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Basic consultant of Positive Psychotherapy (Ankara, Türkiye)**Email:** [fadime.isayev@gmail.com](mailto:fadime.isayev@gmail.com)**ORCID:** [0009-0005-5104-1923](https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5104-1923)

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**DOI:** [10.52982/ikj291](https://doi.org/10.52982/ikj291)**Abstract**

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction among married individuals. The research sample consisted of married individuals residing in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). A purposive sampling method was employed, and data were collected via questionnaires administered to volunteers. A total of 100 married individuals participated in the study, comprising 56 women and 44 men. The instruments employed in this research were the Experiences in Close Relationships Inventory-II (ECR-R), the Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy (WIPPF), and the Marital Life Scale. It was found that marital satisfaction increases as the levels of anxious and avoidant attachment decrease. A similar finding regarding the relationship between WIPPF model dimensions and marital satisfaction was that, as participants adopted another person as a model (e.g., a mother or father), marital satisfaction decreased. Actual capacities for hope, obedience, and loyalty were positively correlated with marital satisfaction.

**Keywords:** attachment styles, WIPPF, marital satisfaction, married individuals, Positive Psychotherapy**Introduction**

The concept of marriage, which has evolved continuously since 2000 BC, is a cultural phenomenon that significantly influences people's lives. The concept of family, which consists of the triangle of mother, father, and children, has become a core family structure, as its functionality and form have varied over the last century (Kaplan, K., 2016).

Many factors influence the continuity of marriage. Moreover, individuals' personality traits, upbringing conditions, the environment in which they were raised, and the values they adopt (Dilmaç & Bakırcioğlu, 2019), along with the level of mutual trust between partners and their reactions during interactions (Kılıçaslan, 2007), also play significant roles in maintaining marital harmony.

Many factors influence the continuity of marriage. The existence of these factors and their emergence have been extensively documented in the literature. Given that a healthy marriage is possible, marital satisfaction is also important for healthy individuals and a healthy community. One of the most basic variables to examine in marital satisfaction is attachment. Attachment Theory, first introduced by the psychoanalyst John Bowlby in 1969, emphasizes the importance of the child's sense of security and psychological development, which are shaped by the relationship with the primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). Secure attachment fosters emotional stability and effective communication, while insecure patterns (anxious or avoidant) tend to generate conflict and dissatisfaction (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Attachment style plays a major

role in determining adult relationships. Based on the assumption that an individual's attachment style with their mother affects the romantic relationships in adulthood, attachment styles and their effects on marital satisfaction were investigated in this study. The current study aims to integrate these two theoretical frameworks – attachment theory and PPT – by exploring how attachment styles and actual capacity jointly influence marital satisfaction. While previous studies have independently addressed attachment and satisfaction, limited research has examined them through the lens of PPT, particularly in the context of Turkish culture. The present study integrates two major theoretical perspectives – attachment theory and Positive Psychotherapy (PPT) – to examine how attachment styles and individuals' actual capacities may shape marital satisfaction. The present study integrates these frameworks by proposing that attachment styles not only directly influence marital satisfaction but may also be associated with the activation of specific capacities, such as hope, trust, obedience, and loyalty. These capacities, central to PPT, represent behavioral and emotional resources that individuals bring into marital relationships. An insecure attachment style may hinder the development or expression of such capacities, thereby affecting marital satisfaction. This conceptual model provides the rationale for investigating attachment, PPT-based capacities, and marital satisfaction within a single analytical framework. Rather than examining these constructs separately, the study proposes a combined framework in which attachment tendencies and PPT-based strengths are considered jointly, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of variations in marital satisfaction. By doing so, this research aims to propose an integrative conceptual model to the existing literature.

Based on this theoretical groundwork, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Do attachment styles predict marital satisfaction?
- Do actual capacities (PPT actual capacities) predict marital satisfaction?
- Do actual capacities mediate the relationship between attachment style and marital satisfaction?
- Are there differences in marital satisfaction by marriage type (love vs. arranged)?
- Do socio-demographic variables relate to marital satisfaction?

## Methodology

The research employs a quantitative approach. Quantitative research methods aim to explain individuals' behaviors using numerical data and to measure them objectively through observation, experimentation, and testing (Akman, 2014).

Studies employing the quantitative research model fall into two basic patterns. Quantitative research designs are classified into scan and experimental models (Bilal, 2012).

The scan model is used as a quantitative research pattern in this study, as it is aimed to analyse more than one factor influencing the dependent variable of this research; the research pattern is accepted as a "multi-factorial design.

### 2.1. Sample

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from members of the population who are readily available to participate in the study. For this purpose, 100 married individuals who had been married for at least 1 year and lived in the TRNC were selected. The participants' educational levels were as follows: 4% had completed primary school, 5% had completed secondary school, 30% had completed high school, 52% had completed university, and 9% had completed postgraduate studies (master's/doctoral). A similar distribution was observed in the educational attainment of the spouses: 5% had completed primary school, 3% had completed secondary school, 35% had completed high school, 49% had completed university, and 8% had completed postgraduate education. Regarding the type of marriage, 82% reported a love marriage, 17% reported an arranged marriage of convenience, and 1% reported an arranged marriage not of convenience. The study shows that the mean age of participants was 32.15 years (SD = 9.60), with an age range of 20-71 years. The average duration of marriage was 7.65 years (SD = 8.83), with a range of 1 to 40 years. The average age at marriage was 24.43 years (SD = 3.81), and the average dating

duration prior to marriage was 3.01 years (SD = 2.21). Participants also reported having an average of 0.98 children (SD = 1.29). These demographic characteristics together provide a comprehensive overall view of the sample and support the interpretability and contextualization of the study's findings.

## 2.2. Measures

The scales planned for use in the research are as follows.

### Demographic Information Form

First, participants are given a form stating the purpose of the research, its content, the researcher's identity information, and the voluntary nature of participation; thereafter, a demographic information form is distributed. Socio-economic and educational levels, and marital relationship-related items appear in the form. Their gender, age, educational attainment, duration of marriage, and type of marriage.

### Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-II (ECR-R)

It was developed by Brennan et al. by applying factor analysis to 60 scales used to measure attachment in adult romantic relationships (Brennan, Fraley, and Waller, 2000). The ECR-R is a self-report instrument designed to measure the extent of insecure attachment in romantic relationships. The adaptation of the ECR-R to Turkish was carried out by Sümer and Güngör (1999), and the expected findings regarding factor structure and related analyses were obtained (Güngör, 2000). ECR-R is evaluated as a 7-level Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, seven strongly agree) (Brennan, Fraley, and Waller, 2000). As a result of his studies on the scale, Sümer (2006) identifies two dimensions: "anxiety" and "avoidance". The internal consistency coefficients for the scale are 0.86 and 0.90, respectively.

### Marital Life Scale

The "Marital Life Scale," originally developed by Tezer (1996), was used to assess participants' marital satisfaction. The scale comprises 10 items scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Items numbered 2, 4, and 5 require reverse scoring. The potential score range for the scale is 10-50. A higher score on this scale indicates greater marital satisfaction. The original reliability analysis for the scale reported a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.85, and internal consistency coefficients of 0.91 in the first

application group and 0.89 in the second. These findings demonstrate the high reliability of the Marital Life Scale (Tezer, 1996). Within the scope of the current research, the reliability of the scale was tested by examining the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients, which resulted in an internal consistency value of .88.

### Wiesbaden Inventory for Positive Psychotherapy and Family Therapy (WIPPF 2.0)

It is an inventory developed by Peseschkian and Deidenbach (1988). It is a scale measuring Positive Psychotherapy items and consists of 88 items, answered on a four-point Likert scale.

Data were collected online, ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation. Ethical approval was obtained. Analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 22.0) with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and mediation testing (Hayes, 2013). Significance level was set at  $p < .05$ .

## 2.3. Procedure

Individuals who had been married for at least 1 year and were over 18 years of age were included in the study. Divorced individuals, those living together but not married, or those who provided incomplete responses, were not included. The data were examined for missing values, and cases with more than 10% missingness were removed using listwise deletion. Both online and face-to-face methods were used to collect data. For online data collection, a survey was developed in Google Forms, and the link was distributed to participants across various community groups. Participants could complete the survey at their convenience. No personal information was requested on the survey form; therefore, responses were recorded anonymously.

All participants were given a consent form. This form included the study aim, a statement that participation was voluntary and that information would be kept confidential, and an explanation of the potential benefits and risks of the study. Individuals who agreed were directed to the survey.

## 2.4. Ethical Approval

This study is an ethically approved research project that was conducted as part of a 2017 graduation thesis at the Near East University Institute of Social Sciences. Throughout the research process, the institution's ethical

principles and overall research standards were adhered to.

**Results**

Descriptive analyses showed that participants reported moderate to high levels of marital satisfaction (M = 39.33, SD = 7.13). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the Marital Life Scale (MLS).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Marital Life Scale (MLS)**

M	SD	MIN	MAX
39.33	7.13	12	50

Note. MLS ranges from 10 to 50. Higher scores reflect higher marital satisfaction.

Correlational findings (Table 2) indicated that anxious attachment was negatively associated with marital satisfaction (r = -.296, p = .003), and avoidant attachment showed an even stronger negative association (r = -.576, p < .001). The ECR-R total score also demonstrated a significant negative correlation with marital satisfaction (r = -.513, p < .001).

**Table 2. Correlations Between Attachment Styles and Marital Satisfaction**

Variable	r	p
Anxious Attachment	-.296	.003
Avoidant Attachment	-.576	.000
ERC-R Total	-.513	.000

**Table 3a. Correlations Between WIPPF Primary Capacities and MLS**

Primary Capacity	r	p
Patience	.045	.654
Time	.127	.208
Contact	.048	.233
Trust	.155	.010
Hope	.213	.033
Sexuality	.002	.994
Love	.094	.469
Belief	.096	.496

Among primary capacities, hope demonstrated a small positive association with marital satisfaction (r = .213, p < .05).

**Table 3b. Correlations Between WIPPF Secondary Capacities and Attachment Styles**

Secondary Capacity	Anxious (r)	Avoidant (r)
Cleaning	.254*	.297**
Obedience	-	-.198*
Loyalty	-.295**	-.201*

Several secondary capacities showed associations with attachment styles, particularly cleaning, obedience, and loyalty.

**Table 3c. Correlations Between Model Dimensions and Attachment Styles**

Model Dimension	Anxious (r)	Avoidant (r)
I-other	.287**	.418**

Model dimensions such as I-other demonstrated positive correlations with insecure attachment patterns, indicating that individuals with higher anxiety or avoidance in attachment may experience difficulties within interpersonal role structures.

**Table 4. Regression Analysis Predicting Marital Satisfaction**

Predictor	B	SE(B)	β	t	p
Anxious Attachment	-0.18	0.06	-.24	-3.02	.003
Avoidant Attachment	-0.31	0.05	-.46	-6.12	<.001

Multiple regression analysis showed that attachment styles significantly predicted marital satisfaction, with avoidant attachment emerging as the strongest predictor. The model explained a meaningful portion of the variance in marital satisfaction.

R = .63  
 R<sup>2</sup> = .38  
 Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .37  
 F(2,97) = 29.62, p < .001

Table 5. Mediation Analysis of Hope Between Attachment and Marital Satisfaction

Path	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI
<i>a</i> (Attachment → Hope)	-0.21	0.08	-2.62	.010	[-0.37, -0.05]
<i>b</i> (Hope → Marital Satisfaction)	0.19	0.09	2.11	.037	[0.01, 0.36]
<i>c</i> (Total effect)	-0.52	0.09	-5.86	<.001	[-0.70, -0.34]
<i>c'</i> (Direct effect)	-0.48	0.10	-5.02	<.001	[-0.68, -0.27]

Mediation analysis revealed that primary capacities did not mediate the relationship between attachment styles and marital satisfaction. Attachment styles maintained their direct negative effects on marital satisfaction even after including primary capacities as mediators.

## Discussion

When considered alongside previous studies investigating the relationships among adult attachment styles, the primary and secondary capacities addressed in Positive Psychotherapy, and marital satisfaction, this research makes significant contributions. It is accepted that adult attachment styles strongly influence the quality of romantic relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Moreover, studies conducted in Turkey also show that attachment patterns are associated with relational harmony and marital satisfaction (Güngör, 2009; Sümer & Güngör, 1999). The results of this study were evaluated in the context of this literature.

When gender is analysed, male and female participants do not differ in marital satisfaction or attachment styles. Tezer (1996) and Çelik (2006) find no significant difference in marital satisfaction between men and women. These results support our findings. The results of this study support the study's findings and suggest that gender may not be a fundamental determinant of attachment style.

The literature on Positive Psychotherapy highlights that basic capacities such as hope play an important role in an individual's life satisfaction and relational functioning (Peseschkian, 2012; Bachmann, 2018). Similarly, in this study, a significant positive relationship was found between hope and marital satisfaction. As marriage satisfaction increases, the level of hope, a primary capacity, also increases. This shows that the level of hope affects marital satisfaction. In Positive Psychotherapy, the capacity for hope means

that, even when people feel desperate, they believe there is always a way out, that they will have a good future for themselves and their families, and that they always have a life plan (Peseschkian 1996, 2002).

In Positive Psychotherapy, the capacity for hope means that, even when people feel desperate, they believe there is always a way out, that they will have a good future for themselves and their families, and that they always have a life plan (Peseschkian 1996, 2002). It has been shown that hopeful people are happier, more successful in coping with stress, and they have stronger social ties (Peterson, 2000; Snyder, 2000).

Given the research's cultural context, it can be concluded that family structures in Turkey continue to exhibit strong collectivist elements. The literature indicates that values such as commitment, solidarity, and collective action within Turkish culture influence both attachment behaviors and the maintenance of romantic relationships (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Therefore, it is important to interpret the findings within the cultural context. The use of capacities may also vary across cultures; for example, capacities such as hope, patience, and perseverance may be employed in more relational contexts within Turkish culture. Comparative studies across cultures will more clearly reveal whether the relationships between capacities and attachment are universal or context-specific.

## Limitations

This study has several limitations, and the results should be interpreted within this framework. First, the sample size is limited and was determined through convenience sampling, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data were collected entirely through self-report measures, which increases the risk of bias, such as social desirability bias. Because the desire to appear positive in marriage may be greater in Turkish

culture, this could have influenced the findings. Third, the study has a cross-sectional design; therefore, causal relationships between variables could not be evaluated. In addition, some socio-demographic information was collected only in a limited manner, which makes it difficult to fully describe the sample's characteristics. Although the measurement tools used had previously been adapted into Turkish, the cultural sensitivity of these scales should also be considered, as cultural norms may influence attachment and marital behaviors.

In future studies, collecting data from both partners in a couple, employing longitudinal methods, and engaging with larger and cross-cultural samples will contribute to a more comprehensive and comparative understanding of the relationships between the variables.

## Conclusion

This study examined the relationships among marital satisfaction, attachment styles, actual abilities, and model dimensions within the framework of Positive Psychotherapy (PPT). The results indicated that secure attachment and Balance Model dimensions contribute to higher

levels of marital satisfaction. In addition, individuals' awareness of their actual abilities may contribute to relational harmony. Recognizing and applying strengths such as patience, empathy, and reliability can help facilitate couples' conflict resolution processes and enhance mutual understanding.

From a therapeutic perspective, the findings suggest that bringing PPT's focus on personal resources into couple sessions may be helpful. When people become more aware of their strengths, they often manage their relationships in a calmer, more flexible, and more understanding manner.

These interventions can help individuals recognize and apply their personal capacities to strengthen emotional bonds and resilience within marriage. Additionally, exploring cultural differences in the expression of actual capacity could enrich the transcultural understanding of marital dynamics. In conclusion, this study underscores the value of combining attachment theory with Positive Psychotherapy principles. By integrating emotional security and personal strengths, practitioners can promote deeper satisfaction, empathy, and resilience in marital relationships.

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