Summary

The Mediating Role of Marital Power on the Relationship between Attachment Dimensions and Marital Satisfaction among Married Couples

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Studies have shown that insecure attachment is related to low satisfaction in relationships (e.g., Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Davila, Bradbury, & Fincham, 1998; Harma & Sümer, 2016; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Specifically, individuals attached to their spouses anxiously or in an avoidant manner were shown to have less marital satisfaction. In addition, it was indicated that spouses married to an insecurely attached person also had lower marital satisfaction (e.g., Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Harma & Sümer, 2016). Considering the crucial effect of insecure attachment on marital satisfaction of both partners, it is essential to uncover the underlying mechanisms.

It was repeatedly reported that attachment insecurity was related to perceived low power in relationships (Lemay & Dudley, 2009; Oka, Brown, & Miller, 2016) and low power was related to low relationship satisfaction (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Zimbler, 2012). Therefore, it can be suggested that marital power mediates the association of attachment anxiety and avoidance with marital satisfaction. However, to the best of our knowledge, the mediating role of marital power on this association has not yet been investigated. In this context, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between attachment insecurity (high attachment anxiety or avoidance) and marital satisfaction and the mediating role of marital power within this relationship. Additionally, we also aimed to understand the association between an individual's attachment insecurity and his/her partner's marital satisfaction and the mediating role of actor's and/or partner's marital power on this association.

Attachment and Marital Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as '*having needs met, and within long-term couple relationships, the needs have to do with wishes for love, intimacy, affection, accep-tance, understanding, support, and security, as well as more individualistic wishes for autonomy, growth, and competence*' and it is stated that '*in terms of attachment theory, relationship satisfaction depends on the extent to which partners effectively meet their needs for proximity, a safe haven, and a secure base*' (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, p. 308). In addition, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were reported to be associated with low marital satisfaction (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Accordingly, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were linked to the couple's nonfunctional reactions given against relationship problems that were common in every marriage, and as a result, they were linked to the couples' dissatisfaction in their marriage. In the present study, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were expected to predict an individual's own marital satisfaction (Hypothesis 1) as well as that of his/her partner's (Hypothesis 2).

The Mediating Role of Marital Power on the Association between Attachment Dimensions and Marital Satisfaction

In accordance with the various definitions presented in the literature, briefly, power can be defined as an individual's ability or potential to influence others' behaviors, gains or resources and change them in order for the individual to attain his/her own goals (*see* Simpson, Farrell, Orina, & Rothman, 2015). Numerous studies indicated that attachment insecurity was related to the perceived low power in relationships (e.g., Lemay & Dudley, 2009; Oka et al., 2016). In the present study, parallel to the findings of previous studies, both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were expected to be related to low marital power.

In association with insecure attachment, low relationship power was found to be related to various

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Partial Correlations Among Study Variables Controlling for The Number of Children

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. W (Wife) Attachment Anxiety	-							
2. H (Husband) Attachment Anxiety	.45**	-						
3. W Attachment Avoidance	.54**	.39**	-					
4. H Attachment Avoidance	.34**	.51**	.47**	-				
5. W Marital Power	-.51**	-.26**	-.35**	-.22**	-			
6. H Marital Power	-.33**	-.46**	-.23**	-.40**	.38**	-		
7. W Marital Satisfaction	-.43**	-.23**	-.46**	-.24**	.49**	.32**	-	
8. H Marital Satisfaction	-.38**	-.35**	-.31**	-.54**	.30**	.43**	.42**	-
Mean	3.31	3.11	2.29	2.37	3.78	3.78	7.80	7.97
Standard Deviation	1.01	.90	.98	.92	.74	.71	1.47	1.32

Note. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$

problems in marriage (e.g., Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1999) as well as to low marital and relationship satisfaction (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Kifer et al., 2013; Zimbler, 2012). Similarly, in this study, as a result of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, perceived low marital power was predicted to create low marital satisfaction among individuals. In other words, both attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were expected to decrease marital power which in turn was expected to decrease each spouse's marital satisfaction (Hypothesis 3). In addition, attachment anxiety and avoidance were expected to negatively predict the spouse's marital satisfaction through the individual's and/or the spouse's low marital power (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants

Participants of the current study were 164 married couples, reached out through snowball sampling. Two couples were excluded from the study as data from at least one spouse included outliers. Analyses were performed with the remaining 162 couples. The participants were aged between 21 and 54 years ($M = 31.44$, $SD = 4.74$).

Materials

Personal Information Form. In this form, the participants were asked to provide personal information such as gender, age, education level, and employment status.

Couple Power Scale. Couple Power Scale which was developed as part of The Flourishing Families Project (Day et al., 2016) was used in the study. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Kaynak-Malatyalı (2014). In the present study, internal consistency was calculated as .85 for husbands and .87 for wives.

Investment Model Scale. The scale was developed by Martz and Agnew (1998). It was adapted into Turkish by Büyükşahin, Hasta and Hovardaoğlu (2005). The relationship satisfaction dimension of the scale was only used in the present study. In this study, internal consistency for relationship satisfaction dimension was found .96 for husbands and .97 for wives.

Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-Revised. The scale was developed by Waller and Brennan (2000). It has two dimensions namely avoidance and anxiety. The scale was adapted into Turkish by Selçuk, Günaydın, Sümer and Uysal (2005). In the present study, internal consistency for the anxiety dimension was calculated as .83 for husbands and .86 for wives. Internal consistency for avoidance dimension was .87 for husbands and .89 for wives.
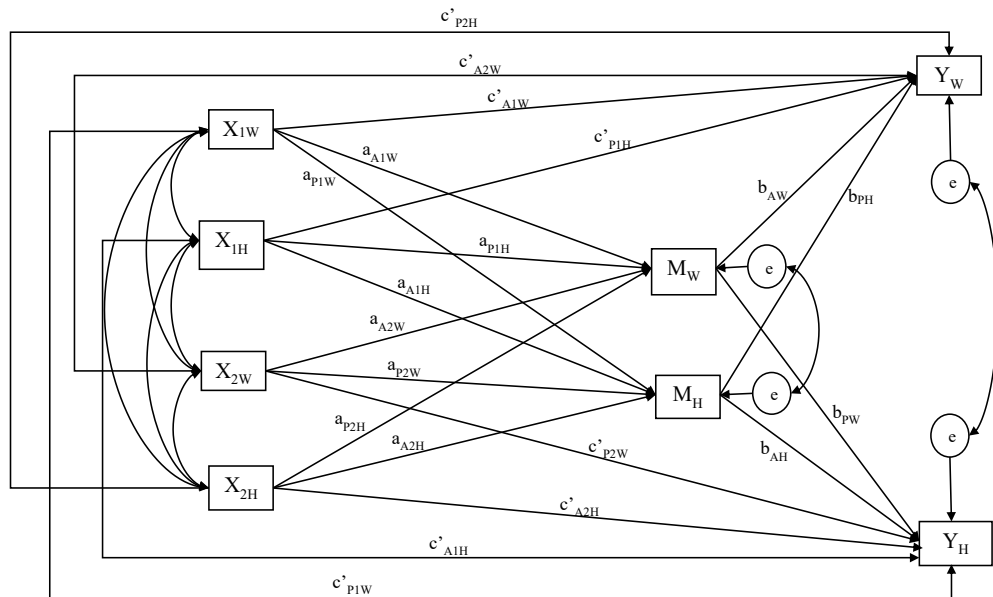
Figure 1. Proposed APIMeM investigating the mediating role of marital power on the association between attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and marital satisfaction. X1 refers to attachment anxiety; X2 refers to attachment avoidance; M refers to marital power; Y refers to marital satisfaction; W refers to wife; H refers to husband; A refers to actor effect; P refers to partner effect; e refers to error term; a, b and c' refers to traditional paths in models with mediation. Paths were named according to these abbreviations. The number of children is covariate. Covariate was not shown in the figure to make the figure more understandable. The model was adapted from that of Ledermann, Macho and Kenny (2011).

Procedure

The scales were provided to the participants in envelopes and the participants delivered them sealed up. The participants were informed about the study in the first page of the form and they were asked to provide their voluntary consent.

Results

Partial correlations among the main study variables (attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, marital power and marital satisfaction) were computed after controlling for the number of children (*see* Table 1). All correlations between the variables were in the expected direction and significant.

Next, in order to investigate the gender differences among the study variables, a series of repeated measures analyses of variance were conducted controlling for the number of children. Results indicated that there were no significant gender differences on attachment avoidance, $F(1,160) = .35$, $p = .56$; attachment anxiety, $F(1,160) = .92$, $p = .34$; marital power, $F(1,160) = .23$, $p = .63$; and marital satisfaction, $F(1,160) = 1.91$, $p = .17$, after controlling for the number of children.

Study hypotheses were tested by using Actor-Partner Interdependence Model with Mediation (APIMeM, Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011) in which a pair of mediating variables were added to Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM, Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) using AMOS program. The proposed model was presented in Figure 1. In the model, independent variables were husband's and wife's attachment anxiety (X_1) and attachment avoidance (X_2), mediating variables were husband's and wife's marital power (M), and dependent variables were husband's and wife's marital satisfaction (Y). In addition, the number of children was added as covariate. The final model was the saturated model of which degrees of freedom equal to zero.

All unstandardized regression coefficients (*B*), standard errors (SE) and *p* values were shown in Table 2. In terms of the effect of attachment anxiety on marital power, actor effect of both wives and husbands were found to be statistically significant while partner effects of both wives and husbands were found to be statistically non-significant. As for the effect of attachment avoidance on marital power, actor effect of husbands was significant whereas husbands' partner effect and wives' both actor and partner effects were non-significant.

Table 2. Unstandardized Regression Coefficients (B), Standard Errors (SE) and *p* Values for the APIMeM.

| Effect	*B*	*SE*	*p*
Attachment Anxiety (X_1) → Marital Power (M)			
Wife Actor Effect (a_{A1W})	**-.33**	**.06**	**<.001**
Husband Actor Effect (a_{A1H})	**-.24**	**.07**	**<.001**
Wife Partner Effect (a_{P1W})	-.11	.06	.07
Husband Partner Effect (a_{P1H})	-.01	.07	.91
Attachment Avoidance (X_2) → Marital Power (M)			
Wife Actor Effect (a_{A2W})	-.07	.06	.25
Husband Actor Effect (a_{A2H})	**-.18**	**.07**	**.01**
Wife Partner Effect (a_{P2W})	.06	.06	.37
Husband Partner Effect (a_{P2H})	-.01	.07	.90
Marital Power (M) → Marital Satisfaction (Y)			
Wife Actor Effect (b_{AW})	**.58**	**.15**	**<.001**
Husband Actor Effect (b_{AH})	**.37**	**.14**	**.01**
Wife Partner Effect (b_{PW})	.11	.13	.39
Husband Partner Effect (b_{PH})	.28	.16	.07
Attachment Anxiety (X_1) → Marital Satisfaction (Y)			
Wife Actor Effect (c'_{A1W})	-.15	.12	.21
Husband Actor Effect (c'_{A1H})	.07	.11	.55
Wife Partner Effect (c'_{P1W})	**-.22**	**.11**	**.04**
Husband Partner Effect (c'_{P1H})	.10	.13	.46
Attachment Avoidance (X_2) → Marital Satisfaction (Y)			
Wife Actor Effect (c'_{A2W})	**-.46**	**.12**	**<.001**
Husband Actor Effect (c'_{A2H})	**-.61**	**.11**	**<.001**
Wife Partner Effect (c'_{P2W})	.04	.10	.67
Husband Partner Effect (c'_{P2H})	.06	.13	.67

Note. Statistically significant paths were given in bold.

Considering the predicting role of marital power on marital satisfaction, actor effects of both husbands and wives were significant whereas partner effects of neither of the spouses were significant. Findings also indicated that after controlling for the effect of all other variables, for both husbands and wives, attachment avoidance negatively predicts the individual's own marital satisfaction, however attachment avoidance does not significantly predict the spouse's marital satisfaction. Only wives' attachment anxiety negatively predicted the partner's marital satisfaction.

We conducted a chi-square difference test to examine whether direct actor effects are equal across genders. The results indicated that actor effects did not vary according to gender, $\chi^2_{difference}$ (5) = 5.29, *p* > .05. Another chi-square difference test was conducted to test whether actor and partner effects on marital power and marital satisfaction are equal. The results revealed that actor and partner effects were not equal in predicting marital power and marital satisfaction, $\chi^2_{difference}$ (10) = 65.48, *p* < .05.

Next, the model was simplified by removing non-significant paths (i.e., *p* >.05) and it was observed that the simplified model fit the data very well, χ^2 (12) = 14.26, *p* = .28, χ^2/df= 1.19, CFI = 1.00, GFI=.98, AGFI=.93, TLI= .99, RMSEA =.03, 90% CI [.00, .09]. Standardized regression coefficients (beta values) of this final model were presented in Figure 2. Afterwards, using this simplified model, we examined the mediating role of marital power on the association between attachment dimensions and marital satisfaction. Results showed that
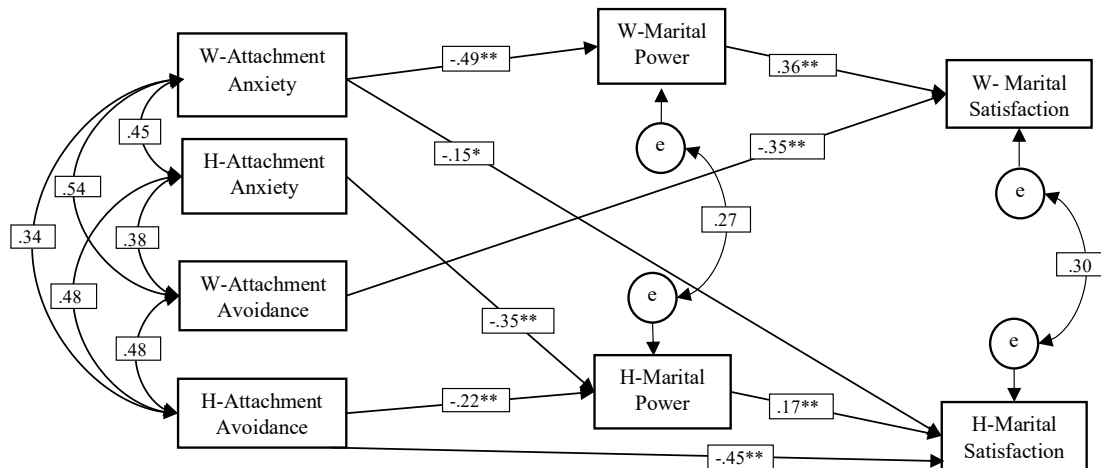
Note. $\chi^2(12) = 14.26$, $p = .28$, $\chi^2/df = 1.19$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .03

Figure 2. APIMeM predicting marital satisfaction. Attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) were independent variables, marital power was mediating variable, marital satisfaction was dependent variable and the number of children was control variable. W refers to wife; H refers to husband and e refers to error term. Non-significant paths ($p > .05$) were removed in order to simplify the model. The paths from control variable to mediating and to dependent variables were all non-significant. Therefore, control variable was removed from the model. Standardized regression coefficients (beta) were given. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

on the relationship between attachment anxiety and marital satisfaction, actor-actor indirect effects were significant both for wives $B = -.25$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.41, -.14] and for husbands, $B = -.09$, $SE = .05$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [-.23, -.01]. In other words, as the attachment anxiety increased, individual's own marital power tended to decrease for both husbands and wives, this in turn tended to decrease individual's own marital satisfaction. In terms of attachment avoidance, it was found that only husband's actor-actor indirect effect was significant, $B = -.05$, $SE = .03$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [-.14, -.01]. Therefore, attachment avoidance shows a tendency to decrease only the husband's own marital satisfaction via his own marital power.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between attachment insecurity (attachment anxiety or avoidance) and marital satisfaction and the mediating role of marital power within this relationship. It was found that for wives, attachment avoidance directly predicts marital satisfaction; whereas for husbands, attachment avoidance predicts marital satisfaction not only directly but also through low marital power. The direct effect of attachment avoidance on marital

satisfaction is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Harma & Sümer, 2016; Li & Chan, 2012). However, it was found that for both husbands and wives, attachment anxiety did not directly predict marital satisfaction. Harma and Sümer (2016) asserted that for collectivist cultures, attachment avoidance was a greater risk factor than attachment anxiety because intimacy and harmony seemed to be very important in this kind of societies. On the contrary, anxious attachment with behavioral characteristics such as clinging to the spouse may not be seen as abnormal as they would in western societies (Harma & Sümer, 2016). Therefore, anxious attachment may not be a risk factor marital satisfaction in this kind of societies. Harma and Sümer (2016) have found that in Turkey, which also bears collectivist properties, avoidant attachment strongly predicts marital satisfaction, whereas anxious attachment does not. Our findings are consistent with those of Harma and Sümer's (2016).

Results indicated that for both wives and husbands, anxious attachment predicts marital satisfaction via marital power. Accordingly, individuals with a high anxious attachment level perceive themselves less powerful in their marriages and this, in turn predicts low marital satisfaction. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) claimed that individuals with high attachment anxiety were too busy with their relationships and they had very high rejection

sensitivity. It may be possible to say that individuals with a high attachment anxiety might also be more selective to perceive the situations where they cannot influence their spouses. This, in turn, may lead individuals to perceive to be less powerful in their marriages and obtain less satisfaction from it. The present study reveals one of the processes by which attachment anxiety influences marital satisfaction.

In addition, in the present study, attachment avoidance was expected to predict marital satisfaction via marital power as well. However, this expectation was confirmed only for the husbands. Accordingly, for husbands as the attachment avoidance increases, marital power decreases, which in turn results in low marital satisfaction. For the wives, no significant mediating effect was found in this association. One reason for the difference between men and women was that although the effect of attachment avoidance on marital power was found significant for husbands, it was not the case for the wives. In other words, as attachment avoidance increased, marital power tended to decrease for husbands, whereas this association was not significant for wives. This difference between genders might result from the masculine norms. Namely, it was stated that being more powerful had a central value in masculinity, whereas having less power was a threat to the masculinity (Overall, Hammond, McNulty, & Finkel, 2016). Avoidant husbands may also desire to have more power but at the same time they may lack intimacy to attain this. That is, avoidant husbands may perceive themselves to have less power because they do not have enough intimacy with their viwes (Mikulincer & Shaver,2007) to influence them. This may in turn make them get less satisfaction from their marriages. As they are not expected to have more power, it can be stated that wives with high avoidant attachment level may not face conflicts like the husbands. The gender difference revealed in our study supports the idea that gender roles may affect the relationship between avoidant attachment and marital power. Yet, we suggest that this relationship should be examined in more detail in future studies.

This study has certain limitations as well. First of all, our study is a correlational one, which prevents inferring a causality among the variables. With the help of future longitudinal research, more reliable results on the subject will be available. In addition, our study did not include questions about the individuals' relationship history such as the number of previous relationships or whether they had a previous marriage. Future research, which will measure and test such factors, will be more representative. Moreover, in our study, marital power was used as unidimensional as in previous studies (e.g., Oka et al., 2016). However, for future research correla-

tion of attachment dimensions with power outcomes and power processes can be evaluated in more detail by using marital power as two-dimensional.