

## Marital Satisfaction of Turkish Individuals: The Role of Marriage Type, Duration of Marriage, and Personality Traits

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### Abstract

The aim of the present study was to investigate the role of marriage type (family-arranged versus self-choice), duration of marriage, and personality traits (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism) in predicting married Turkish individuals' marital satisfaction levels. Participants were 288 (147 female and 141 male) married Turkish individuals living in urban cities in Turkey. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed significant results for the linear combination of marriage type and duration of marriage as well as personality traits in explaining individuals' marital satisfaction levels. More specifically, duration of marriage, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were found to have individual significant contributions to Turkish individuals' marital satisfaction levels. Results were discussed by offering suggestions for future research and mental health professionals working with marriage and family issues.

**Keywords:** marital satisfaction, marriage type, duration of marriage, personality traits, Turkish individuals

### 1. Introduction

We are living in a world where marriage as a social institution is becoming less and less dominant (Cherlin, 2004), especially in Western cultures, and divorce rates are outnumbering death as the main reason for the end point of marriage (Pinsof, 2002). Research findings, however, continue to support that marital satisfaction is a strong predictor of life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007) as well as physical health (Troxel, Braithwaite, Sandberg, & Holt-Lunstad, 2017; Zhou et al., 2011). Given the importance of marital satisfaction, many researchers have focused on the factors contributing to married individuals' perceived relationship fulfillment (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Gadassi et al., 2016; Weiss, Lavner, & Miller, 2016). As most of these studies targeted Western societies with love-based or self-choice marriages, exploration of marital satisfaction in a society where both family-arranged and self-choice marriages exist is a promising area of study. Thus, the Turkish society would be a good population for such an examination that would add to our current knowledge base of marital satisfaction.

Having lands on both the European and Asian continents, Turkey is a unique mixture of modernism and traditionalism. Rooted in the Ottoman Empire, which ruled for more than 600 years, the Turkish society is still carrying the influence of inherited culture and traditions. During the Ottoman period, marriages were arranged by the elders of the family and ruled by the Islamic law. Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkish family law was based on the Swiss Civil Code, which required individuals' free will and consent in marriage. Statistics reveal that the ratio of arranged marriages between 1981 and 1990 was 57%, however it decreased to 34% between 2001 and 2011 (Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2015).

Reflecting a mixture of traditionalism and modernism, in Turkey, there are a considerable number of arranged marriages besides self-choice ones (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2016). However, one of the speculative changes in the nature of family-arranged marriages since the Ottoman era may be considered as the individuals' increasing say in the arrangement. For example, some families tend to ask whether their daughter or son would like to marry the prospective spouse they believe would be a good fit for them. In other instances, individuals could object to their families' choice, particularly if they have someone else in mind. Statistics also reveal that the number of individuals who got married between 2001 and 2011 with arranged marriages and without their opinion being asked decreased 4.5 times compared to those between 1981 and 1990 (Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2015). Furthermore, statistics support that the increase in education levels of the individuals result in a decrease in arranged marriages and an increase in self-choice marriages. Therefore, considering the importance of marital satisfaction as well as the changing nature of the Turkish society, examining marriage type in Turkey is an area that warrants attention. Particularly, comparing family-arranged and self-choice marriages in an Eastern and Western blended society, while considering factors such as duration of marriage and personality traits, in this study, we aim to obtain an understanding of these factors' contribution to married Turkish individuals' perceived marital satisfaction. Taking into consideration that most of the studies examining marriage type in Turkey were conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it would be beneficial to investigate the relationship between marriage type and marital satisfaction with more recent research findings so that possible changes in the Turkish society would be better reflected.

### 1.1. Marital Satisfaction

The present-day study of marital satisfaction is predominantly based on two models (i.e., intrapersonal versus interpersonal) with competing perspectives regarding how marriages change over time (Amiri, Farhoodi, Abdolvand, & Bidakhavidi, 2011; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Karney & Bradbury, 1997). According to the *intrapersonal model*, individuals' enduring characteristics and personality traits define how they respond to important social stimuli (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). In other words, stable factors that each partner brings to the marital relationship are thought to influence how they respond to one another within the relationship, which indirectly affects their marital satisfaction (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000). *Interpersonal models*, on the other hand, support that relationships emerge from the interaction between the partners (Karney & Bradbury, 1997) and that interpersonal processes such as communication and emotional contagion determine individuals' marital satisfaction levels (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000). More specifically, the dyadic communication process helps provide closeness and connectedness for the couple. Laurenceau, Barrett, and Rovine (2005) share that disclosing emotions and showing responsiveness through understanding and validation are features of spouses in satisfied marriages. In the present study, by examining the role of personality traits, we aim to get an understanding of the intrapersonal factors in explaining marital satisfaction among Turkish individuals. On the other hand, studying duration of marriage will allow us to extend our understanding regarding the interpersonal processes related to possible closeness and connectedness in marriage. Lastly, examining marriage type would help us better understand the role of traditional and modern approaches to marriage in Turkey.

### 1.2. Marriage Type

Marriage type in this study refers to one of two types: a) family-arranged marriage (i.e., marriages in which families or acquaintances of individuals choose or introduce prospective spouses to each other; Hortaçsu & Oral, 1994) and b) self-choice marriage (i.e., marriages in which both partners freely choose their spouse themselves). The way of selecting a partner to get married differs from one culture to another. Family-arranged marriages are more common in Eastern societies where elders' viewpoint and decision are heavily valued and respected (Hammon & Ingoldsby, 2003). Depending on the family values and degree of traditionalism, family-arranged marriages could range from individuals getting married having no say in the decision making process, to individuals agreeing to marry someone of their family's choice and having an engagement period where they get to know the potential spouse prior to getting married. On the other hand, self-choice marriages are mostly known as love-based marriages, in which the individuals make the decision on their own and then announce it to family and friends. Therefore, self-choice marriages may be considered as commonly based in individualistic Western societies as opposed to family-arranged marriages' collectivistic nature (Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003).

Although, the relationship between marriage type and marital satisfaction has received little attention (Myers, Madathil, & Tingle, 2005), researchers particularly in non-Western cultures have put in effort to describe this phenomenon. The results are diverse.

For instance, findings of a study conducted in Nepal, where marriages are predominantly arranged, revealed that individuals in self-choice marriages reported significantly higher marital satisfaction levels than those in arranged marriages (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013). Similarly, in another study conducted in a collectivistic society, Japan, Xiaohe and Whyte (1990) reported that individuals in love-based marriages were more satisfied with their marital relationships than their counterparts in arranged marriages regardless of the length of the marriage and other background factors. On the contrary, Arif and Fatima's (2015) study results showed that participants were more satisfied in arranged and self-choice marriages if they had parental acceptance than the ones who did not have parental acceptance. Moreover, results of a study conducted in Ethiopia pointed out that individuals in arranged marriages and self-selected marriages were both satisfied in their marriages if their marriages were age-appropriate (Yizengaw, Kibret, Gebersulis, & Sewasew, 2014). In a study conducted in Israel, Shachar (1991) surveyed 206 young married couples to examine differences in marital satisfaction in arranged marriages and in marriages in which spouses were selected autonomously. He found that the duration of courtship, premarital cohabitation, and patterns of spouse selection were only minimally related to marital satisfaction. Similarly, Myers, Madathil, and Tingle (2005) revealed no difference in marital satisfaction levels between arranged and self-choice marriages. Lastly, Madathil and Benshoff (2008) studied arranged marriages and marriages of choice among three groups: Asian Indians in arranged marriages living in India, Asian Indians in arranged marriages living in the United States, and Americans in self-choice marriages. The results of the study revealed that Asian Indian participants in arranged marriages living in the U.S. were significantly more satisfied with their marriages overall. Thus, even though people living in individualistic societies question the satisfaction levels of individuals in arranged marriages, it is assumed that, the culture of the married person and its norms about marriage is important in determining the satisfaction level.

In an earlier study, Turkish individuals' marital satisfaction levels were found to be positively associated with self-selection of marriage and socioeconomic status (İmamoğlu & Yasak, 1997). Similarly, results of another study primarily investigating the quality of marriage and loneliness reported that married Turkish individuals in self-choice marriages had higher degree of perceived marital adjustment compared to those in arranged marriages (Demir & Fışlıoğlu, 1999). Marital adjustment was also examined in a Turkish sample of individuals in consanguineous (i.e., marriage between cousins or other relatives that are no more distant than a great-great grandparent; Givens & Hirschman, 1994) and non-consanguineous marriages (Fışlıoğlu, 2001). The researcher reported that individuals in consanguineous marriages had significantly lower marital adjustment scores than those in non-consanguineous marriages. In comparisons of family- and couple-initiated marriages in Turkey, family arranged marriages were to be found more in rural than urban areas (Hortaçsu & Oral, 1994). Hortaçsu (2007) in a study focusing on the urban Turkish family, stated that couple-initiated marriages were associated with more positive spousal emotions and fewer conflicts in comparison to family-initiated marriages. The results of the current study will provide researchers with an updated understanding of marriage types and its relationship to marital satisfaction.

### 1.3. Duration of Marriage

The civil marriage ceremony being the starting date, duration of marriage refers to the length of an individual's marriage. The initial studies conducted in the 1960s reported that marital satisfaction was either maintained (Dentler & Pineo, 1960) or declined steadily during the first 10 years of marriage (Dentler & Pineo, 1960; Pineo, 1961). However, later studies, which mostly used cross-sectional data, indicated that there was a U-Shaped/curvilinear pattern for marital quality/satisfaction throughout the duration of marriage (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983; Lupri & Frideres, 1981; Rollins & Cannon, 1974). For instance, Vaillant and Vaillant (1993) in their 40-year study examining marital satisfaction both prospectively and retrospectively reported that marital satisfaction followed a weak curvilinear pattern with the lowest level of marital satisfaction at approximately 20 years. When studied prospectively, the U-curve disappeared and marital satisfaction remained relatively stable, particularly in the middle and later years.

Orbuch and colleagues (1996) have stated that the relationship between marital satisfaction and duration of marriage was U-shaped. On the other hand, Glenn (1998) has indicated a continuous decline in marital satisfaction over time. Similarly, Karney and Bradbury (1997) emphasized that longitudinal research has failed to support the curvilinear change that was expected to take place in marital satisfaction levels of spouses over the life span. Instead, they indicated that individuals begin marriage with relatively higher marital satisfaction levels and then report gradual decline in their marital satisfaction over time.

Moreover, VanLanhingham, Johnson, and Amato (2001) stated that marital happiness did not increase in the later years of marriage. In other words, after an initial decline, marital happiness either continued to decline or remained flat. On the other hand, Allendorf and Ghimire (2013) reported that the duration of marriage was significantly related to marital quality in Nepal. More specifically, Nepalese individuals who were married for longer periods of time had higher levels of marital satisfaction and fewer problems and disagreements with their spouses. Similarly, Zainah, Nasir, Hashim, and Yusof (2012) found that length of marriage made a significant difference in marital satisfaction levels of Malaysian couples. More specifically, couples that were married for ten years or more were more satisfied with their marriage than couples that were married for less than ten years.

In a study conducted with married Turkish couples, Demir and Fişloğlu (1999) did not find a significant relationship between quality of marriage and marital duration. Moreover, duration of marriage and marital satisfaction were negatively related to each other on a sample consisting of American, British and Turkish couples (Wendorf, Lucas, İmamoğlu, Weisfeld, & Weisfeld, 2011). Similar to the other variables of the current study, the relationship between duration of marriage and marital satisfaction has not been examined adequately on Turkish samples. Thus, in the present study, the contribution of duration of marriage to marital satisfaction will also be examined.

#### **1.4. Personality Traits**

Representing consensus of a general taxonomy of personality attributes, personality traits in this study indicate Big Five dimensions of personality (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The five dimensions and their encompassing traits are as follows: *agreeableness* (e.g., trust, straightforwardness, altruism, and compliance), *conscientiousness* (e.g., competence, dutifulness, self-discipline, and deliberation), *extraversion* (e.g., sociability, assertiveness, warmth, and enthusiasm), *openness* (e.g., imaginativeness, aesthetics, and willingness to try different activities), and *neuroticism* (e.g., anxiety, depression, impulsiveness and vulnerability; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Previous research findings reported that individuals' personality characteristics were related to their marital satisfaction levels (Amiri et al., 2011; Caughlin et al., 2000). Observing newlywed couples over a four-year period, Karney and Bradbury (1997) found that neuroticism was negatively related to initial levels of marital satisfaction. Likewise, the negative association between trait anxiety and marital satisfaction was also reported in a longitudinal study of 13 years as an indicator of the significant relationship between personality traits and marital satisfaction (Caughlin et al., 2000). Moreover, in a study with long-wed couples, Claxton, O'Rourke, Smith, and DeLongis (2012) found that all of the five personality traits were significantly related to marital satisfaction with conscientiousness being the strongest predictor. In a study conducted with married students majoring in public universities in Iran, Amiri and colleagues (2011) reported that the big five personality traits were significantly associated with participants' marital satisfaction levels. More specifically, neuroticism was the largest predictor of marital satisfaction and negatively related to it. Agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness to experience were all positively associated with marital satisfaction in the respective order of power.

In addition to these studies, in a meta-analysis of the relationships between Five-Factor Model traits and self-rated satisfaction, Heller, Watson, and Ilies (2004) found that high agreeableness and conscientiousness as well as low neuroticism was significantly related to high levels of marital satisfaction. In another meta-analytic study, researchers reported that low neuroticism as well as high agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion were significantly correlated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction in intimate heterosexual partners (Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Schutte, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2010). As indicated in the research findings presented above, individuals' personality characteristics seem to play a considerable role in influencing their perceptions regarding their marriage. To our knowledge, examination of personality traits in relation to marital satisfaction has not been studied with a Turkish sample, yet. Therefore, this study will add to the findings presented above regarding the relationships between personality traits and marital satisfaction in a married Turkish sample.

#### **1.5. Hypotheses**

The aim of the present study is to examine how marriage type, duration of marriage, and personality characteristics play a role in predicting married Turkish individuals' marital satisfaction levels. The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. Marriage type will significantly predict individuals' marital satisfaction levels. More specifically, individuals from self-choice marriages will have significantly higher marital satisfaction levels than those from family-arranged marriages.
2. Duration of marriage will significantly predict individuals' marital satisfaction levels. As individuals' duration of marriage increases, so will their marital satisfaction levels.
3. Personality traits will significantly predict individuals' marital satisfaction levels. Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness will be significantly and positively related to marital satisfaction and neuroticism will be significantly but negatively related.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

Participants of the current study were 147 female and 141 male, a total of 288, married Turkish individuals from five urban cities in Turkey. In reaching the participants, convenience sampling method was utilized through word-of-mouth advertising to the personal networks of the researchers. Participants' age ranged from 20 to 66 ( $M = 38.21$ ,  $SD = 8.50$ ). A little more than half of the participants (52.1%) reported pre-college education (i.e., 5.2% elementary school, 6.9% middle school, 39.9% high school) whereas the other half reported college degrees (47.9%). Most of the participants reported that they had children; 33.7% had one child, 45.5% had two children, 6.3% had three children, and .7% had 4 children, whereas 13.9% had no children. The duration of participants' marriages ranged from 6 months to 40.42 years ( $M = 12.94$ ,  $SD = 9.07$ ). One hundred fifteen participants (39.9%) reported being in arranged marriages whereas 173 participants were in self-choice marriages (60.1%).

### **2.2. Measures**

#### **2.2.1. Demographics**

Participants' demographic information was collected through a form that included questions regarding gender, age, education level, number of children, duration of marriage, and marriage type (family-arranged vs. self-choice).

#### **2.2.2. Marital Satisfaction**

The Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS) was developed in Turkey by Tezer (1996) to assess the overall satisfaction of married individuals. The scale consists of 10 items with 5-point responses (1: Completely disagree to 5: Completely agree). Two separate studies were conducted for the development of the scale. The internal consistency of the scale was reported as .91 for the first study and .89 for the second study (Tezer, 1996). Test-retest reliability over three-month interval was reported as .85. The negative correlation with tension scores of the Marital Relationship Questionnaire and low correlation with the Personal Behaviours Questionnaire, measuring social desirability, indicated good construct validity for MSS (Tezer, 1996). Tezer (1996) reported that MSS scores significantly differed between the couples who were in on-going marriages and couples who had been divorced.

#### **2.2.3. Personality Traits**

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) was utilized to assess participants' personality dimensions of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism (John & Srivastava, 1999). The BFI consists of 44 items with a 5-point Likert scale (1: Disagree strongly to 5: Agree strongly). For the original five subscales, alpha reliability coefficients ranged from .75 to .90, and from .80 to .90 in the 3-month test-retest analysis. Validity coefficients with the NEO-Five Factor Inventory were .91 for Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion subscales, .88 for the Neuroticism and .83 for the Openness subscales. The Big Five Inventory was adapted to Turkish by Alkan (2006), who reported alpha reliability for the total scale as .87 and ranging from .67 to .89 for the subscales of the Turkish version.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

In the current study, we intended to examine the predictive effects of marriage type, duration of marriage, and personality traits on married Turkish individuals' marital satisfaction. Prior to the main analysis, we conducted a series of preliminary procedures to obtain a better understanding of our data set. First, using IBM SPSS 22, we examined the missing values, outliers, as well as the assumptions of hierarchical regression analysis.

In the current data set, missing values in each of the variables did not exceed 2.5%; thus, due to the relatively small sample size, instead of listwise deletion, we used Expectation Maximization (EM) technique to deal with the missing data. In terms of the accuracy of data, among Z-score, Cook's distance, and Mahalanobis distance values, one case appeared as the common univariate and multivariate outlier. Likewise, between Cook's and Mahalanobis distance values, there was one other case, which appeared as the second common univariate and multivariate outlier. After deleting these two common outliers, the insignificant model/block in the hierarchical regression analysis became significant and the  $R^2$  was increased by .06%. Thus, we ended up deleting two outliers, which were detected as both univariate and multivariate. Furthermore, all the necessary assumptions (i.e., univariate normality of the dependent variable, normality and independence of errors, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity) met the minimum requirements for hierarchical regression analysis. Next, we conducted a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis with two blocks.

### 3. Results

Marriage type and duration of marriage were entered into the regression analysis in the first block, whereas agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism were entered into the analysis in the second block. By doing so, after controlling the compound effect of marriage type and duration of marriage, the predictive power of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism on marital satisfaction were examined. Results are presented for each model in Table 1.

**Table 1. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Satisfaction of Married Turkish Individuals**

	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$F$	$b$	$SE(b)$	$B$	$t$
Model 1	.022	.015	3.19*				
Duration of Marriage				.011	.004	.14	2.38*
Marriage Type (Arranged vs. Self-Choice)				1.200	.990	.072	1.21
Model 2	.151	.129	8.40**				
Duration of Marriage				.005	.004	.064	1.10
Marriage Type (Arranged vs. Self-Choice)				.199	.958	.012	.21
Agreeableness				.291	.103	.185	2.82**
Conscientiousness				.239	.091	.171	2.62**
Extraversion				.068	.101	.046	.68
Openness				-.011	.085	-.009	-.14
Neuroticism				-.168	.079	-.123	-2.12*

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

Hierarchical regression analysis results revealed that, in Model 1, explaining 2% of the variance, linear combination of marriage type and duration of marriage significantly predicted individuals' marital satisfaction,  $F(2,282) = 3.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .022$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .015$ . In this model, duration of marriage significantly contributed to the explained variance in marital satisfaction. Specifically, when there was one unit increase in duration of marriage, participants' marital satisfaction scores increased by .14 units. In Model 2, after controlling the effects of marriage type and duration of marriage, the multiple correlation coefficient between the linear combination of five predictors, namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and neuroticism, and marital satisfaction was increased to .39. This model explained 13% of the variance in participants' marital satisfaction levels. The contribution of Model 2 to the regression equation was also significant,  $F(5,277) = 8.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .151$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .129$ . In this model, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism had individual significant contributions to the explained variance in marital satisfaction. Particularly, when there was one unit increase in participants' agreeableness and conscientiousness scores, their marital satisfaction scores increased by .19 and .17 units respectively. On the other hand, when participants' neuroticism scores increased one unit, their marital satisfaction scores decreased .12 units.

### 4. Discussion

We examined if and to what degree marriage type, duration of marriage, and personality traits predicted marital satisfaction levels of married Turkish individuals.

Overall, our data analysis results provided some support for our hypotheses. Moreover, the observed relations are theoretically meaningful and go beyond a simple evaluative aspect of marital satisfaction. Our efforts to understand to what degree marriage type explained marital satisfaction in a traditional but gradually westernized culture yielded an interesting finding. Contrary to our expectations, marriage type did not significantly predict marital satisfaction. In other words, participants in self-choice marriages did not differ from those in family-arranged marriages in terms of their marital satisfaction levels. This finding was different from a previous research study that indicated a positive relationship between self-selected marriages and higher marital satisfaction in another Turkish sample (İmamoğlu & Yasak, 1997). Likewise, compared to the study results carried out in other collectivistic cultures, such as Nepal (Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013) and Japan (Xiaohe & Whyte, 1990), which reported individuals in love-based marriages being more satisfied with their marital relationships than their counterparts in arranged marriages, this finding appeared as inconsistent yet intriguing.

Most of the studies on arranged and self-choice marriages, particularly the ones with Turkish samples, were carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s. Therefore, our findings may point out the fact that Turkey has been changing in a fast manner due to more exposure to Western cultures. Arranged marriages might also differ according to the degree of traditionalism practiced in a certain family. Due to the fact that our participants were from urban settlements in Turkey, even those in arranged marriages may have had more modernized procedures and experiences such as an engagement period. Similarly, our participants' families may have taken their children's characteristics into consideration and have chosen potential spouses that they believe their children would like and get along well with. Even though the marriage was arranged, those families may have utilized an educated guess of how compatible the couple would be and could have given the prospective couple an equal chance of marital satisfaction. Furthermore, the individual may have had a say in his/her family's offer/decision in regards to the potential spouse's characteristics.

Our second hypothesis, the significant relationship between duration of marriage and marital satisfaction was also supported by the data. Participants with longer durations of marriage reported higher levels of marital satisfaction. This finding was somewhat supportive of some of the previous research findings (e.g., Allendorf & Ghimire, 2013) whereas differed from the others (e.g., Demir & Fışılıoglu, 1999). In line with our findings, Zainah and colleagues' (2012) study indicated that individuals with ten years and above in length of marriage were found to be more satisfied with their marriages than those married less than ten years. These findings may also be related to high cohesion in marriage helping negotiate difficult periods of adjustment, and this flexibility keeping the couple happy and satisfied with their marriage (Olson, Russell, & Sprengle, 1983). The more work one puts in a relationship to maintain it and make it better, the more satisfied he/she would be with it in the long run. As a result, partners may develop cohesion over the course of their marriage, which may lead to higher marital satisfaction.

Despite these assumptions, the cross-sectional nature of the current study is not adequate to discuss the pattern of marital satisfaction over time. On the other hand, the relationship between longer duration of marriages and marital satisfaction could be also explained with the stress factors such as psychological, social, and economical problems related to the marital adjustment process. Particularly, the early stages of marriage, especially with the involvement of families, are a very common struggle for couples in Turkey. After some years, married individuals may overcome the difficulties of the adjustment period, develop their marital identities, and experience less distress derived from family and in-law relationships, which may be related to increased satisfaction.

Finally, our third hypothesis regarding the relationships between different personality traits and marital satisfaction was partially confirmed. More specifically, the results indicated that participants' agreeableness and conscientiousness scores significantly and positively, whereas their neuroticism scores significantly and negatively predicted marital satisfaction. These results were in the same line with previous research findings reporting agreeableness and conscientiousness (e.g., Amiri et al., 2011; Claxton, O'Rourke, Smith, & DeLongis, 2012; Malouff et al., 2010) as significant positive correlates of marital satisfaction and neuroticism (e.g., Buss, 1991) as a significant negative predictor of marital adjustment.

Supported by the current and previous research findings, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism appear to be global personality characteristics that either contribute to or take away from the quality of the relationship. An agreeable partner could approach his/her spouse in a thoughtful manner, be more clear in his/her intentions with his/her spouse, have more trust in the relationship, and be helpful and easy to get along due to taking ownership of one's responsibilities in the marital relationship.

In addition, a conscientious partner could be more deliberate in his/her behaviours towards their spouse, put effort into maintaining the quality relationship, and be competent in dealing with issues faced along the way. On the other hand, the less depressed, anxious, self-conscious, and hostile an individual is, the more they would be fulfilled with their marriage. In brief, it appears natural for agreeable, conscientious, and less neurotic individuals to appreciate and be more satisfied with their relationship, as they could take deliberate steps to maintain a happier and more satisfied marital relationship with their spouses. Current study findings could also be discussed in the terms of Turkish cultural tendencies. Taking the collectivistic nature of the Turkish society into consideration, people are socialized to be more agreeable and conscientious when it comes to their significant others. Finding a common ground, being deliberately understanding and capable of addressing the partner's needs are valued characteristics in a partner. These may not only improve the relationship quality, but also help the individual feel functional in serving the sacred unit of the society, the family. Similarly, being less anxious and hostile would lead to more agreement and fulfillment in a marital relationship.

#### **4.1. Limitations**

The current study relied on self-report measures, which comes with the risk that all reported data is based on participants' perceptions. Not controlling social desirability, we acknowledge that participants' reports may have involved under- or over-report of personality characteristics as well as marital satisfaction. Additionally, this study recruited a convenience sample of participants from urban cities of Turkey. A sample of participants from rural settings may have yielded different results. Furthermore, due to convenience sampling, the statistical effect in the current study may involve sampling error. As the current study also involved a relatively small sample, despite being tested, different demographic variables such as gender, education level, and age were not included in the analysis. Inclusion of these demographic variables may lead to different results in different samples and provide a better understanding of the subject matter overall.

#### **4.2. Implications**

Results of the current study generated further questions to be investigated in future research endeavors. In this study, we did not ask our participants regarding the details of their marriage arrangements. We believe the nature of arranged marriages in contemporary Turkish society would be a promising area to investigate in future studies. This can be examined through comparisons of individuals in arranged marriages from rural and urban areas of Turkey as well as educated and less educated segments. Additionally, the trajectory of arranged marriages and the range of arrangement practices would be an important area of research as we found arranged marriages as satisfactory as self-choice marriages in the current study. Furthermore, we only studied married individuals. Further research may involve dyadic data collection procedures. Moreover, longitudinal designs could also contribute to the understanding of marital satisfaction in Turkish individuals and couples.

Results of this study also have implications for mental health professionals working in the field of marriage and family counseling. In the multicultural world we live in, different cultures have different dynamics involved in marriage. Based on our findings, mental health professionals could take into consideration the clients' intrapersonal factors especially their level of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism in dealing with marital issues. In addition, our findings indicated a significant positive relationship between marital satisfaction and duration of marriage. Therefore, paying attention to the factors that have positively contributed to and brought the couple emotionally closer throughout their marriage while learning how the couple had dealt with the stressors in their earlier years of marriage could be helpful. Understanding different marital and family dynamics for individuals coming from mainly collectivistic societies appears as a less understood area for the practitioners in Western societies. Therefore, the results of the current study may help marriage and family counselors gain insight into differing cultural practices and their influence on the individuals. More specifically, we hope that results of this study will encourage mental health professionals to recognize and conduct in-depth assessments in understanding marital satisfaction levels of individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

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