how a dysfunctioning of a nuclear family system affects MS can be observed.

We noted that the MS level is just one of the nuclear families' emotional functioning signs, but little research has been done on the link between NFEF variables and MS. Few pieces of research specify that a dyad's combined functioning (e.g., emotional) symptoms progressively unveil the marital distance and conflict (Klever, 2001). Moreover, spouses report lower FC and greater MS when they have a higher perception of self-developmental orientation – as a self-construal construct- in their cultural context (Kurşuncu, 2020). Our focus on MS as the dependent variable was driven by Bowen's conceptions of NFEF, which inspired this research. Our MS research can advance scientific understanding of factors underlying dysfunctional family dynamics and strategies used by family members to manage their emotional difficulties.

### Focus on Child

Our investigation's theoretical background is centered on the BFST. The approach principally points to symptom-producing mechanisms in a dyadic relationship instead of depicting MS. Symptoms are evaluated as obstacles to a satisfactory dyadic relationship (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). A satisfactory marriage depends mainly on the DoS levels in a dyadic system and spouses' functional lifestyle patterns. Four anxiety-binding symptoms emerge in the emotional context of a nuclear family (NFEF) otherwise (Kerr & Bowen, 1988): focus on the child (FC), emotional distance, marital conflict, and symptoms in spouses. Among these NFEF symptoms, FC prompts spouses' unintentional projection of chronic anxiety (or marital tension) on children that may become more defenseless, being the least differentiated family members, and more likely to develop emotional, interpersonal, and maladaptive problems (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The FC manifests itself in parental behaviors of overprotection, intergenerational fusion, or interdependent parent-child relationships that inhibit the children from developing a sense of DoS; therefore, childrearing practices become marital conflicts (Platt & Skowron, 2013). Such a pattern of childrearing practices becoming a matter of marital disputes in Turkish culture is also observable. FC and marital conflict have also been reflected as reciprocal mechanisms of symptoms in a dyadic relationship in Turkish culture



(Kurşuncu, 2020). FC functions in a continuum line where childrearing practices create marital conflicts to satisfy spouses' emotional contact need in a dysfunctional dyadic relationship pattern (e.g., criticism). Chronic anxiety vigorously sustains, and MS becomes at risk. Although FC has emphases such as *over protecting*, and *too focused on the child*, Turkish parents reflect more on child-related issues become marital conflict (Kurşuncu, 2020).

Family developmental transitions or crisis periods may alter the NFEF symptoms over time. Before the dyad has children, one of the spouses may endeavor more for marital adjustment than the other spouse. The purpose for marriage harmony may be binding the chronic anxiety, especially during stressful or crisis situations. With the inclusion of the child in the family, this dysfunctional pattern may turn into efforts to prove who is right about the child-related issues or quickly turn into marital conflicts in childrearing practices (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). While other dimensions (i.e., symptoms in spouses, marital conflict, emotional distance) only refer to dyadic tension, we assume that FC is the dimension that best reflects the emotional system of the nuclear family as a whole. We suppose that the pattern in which children are involved in a dyadic relationship (FC) will provide a broad perspective for a deeper comprehension of the family system and relationship satisfaction between spouses.

The critical factor is how spouses handle FC-related emotional handicaps. Such a dysfunctional pattern can also be dynamic in a well-differentiated dyad, but unlikely it reveals marital conflicts as chronic anxiety is low in the family system (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Emotion regulation-related findings in MS reveal that higher emotion regulation skills in marriages predict current and future MS, especially for wives (Bloch, Haase, & Levenson, 2014). Research reveals that when spouses have more emotional skills (e.g., emotional control, identification / communication of emotions), they report higher MS through intimacy (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). In our study, we presume that the emotional demands of FC for dyads increase in the presence of experiential avoidance.

### **Experiential Avoidance**

Experiential avoidance is conceptualized in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes et al., 1996; Hayes et al., 2004). The construct reflects the individuals' persistent strategies of emotional, behavioral, or cognitive avoidance preferences against painful internal experiences (e.g., emotions, memories). People don't want to have painful inner experiences because they believe those experiences will damage them. Thus, they try to manage this aversive stimulus (Gaudiano, 2011; Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996). The issue with experiential avoidance is that it is illusory and causes people to feel relief in the short term, which makes them more resistant and dysfunctional to changing their avoidance behaviors (Hayes et al., 1996; Hayes et al., 2004).

We presume that the experiential avoidance can reflect spouses' aversive inner experiences within a mediating link between maladaptive dyadic pattern of FC and spouses' MS level. Spouses lose their bearings when they have to cope with their undesired or overwhelming feelings in experiences of FC, increasing their experiential avoidance levels. These avoidant behaviors in a dyadic relationship also become more visible and persistent in FC; given the risk of rejection, either emotional or physical closeness in dyadic relationships may be avoided by individuals. Spouses refrain from creating shared memories, or they avoid communicating with each other under the shadow of past experiences where conflictual communications and distance appear (Peterson, Eifert, Feingold, & Davidson, 2009). Less experiential avoidance patterns in a dyadic relationship likely assisted "*the couples to become observers of their internal negative relationship reactions and thus make choices not to engage in old patterns of avoidance and conflict behavior*" (Peterson et al., 2009, p. 439). While many dyads experience experiential avoidance occasionally, we assume that the higher the spouses' FC the more likely to develop chronic anxiety, in which emotional symptoms (e.g., emotional distance) including experiential avoidance patterns may emerge. BFST assumes that spouses with lower FC (greater DoS) will have more emotional functioning, referring to an ability to manage unpleasant emotions even when tension or stress in a dyadic relationship is high (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Developmental experiences (i.e., childrearing) may also produce difficult emotions in the dyad's relationship. Nevertheless, we found only one study examining the relationship between FC and MS (Kurşuncu & Sümer, 2021). No research looks into experiential avoidance's function as a mediator between MS and FC.

### **Rationale**

A dyad's cognitive fusion sustains experiential avoidance (Gaudiano, 2011). For instance, when a dyad has a cognitive fusion with a negative thought (My spouse is not a good enough parent), they are involved in that thought (Bad parent = my spouse). The fused cognitive content and the literal expression of such thinking rule their behaviors (I cannot relinquish control to my spouse when my child-related topics are concerned). One may engage in such thoughts (e.g., blaming) and feelings (e.g., hate, regret) on the spouse's parenting without any process. However, this avoidance preference may direct the person to suppress these thoughts and emotions in the long run, which narrows the behavioral repertoire (i.e., conflict resolution strategies) and psychological flexibility against the dyadic tension. This conceptualization reminds us of Bowen's (1978) *closed* and *open* relationship systems. In the *closed* dyadic relationship systems, spouses have no sense of flexibility "*to communicate a high percentage of inner thoughts, feelings, and fantasies to another who can reciprocate*" (Bowen, 1978, p. 322). The *open* dyadic

relationship system supports spouses process their emotional attachments or dilemmas without reflexive emotional reactions when chronic anxiety is more noticeable. We assume that psychological inflexibility (with higher experiential avoidance) and the *closed* relationship systems will ultimately emerge in greater undifferentiation (DoS). Unprocessed experiences, such as emotions from child-related conflicts (FC), might therefore cause experiential avoidance to replace with the ability to access unwanted ideas or feelings immediately triggered. We aim to investigate how these relationships operate on MS. Our findings may delineate the results on evidence-based NFEF, and FC (low-level DoS) may unconventionally emerge in different cultural orientations, reflecting independent or psychologically interdependent systems (Erdem & Safi, 2018). Moreover, researchers call for culturally oriented studies, including family-of-origin concepts (i.e., DoS, FC) in non-western countries (Rodríguez-González, Martins, Bell, Lafontaine, & Costa, 2019). Hence, an integrationist stance may be superior as our study examined the association between FC (BFST), experiential avoidance (in the ACT), and MS in a sample of Turkish married individuals, which has the following hypotheses:

First hypothesis: MS will be lower in Turkish dyads with higher FC.

Second hypothesis: The relationship between MS and FC will be mediated by experiential avoidance.

## Method

### Participants and Sample

Criterion sampling from purposive sampling methods was applied. One could participate the study if they are a member of a heterosexual nuclear family (two parents and at minimum one child). Participation was not dependent on the number of marriages a person had as far as the child(ren) was/were born in their current relationship. Spouses participated in the study from different cities across Türkiye (e.g., Ordu, Amasya, Van, Samsun, Gaziantep, Istanbul). Our participants were 159 married dyads consisting of 318 individuals. The mean age variable was 37.75 years ( $SD = 8.14$ ). Participants presented a highly educated profile; most belonged to vocational higher school, undergraduate or graduate degrees ( $n = 241, 75.8\%$ ). Others had graduates of high-school ( $n = 45, 14.2\%$ ), primary or secondary schools ( $n = 31, 9.7\%$ ; 1 missing, 0.3%). Our participants were mainly in their first marriages ( $n = 313, 98.4\%$ ). Participants mainly reported marital length of 6 to 10 years ( $n = 108, 34\%$ ), 16+ years ( $n = 82, 26\%$ ), 1 to 5 years ( $n = 71, 22\%$ ), 11 to 15 years ( $n = 54, 17\%$ ), and less than one year ( $n = 1, 2$  missing, 1%). Spouses had one child ( $n = 151, 47.5\%$ ), two children ( $n = 118, 37.1\%$ ), 3 children ( $n = 41, 12.9\%$ ), and 4+ children ( $n = 8, 2.5\%$ ). The firstborn children's average age remained at 9.61 years ( $SD = 8.69$ ).

### Data Collection Instruments

**The Focus on Child Subscale (Family Genogram Interview; FGI).** The FC subscale is a part of FGI (Platt & Skowron, 2013). FC subscale assessed the focus on child dynamics in Turkish culture (Kurşuncu, 2020) with three items (5 points Likert type) as a part of Turkish FGI (Kurşuncu, 2020). The item example is “How much would you say your relationship with your children affects your marriage?” (Kurşuncu, 2020, p. 159). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results indicated an acceptable model fit for Turkish FGI with  $\chi^2/df = 2.3$ , CFI = .95, TLI = .94, SRMR = .06, and RMSEA = .06, indicating four-factor structure. Turkish version's Cronbach's alpha and Omega coefficients were .72 and .76 respectively. The lowest score for FC is three, and the highest score is fifteen. Higher scores indicate higher FC. Internal consistency via McDonald's Omega and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .76 in our study.

**Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II).** The scale (Bond et al., 2011) assesses experiential avoidance (indicates psychological inflexibility) with seven items (7-point Likert type scale). CFA results indicated an acceptable model fit for Turkish AAQ-II with  $\chi^2/df = 3.7$ , CFI = .97, GFI = .97, SRMR = .02, and RMSEA = .08, indicating one-factor structure. Turkish version's (Yavuz et al., 2016) Cronbach's alpha and the test-retest reliability coefficient were .84 and .85. There are seven to forty-nine possible scores. Higher scores indicate higher experiential avoidance (less psychological flexibility). Internal consistency via McDonald's Omega and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .92 in our study.

**Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).** The scale (Hendrick, 1988) assesses MS with seven items (7-point Likert-type). There are also seven to forty-nine possible scores. Items 4 and 7 are reverse-coded. Higher scores indicate higher MS. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of Turkish RAS indicated one-factor solution with 52% of the variance. Turkish version (Curun, 2001) revealed .86 of internal consistency via Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In our investigation, the RAS yielded Cronbach's alpha values of .89 and McDonald's Omega coefficients of .90.

**Demographic Information Form.** We developed a survey information form with questions about the spouses' backgrounds and demographics, including the number of marriages, children, and marriage duration.

### Data Collection Process

The Institutional Review Board of Ordu University's Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee gave authorization based on ethical considerations (approval number 2020-85). The Declaration of Helsinki and this

institutional review board's ethical standards were followed in conducting the study. We applied Google forms to collect the data throughout 2020 and 2021. We believed that when our sample members responded to questions anonymously (with no personal data requested), their experiences, feelings, or thoughts would be simpler to picture. Additionally, we wanted to reach out to couples that prefer online data-gathering methods over traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Dyads were told to respond to the instruments independently of one another. Before answering, partners were required to input a nickname on the survey's top that they had jointly chosen. We used these nicknames rather than credentials to match the spouses' responses. On the opening step of the online form, dyads were asked to indicate their voluntariness in a consent form. We posted information about the study on social media (e.g., WhatsApp).

### Analysis

Using SPSS version 22, we investigated descriptive statistics, presumptions, and bivariate analyses (IBM Corp. Released, 2013). Regarding the non-independence of the dyadic data, a Common Fate Model (CFM) was applied. We used maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS 24.0 (Arbuckle, 2016). Because both couples' variances on our constructs are shared, we assumed on CFM that our factors are common dyadic structures impacting both partners (Ledermann & Kenny, 2012). Thus, spouses' scores were implied as the indicators of latent dyadic factors of FC, experiential avoidance, and MS investigating structural model (Figure 1). Model fit indices including cutoff points in assessment of the findings we considered  $\chi^2/df$ -ratio  $< 5$  (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004); CFI of .95 or above, SRMR of .08 or below (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and  $.08 < RMSEA < .10$  (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996).

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

Since it was necessary to reply to every question in the survey, we did not find any missing data. The management of the deviations from multivariate non-normality was favored using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) plus bootstrapping (Byrne, 2010). There was no violation of the linearity and homoscedasticity of the partial regression plots. The correlation coefficients amongst research variables revealed no greater cutoff point than .90 (maximum was  $r = -.53$ ), multicollinearity assumption was not violated (Kline, 2011).

### Descriptive and Bivariate Correlations

The sample exhibited greater MS ( $M = 41.55$ ,  $SD = 6.97$ ) but lower level of experiential avoidance ( $M = 15.86$ ,  $SD = 8.04$ ), and FC ( $M = 7.76$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ) compared to possible range scores (see Table 1). In MS and FC, we didn't reveal any significant gender differences. Women, however, reported higher levels of experiential avoidance ( $t = 2.77$ ,  $p < .05$ ). All study variables revealed significant intercorrelations for women and men, indicating medium associations, confirming using a CFM approach (Ledermann & Kenny, 2012).

Table 1  
Descriptives Including Individual-Level Correlation Matrix ( $N = 318$ )

Factors	1.	2.	3.
1. Focus on Child	-		
2. Experiential Avoidance	.28**	-	
3. Marital Satisfaction	-.40**	-.53**	-
<i>M</i>	7.76	15.86	41.55
<i>SD</i>	2.38	8.04	6.97
Range	3-15	7-42	18-49

Note. \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\*  $p < 0.01$  levels (two-tailed)

### The Common Fate Model

We initially looked into whether the intradyadic associations in the model were all significant and reliable before running the CFM (see Table 2). We concluded that the connections were robust enough to support the common fate model estimation as Ledermann and Macho (2009) suggested. We conducted bootstrapping composing from 5.000 bootstrapping samples with the bias-corrected estimation method (Arbuckle, 2016).

Table 2  
Intra-correlations between spouses' scores on study variables

Factors	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Focus on child	.55	.000
Experiential avoidance	.34	.000
Marital satisfaction	.56	.000

**First Hypothesis (FC to MS).** A CFM evaluated the direct effect of FC on MS in the absence of experiential avoidance (mediator variable). This model confirmed a good fit to the data with  $\chi^2(1) = 3.98, p = .046, CFI = .98, SRMR = .039$  except RMSEA was the above cutoff value with  $.137$  (90% CI =  $.015, .290$ ). However, “for models with small *df*, the RMSEA can exceed cutoffs very often, even when the model is correctly specified” (Kenny, Kaniskan, & McCoach, 2015, p. 501). Our direct effect model’s *df* was only 1. On Kenny et al.’s (2015) suggestion, a new indicator (experiential avoidance) was added. We expected this model to improve *df* and lower the RMSEA to the cutoff value in the mediation model. In excluding experiential avoidance, the direct effect of FC on MS was significant ( $\beta = -.48, p < .001$ ), and accounted for 23% of the variance in MS.

**Second Hypothesis (FC to EA to MS).** The mediation model (see Fig 1) supported a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(3) = 2.16, p = .091, CFI = .99, SRMR = .043, RMSEA = .086$  (90% CI =  $.000, .178$ ). FC significantly predicted experiential avoidance ( $\beta = .44, p < .01$ ), and experiential avoidance significantly predicted MS ( $\beta = -.63, p < .001$ ). FC had a 20% explained variance in experiential avoidance. Still, FC and experiential avoidance altogether accounted for 55% of the variance in MS. Experiential avoidance fully mediated the model, as evidenced by the fact that, after accounting for its mediating effect, the direct effect of FC on MS was no longer significant ( $\beta = -.20, ns$ ). The 95% confidence interval did not contain zero for the indirect effect of FC on MS, which was significant ( $\beta = -.36, p < .01$ ). Married dyads reported greater experiential avoidance and less MS when their FC was higher.

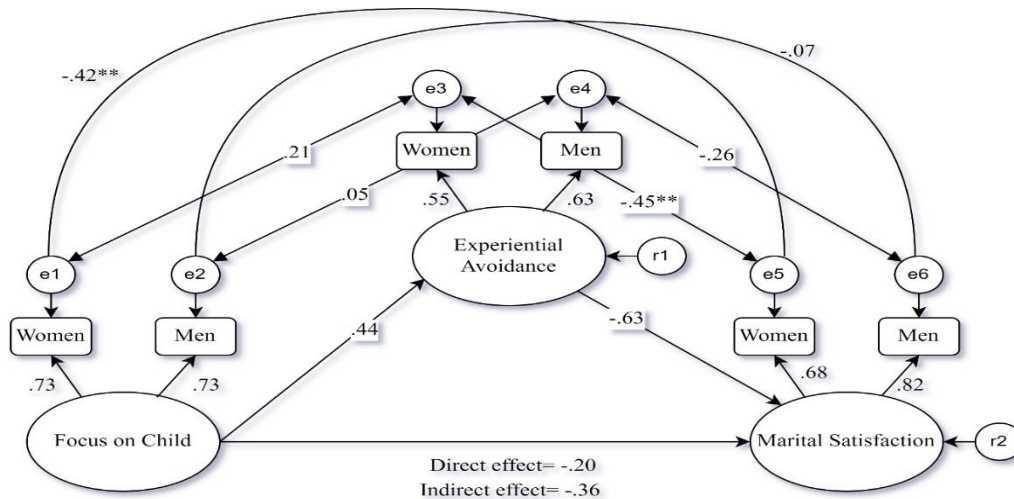


Figure 1. Using standardized coefficients, the Common Fate Mediation Model examines the path: focus on the child → experiential avoidance → marital satisfaction

Note. \*  $p < 0.05$  and \*\*  $p < 0.01$  levels (two-tailed).

## Discussion

The purpose was to examine the relationship between FC and MS. Moreover, we investigated the mediator role of experiential avoidance in the relationship between FC and MS.

### Focus on Child to Marital Satisfaction

Our findings revealed that higher FC resulted in lower MS in bivariate correlations and our first direct effect model. With higher FC (low-level DoS) childrearing practices become more reasons for marital dissatisfaction. While some studies support this finding, for example, being a parent can increase marital conflicts (Claxton & Perr-Jenkins, 2008) and decrease MS (Keizer, Dykstra, & Poortman, 2010), some studies indicate that being a parent increases well-being (Yu et al., 2019) and even increases the happiness of spouses with the first child (Kohler, Behrman, & Skythe, 2005). Our sample may have targeted such a pattern to absorb chronic anxiety to balance relationship harmony; nevertheless, MS inevitably decreases. The link between parenting and MS indicates, “increases or decreases in parents’ marital conflict over raising adolescent children were associated with corresponding decreases or increases in marital satisfaction for both mothers and fathers” (Cui & Donnellan, 2009, p. 478). Our findings move beyond portraying spouses who are satisfied with their marriages when childrearing practices are concerned; instead, we aim to explain better which confounding variables play a role in explaining MS. We assume this relationship requires the context of mediating variables such as emotion regulation abilities (i.e., experiential avoidance) in Turkish samples.



Furthermore, our findings revealed that higher FC resulted in higher experiential avoidance. Although there is no study examining the association between the two variables, previous research indicates that dysfunctional childrearing practices (reflecting FC) predict higher experiential avoidance (Shea & Coyne, 2011). Parental experience avoidance refers to a parent's coping mechanisms with their inner world, such as anxiety-related parenting issues (Emerson, Ogielka, & Rowse, 2019). Experiential avoidance leads to more overprotective, intrusive, or over-controlling behaviors of parents (Tiwari et al., 2008), yet how this relationship may drive to MS has not been examined. We assume that the mechanism between two variables lies in the context of spouses' tendency to suppress their emotions resulting in childrearing-related marital conflicts. Avoidance and not striving for solutions to marital problems (e.g., anxiety ↔ FC) appear as a salient pattern. This mechanism may indicate that Turkish spouses in our sample fail to manage their disagreements and conflicts about childrearing. Yet, they may prefer to suppress feelings (e.g., disappointment, guilt, or anger) that emerge in those conflicts rather than expressing or processing them; in turn, these feelings may have fed the chronic anxiety in the dyadic relationship.

### **Focus on Child to Experiential Avoidance to Marital Satisfaction**

We aimed to investigate the role of experiential avoidance in the association between FC and MS in Turkish dyads. Our findings revealed that higher use of FC predicted higher use of experiential avoidance, decreasing MS. Previous studies have shown interplay between these variables, whereas this is the first investigation to use structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore the associations between all three factors. We assume that this finding is more straightforward to comprehend in the cultural environment due to the childrearing behaviors of our sample since childrearing methods in Turkish middle-class families exhibit conflicting discipline strategies (Sunar & Fişek, 2005), which may have been more likely to produce intergenerational psychological fusion in their family dynamic than personal autonomy. Therefore, the risk of emotional fusion on childrearing methods leading to increased experiential avoidance and FC may be the most difficult challenge for the sample. Likewise, the marital disputes of our participants put their marriages in danger. The direct effect of FC on MS was theoretically integrated by the path that includes experiential avoidance. Moreover, the finding confirms experiential avoidance as a salient potential mechanism in transmitting FC onto MS. We consider that FC and childrearing practices based on intergenerational fusion increased the chronic anxiety in our sample. When spouses had to solve child-related topics, their higher FC might have fed the chronic anxiety over their intense feelings (i.e., disappointment, guilt, or anger), and marital conflicts appeared in their avoidant behaviors of blame, criticism, or sarcasm to mask the unwanted feelings (i.e., chronic anxiety) regarding their MS.

Our study hypothesized an integrated perspective on Bowen's (1978) model and the experiential avoidance concept from ACT to understand emotion regulation mechanisms underlying MS. We verified the evidential support for BFST's claim that higher FC levels (and lower DoS) have an impact on psychological flexibility and MS. Additionally, our findings can apply Bowen's universality assumption to a sample of Turkish spouses from a society with more strong collectivist values than Western societies and individualistic values compared with Eastern culture. Our results may be applied to the field of family counseling by conceptualizing spouses' maladaptive coping mechanisms (such as FC) and how their avoidant actions affect those mechanisms. We presume that the focus should be on increasing spouses' DoS (less FC) and psychological flexibility levels to enhance MS.

As FC theoretically reflects the *triangling* concept, practitioners working with spouses should be mindful of triangling patterns (e.g., mediator, scapegoat) and account for the de-triangling procedure (Bowen, 1978; Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Detriangling in spouses can be seen as efforts to have less FC, and higher DoS level (and lower experiential avoidance). Family therapists can help spouses in three interrelated manners (Titelman, 2008). The first is assisting the spouses in improving their ability to have "*neutral, person-to-person contact*" (Titelman, 2008, p. 48) when child-related topics become their agenda. Such a neutral position of spouses implies having a more unbiased focus on their emotional functioning mechanisms and childrearing practices in their own family. The one step ahead is to progress towards a healthy, authentic relationship between spouses without having emotional distance, as an indication of psychological flexibility (lower experiential avoidance). The second is helping spouses act emotionally less reactive in their marriages, especially when their children are concerned. They can employ techniques for managing their thoughts and emotions that are more self-regulatory. These strategies diminish experiential avoidance by reflecting increased DoS and, theoretically, working in tandem with the ACT's cognitive defusion notion (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999). The third invites partners to consider their involvement in the mechanisms underlying the marriage's problematic patterns.

Our instruments have a self-report structure and are based on spouses' retrospective self-reports regarding their perceptions, thoughts, or emotions within their nuclear family experiences, which may have limited our findings. Moreover, FC theoretically reflects the triangling that children involve in the dyadic relationship to reduce the marital tension. We believe that children's perspectives and understanding of FC are also beneficial through cross-generational interviews to assess FC accurately. Our sample included only heterosexual dyads which can also be a limitation, we recommend determining how FC and experiential avoidance mechanisms also manifest in

extraordinary family forms such as step-families. Our data was also cross-sectional. One cannot infer the findings' causality. One cannot conclude that experiential avoidance drives FC experiences of spouses, or MS drives experiential avoidance without a longitudinal design to evaluate the directionality of effects. Due to the difficulty of collecting dyadic data, our small sample size was limited. We recommend extending the validity of findings to other culture groups with demographically different samples to increase the sample size.

We recommend evaluating the spouses' family-of-origin process based on childrearing practices and emotion regulation strategies in addition to their nuclear family experiences. Researchers can concentrate on determining how the experiences of spouses' families of origin on those characteristics impact their MS. Our sample exhibited a profile with a high level of education including a satisfying viewpoint in MS. Future studies are advised to collect samples with a broader range of educational and socio-economical characteristics. As FC pertains to spouses and at least one child, we recommend researchers use triadic assessment techniques to conceptualize the relationship between FC, experiential avoidance, and MS. Our last suggestion for researchers is to consider possible confounding variables that may affect the link between FC and MS such as personality traits (e.g., neuroticism or psychopathology).

### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors that may affect the current study.

### **Funding**

The current study did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

---

**Ethics Committee Permission Information:** Ethical permission was granted from Institutional Review Board of Ordu University Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences (with approval number: 2020-85) in 25/11/2020.

## References / Kaynakça

- Arbuckle, J. L. (2016). *IBM SPSS Amos 24 user's guide*. IBM.
- Bloch, L., Haase, C. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2014). Emotion regulation predicts marital satisfaction: More than a wives' tale. *Emotion, 14*(1), 130-144. doi: 10.1037/a0034272
- Bond, F. W., Hayes, S. C., Baer, R. A., Carpenter, K. M., Guenole, N., Orcutt, H. K., ... & Zettle, R. D. (2011). Preliminary psychometric properties of the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II: A revised measure of psychological inflexibility and experiential avoidance. *Behavior Therapy, 42*(4), 676-688. doi: 10.1016/j.beth.2011.03.007
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 62*(4), 964-980. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00964.x
- Byrne, B. M. (2010). *Structural equation modeling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications and programming*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Canel, A. N. (2013). The development of the marital satisfaction scale (MSS). *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 13*(1), 97-117.
- Claxton, A., & Perry-Jenkins, M. (2008). No fun anymore: Leisure and marital quality across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*(1), 28-43. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00459.x
- Cui, M., & Donnellan, M. B. (2009). Trajectories of conflict over raising adolescent children and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 71*(3), 478-494. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00614.x
- Curun, F. (2001). *The effects of sexism and sex role orientation on romantic relationship satisfaction*. (Unpublished master's thesis). Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.
- Emerson, L. M., Ogielka, C., & Rowse, G. (2019). The role of experiential avoidance and parental control in the association between parent and child anxiety. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*, 262. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00262
- Erdem, G., & Safi, O. A. (2018). The cultural lens approach to Bowen family systems theory: Contributions of family change theory. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 10*(2), 469-483. doi: 10.1111/jftr.12258
- Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. (2010). Marriage in the new millennium: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*(3), 630-649. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00722.x
- Gaudiano, B. A. (2011). Evaluating acceptance and commitment therapy: An analysis of a recent critique. *International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy, 7*(1), 55-67. doi: 10.1037/h0100891.
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K., & Wilson, K. G. (1999). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: An experiential approach to behavior change*. New York: Guilford.
- Hayes, S. C., Wilson, K. G., Gifford, E. V., Follette, V. M., & Strosahl, K. (1996). Experiential avoidance and behavioral disorders: A functional dimensional approach to diagnosis and treatment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 64*(6), 1152-1168. doi: 10.1037/0022-006X.64.6.1152
- Hayes, S. C., Strosahl, K., Wilson, K. G., Bissett, R. T., Pistorello, J., Toarmino, D., ... & McCurry, S. M. (2004). Measuring experiential avoidance: A preliminary test of a working model. *The Psychological Record, 54*(4), 553-578. doi: 10.1007/BF03395492
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*(1), 93-98. doi: 10.2307/352430
- Hou, Y., Jiang, F., & Wang, X. (2019). Marital commitment, communication and marital satisfaction: An analysis based on actor-partner interdependence model. *International Journal of Psychology, 54*(3), 369-376. doi:10.1002/ijop.12473
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6*(1), 1-55. doi: 10.1080/10705519909540118
- IBM Corp. Released. (2013). *IBM SPSS statistics for Windows, Version 22.0*. IBM Corp.

- Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2020). Research on marital satisfaction and stability in the 2010s: Challenging conventional wisdom. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 100-116. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12635
- Keizer, R., Dykstra, P. A., & Poortman, A. R. (2010). The transition to parenthood and well-being: The impact of partner status and work hour transitions. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(4), 429. doi: 10.1037/a0020414
- Kenny, D. A., Kaniskan, B., & McCoach, D. B. (2015). The performance of RMSEA in models with small degrees of freedom. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 44(3), 486-507. doi: 10.1177/0049124114543236
- Kerr, M. E., & Bowen, M. (1988). *Family evaluation: An approach based on Bowen theory*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Klever, P. (2001). The nuclear family functioning scale: Initial development and preliminary validity. *Families, Systems & Health*, 19(4), 397-410. doi: 10.1037/h0089468
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kohler, H. P., Behrman, J. R., & Skytthe, A. (2005). Partner+ children= happiness? The effects of partnerships and fertility on well-being. *Population and Development Review*, 31(3), 407-445. doi: 10.1111/j.1728-4457.2005.00078.x
- Kurşuncu, M. A. (2020). *Nuclear family emotional processes and marital satisfaction: The mediator roles of interrelational and self-developmental orientations*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.
- Kurşuncu, M. A., & Sümer, Z. H. (2021). Nuclear family emotional functioning and marital satisfaction: The cultural lens of self-construal. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 1-20. doi: 10.1080/01926187.2021.1992804
- Lavner, J. A., Karney, B. R., & Bradbury, T. N. (2016). Does couples' communication predict marital satisfaction, or does marital satisfaction predict communication? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(3), 680-694. doi: 10.1111/jomf.12301
- Ledermann, T., & Kenny, D. A. (2012). The common fate model for dyadic data: Variations of a theoretically important but underutilized model. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 26(1), 140-148. doi: 10.1037/a0026624
- Ledermann, T., & Macho, S. (2009). Mediation in dyadic data at the level of the dyads: A structural equation modeling approach. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(5), 661. doi: 10.1037/a0016197
- MacCallum, R. C., Browne, M. W., & Sugawara, H. M. (1996). Power analysis and determination of sample size for covariance structure modeling. *Psychological Methods*, 1(2), 130-149. doi: 10.1037/1082-989X.1.2.130
- Mirgain, S. A., & Cordova, J. V. (2007). Emotion skills and marital health: The association between observed and self-reported emotion skills, intimacy, and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 26(9), 983-1009. doi: 10.1521/jscp.2007.26.9.983
- Papero, D. V. (2014). Assisting the two-person system: An approach based on the Bowen theory. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(4), 386-397. doi: 10.1002/anzf.1079
- Peterson, B. D., Eifert, G. H., Feingold, T., & Davidson, S. (2009). Using acceptance and commitment therapy to treat distressed couples: A case study with two couples. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 16(4), 430-442. doi: 10.1016/j.cbpra.2008.12.009
- Platt, L., & Skowron, E. (2013). The family genogram interview: Reliability and validity. *The Family Journal*, 21(1), 35-45. doi: 10.1177/1066480712456817
- Rodríguez-González, M., Martins, M. V., Bell, C. A., Lafontaine, M. F., & Costa, M. E. (2019). Differentiation of self, psychological distress, and dyadic adjustment: Exploring an integrative model through an actor-partner analysis. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 41(3), 293-303. doi: 10.1007/s10591-019-09493-x
- Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (2004). *A beginner's guide to structural equation modeling* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Shea, S. E., & Coyne, L. W. (2011). Maternal dysphoric mood, stress, and parenting practices in mothers of Head Start preschoolers: The role of experiential avoidance. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 33(3), 231-247. doi: 10.1080/07317107.2011.596004
- Sunar, D., & Fişek, G. (2005). Contemporary Turkish families. In U. Gielen & J. Roopnarine (Eds.), *Families in global perspective* (pp. 169-183). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.



- Titelman, P. (2008). The concept of the triangle in Bowen theory: An overview. In P. Titelman (Ed.), *Triangles: Bowen Family Systems Theory Perspectives* (pp. 3-63). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Tiwari, S., Podell, J. C., Martin, E. D., Mychailyszyn, M. P., Furr, J. M., & Kendall, P. C. (2008). Experiential avoidance in the parenting of anxious youth: Theory, research, and future directions. *Cognition and Emotion*, 22(3), 480-496. doi: 10.1080/02699930801886599
- Ünal, Ö., & Akgün, S. (2022). Conflict resolution styles as predictors of marital adjustment and marital satisfaction: An actor-partner interdependence model. *Journal of Family Studies*, 28(3), 898-913. doi: 10.1080/13229400.2020.1766542
- Yavuz, F., Ulusoy, S., Iskin, M., Esen, F. B., Burhan, H. S., Karadere, M. E., & Yavuz, N. (2016). Turkish version of acceptance and action questionnaire-II (AAQ-II): A reliability and validity analysis in clinical and non-clinical samples. *Bulletin of Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 26(4), 397-408. doi: 10.5455/bcp.20160223124107
- Yu, Q., Zhang, J., Zhang, L., Zhang, Q., Guo, Y., Jin, S., & Chen, J. (2019). Who gains more? The relationship between parenthood and well-being. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 17(3), doi: 1474704919860467