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Marriage Anxiety of University Students in Terms of Family Belonging and Parental Attitude

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Abstract

In today's modern societies, marriage is less and less preferred by young people. Marriage anxiety is one of the reasons for this. This study examined the correlation between the level of marriage anxiety of university students and two main factors related to it: family belonging and parental attitudes. The sample consisted of 992 university students from public universities in Turkey. It was found that the students with high marriage anxiety had a low sense of belonging to the family and a low level of family affiliation. In addition, the students with high marital anxiety perceived their parents' attention as low and their psychological autonomy was low. It was also found that the attention of parents was perceived as high in students with a high level of family affiliation, that their psychological autonomy was low, and that their level of parental supervision was high. According to the results of multiple linear regression analysis, it was found that family membership status and parental attitude explained 0.5% of the total variance of marriage anxiety. In conclusion, family belonging and parental attitudes are parallel, affecting individuals' marriage anxiety. Parental attitudes seem to reduce / trigger marriage anxiety in university students.

Keywords: Family, Family Belonging, Marriage, Marriage Anxiety, Parental Attitudes

INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest social unit with its values and keeps society alive. In this social unit, people develop their basic skills and learn behavior pattern. It continues its life by giving these behavioral patterns back to the environment. The family is where the building of the individual's emotional and cognitive abilities begin. It is a social institution highly affected by the developments and changes in the social structure, maintaining its permanence in society despite some structural changes. The family interacts with social institutions and is based on social norms; it also relies on an emotional basis and plays a critical role in determining the personality structures of its members (Waite, 2000; Özgüven, 2001; Erürkek, 2007).

Family Belonging

The term belonging is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary (2023) as "a feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you." Belonging is the feeling of attachment to other individuals in society because of the neediness that arises from the problems and shortcomings an individual encounters (Koçyiğit, 2014). May (2013) describes the term as a dynamic and relational manner between the individual and society.

Belonging is the sum of the manifold feelings that people cherish in this context, including sharing and unity of power, with the socialization process experienced in the history of humankind (Elitaş ve Keskin, 2014). Thanks to belonging, individuals feel respected, accepted, and supported by others in various social groups and contexts (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These characteristics make the concept an essential human need that all individuals seek to satisfy in their social lives (Allen et al., 2021; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Every individual, during his life, wants to be accepted by a group or person, and the motive of belonging to a group in the society in which he lives is one of his basic needs. Every individual begins the world in the family in which he was born, and the first social structure in which the need to belong begins is the family.

It is vital for the children of the families to feel a sense of belonging to the family and their relationship to the forms of emotion (Başar, 2019). The more efficiently the individual in the family can satisfy his need to belong,

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the more power he receives from his family, and this leads to a direct increase in the sense of belonging to the family. This ensures the completion of the individual's emotional self in terms of belongingness, and the individual's achievements throughout life and the positive feelings they experience increase (Dere & Kılıç, 2016). A person who feels that he belongs to his family, with a strong sense of belonging, who is loved and accepted in that family, is psychologically happy, sees himself as valuable, and grows self-confidence (Güneş, 2016, p.18).

Belonging is essential for the individual to have a place in society, be liberated, know oneself, and find a place in society (Mavili et al., 2014). In addition, it is easier for individuals with developed family membership to adapt and integrate into the social environment. Moreover, the cognitive and social development of the individual proceeds in parallel (Güneş, 2016, p.115). A perusal of literature shows that in a study examining the effect of family attitudes on family affiliation among university students, the family belonging of the participants who rated their family behavior as democratic was higher than that of participants who rated their family belonging of the students who perceived their family attitudes as indifferent was lower than that of students who perceived their family attitudes as democratic, authoritarian, and overly caring/protective (Ilik, 2019).

Parental Attitude

There are certain variables in the formation of parental attitudes. The most important of these variables is the behavior that parents have seen in their parents, and environmental factors significantly influence the individual's self-development. In addition, the parents' educational level, economic conditions, the number of children, and the environment in which they interact are some variables that influence these attitudes (Yaprak, 2007).

The influence of parents' attitudes on the individual's personality development, social relations, and the way he/she perceives the world has a tremendous and meaningful place. In their study of 72 parents and their children in the U.S., Solomon et al. showed that parents' attitudes directly influence their children's school attendance, aggressive behavior, and propensity to violence (Solomon et al., 2008). Parents' attitudes significantly influence their children's social relationships and perception of the world. For this reason, Yörükoğlu (2009) emphasized that parents should raise children by considering these attitudes. Since parents' perceptions and attitudes can be very different, they can support their children's development according to their perception of accuracy. Above all, the mother's attitudes are very significant for the individualization of the child. A study evaluating parental attitudes from the adolescent individual perspective shows that the educational status of the mothers causes a significant difference regarding maternal attitudes (Akçalı, 2019). However, in some studies, while no significant difference has been found between the authoritarian and permissive attitude sub-dimensions depending on the educational status of the parents, a remarkable difference has been found between the democratic and over-protective attitude sub-dimensions (Aydoğdu & Dilekmen, 2016). As a multidimensional social institution, marriage is in a constant and intense interaction with society. Marriage affects family, family affects cultural structure, culture affects traditions, and all of these affect daily life (Burc, 2018). Some physiological, sociological, and psychological needs of individuals are met in marriage. In addition, each individual's marriage experience and thoughts about marriage may differ.

Marriage Anxiety

In modern society, one of the most fundamental problems encountered regarding the institution of marriage is marriage anxiety, frequently seen in single individuals. Anxiety is a state of tension of unknown cause that we cannot concretely say is the cause. It is a more common form of fear and one of the basic human emotions. People who feel anxious and act as if they are afraid of something have no apparent reason for experiencing these feelings. The source of the anxiety is known by the individual experiencing it (Dağ, 1999). The most well-known types of anxiety include exam anxiety, future anxiety, and marriage anxiety. Individuals' anxiety about the institution of marriage may stem from different reasons. Some of those are witnessing a constant conflict environment, exposure to gender roles, differences between our marriage expectations with the opposite sex,

restriction of freedom, financial concerns, anxiety to maintain relationship, worry about being cheated on while married and sexual myths (Afzal et al., 2019; Celik & Erkilet, 2019).

Deciding to get married can represent a turning point in each individual's life. People want to live their lives with a person they love and value. On the other hand, the responsibilities that marriage will bring with it and the changes that involve almost every aspect of life may put individuals in a difficult situation in terms of marriage. Therefore, each individual should decide on marriage with the awareness of the responsibilities of marriage (Güler, 2021). In a study conducted with university students in our country, the participants' marriage anxiety level was reported to be low (Sezer, 2019). At the same time, a study conducted with university students investigated the fear of marriage. 59% of the study group stated they were unafraid of marriage. In addition, it was found that individuals with unhappy parents had a more negative view of marriage than those with happy

As a result of the literature review about marriage anxiety in university students (Tunc, 2019; Güler, 2021), it was seen that there was no study into how family belonging and parental attitudes affect marriage anxiety in university students in Turkey. Thus, it is thought that this study, in which the relationship between marriage anxiety and the individual's family belonging and parental attitudes is explored and whether family belonging and parental attitudes affect marriage anxiety is examined, will contribute.

METHOD

The population of the study consisted of 5 state universities (Ankara University, Gazi University, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Hacettepe University and Health Sciences University) located in Ankara province. The sample of the study consisted of 992 undergraduate students who participated in this study voluntarily and were selected by stratified sampling method from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics (10.4), Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation (17.9), Department of Audiology (8.3), Department of Speech and Language Therapy (6.5), Department of Social Work (21.9), Department of Child Development (7.1), Department of Occupational Therapy (7.4), Department of Nursing (6.4), Department of Health Management (10.0), and Department of Orthotics and Prosthetics (4.3) from the health sciences faculty departments of 5 state universities in Ankara. Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the administration of the instrument. The ethical approval was obtained from university's ethics commission. The research was funded by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye) with the grant number: TBTK-0117-7829.

The instrument of the study had three parts: the Personal Information Form, containing the demographic variables, the Marriage Anxiety Scale, the Family Belonging Scale, and the Parental Attitude Scale. Missing data and extreme value analyses were performed on the data set. One thousand fifty-seven people participated in the research and answered the data collection tool. However, after removing missing data, the analysis was conducted with 992 participants. As a result of these analyses, whether the data set was suitable for multivariate statistics was determined by normality tests.

Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to estimate the reliability of all scales. The total reliability coefficient of the Marriage Anxiety Scale was 0.94; the reliability coefficient of the Family Belonging Scale was 0.55; and the reliability coefficient of the Parental Attitude Scale was 0.64.

Permission was obtained from the five public universities to conduct the study. In order to examine the significance levels of the relationships between variables, a t-test was applied to compare the averages of two independent variables in a normally distributed distribution. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to compare the averages of two independent variables in a normally distributed distribution, and correlation analysis was applied to examine the relationships between variables. Regression analysis was used to make modeling between variables. The findings obtained were evaluated at a 95% confidence interval and 5% significance level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Considering the distribution of the university students by sex, 79.8% are female, and 20.2% are male (Table 1). In terms of age, the highest participation rate is between the ages of 17-19 with a rate of 37.0%, and the lowest participation rate is 23 years and over with a rate of 12.9%. By class, the highest participation rate is in the 1st grade with 39.1%, and the lowest participation rate is in the 4th grade with 17.0%. Gazi University had the highest participation rate at 22.1% and Health Sciences University had the lowest participation rate at 19.0%. However, there was no significant difference between the groups.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Students Participating in the Study

Variable	Group	f	0/0	
Sex	Female	792	79.8	
	Male	200	20.2	
Age	17-19	367	37.0	
	20-22	497	50.1	
	23 and over	128	12.9	
Grade	1st grade	388	39.1	
	2 nd grade	254	25.6	
	3 rd grade	181	18.2	
	4 th grade	169	17.0	
University	Gazi University	219	22.1	
	Ankara University	185	18.6	
	Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University	198	20.0	
	Hacettepe University	188	18.9	
	Health Sciences University	202	20.4	
Department	Department of Nutrition and Dietetics	103	10.4	
	Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	178	17.9	
	Department of Audiology	82	8.3	
	Department of Speech and Language Therapy	64	6.5	
	Department of Social Work	217	21.9	
	Department of Child Development	70	7.1	
	Department of Occupational Therapy	73	7.4	
	Department of Nursing	63	6.4	
	Department of Health Management	99	10.0	
	Department of Orthotics and Prosthetics	43	4.3	
Mother's Education Status	Illiterate -Literate	66	6.7	
	Primary school	363	36.6	
	Secondary School	188	19.0	
	High school	259	26.1	
	College\Undergraduate- Graduate\PhD	116	11.7	
Father's Education Status	Illiterate-Literate	37	3.7	
	Primary school	222	22.4	
	Secondary School	188	19.0	
	High school	320	32.3	
	College- Undergraduate	225	22.7	
Family Type	Core Family	740	74.6	

	Extended Family	168	16.9
	Single Parent Family		8.5
Economic Level	Low	57	5.7
	Below Average	149	15.0
	Average	602	60.7
	Above Average	165	16.6
	High	19	1.9
Number of Siblings	1 sibling	47	4.7
	2 siblings	324	32.7
	3 siblings	346	34.9
	4 siblings	166	16.7
	5 siblings	64	6.5
	6 and over	45	4.5
Residency Status	With family	286	28.6
	House	164	16.5
	Dormitory	497	50.1
	Lodgings	29	2.9
	Other	16	1.6
Relationship Status	Yes	334	33.7
	No	658	66.3
Thought towards Marriage	I am Thinking of Getting Married	335	33.8
	I have no opinion on marriage at the moment	494	49.8
	I am Not Thinking of Getting Married	163	16.4

According to the department variable, the highest rate was in the Department of Social Work with 21.9%, and the lowest participation in the research was in the Department of Orthotics and Prosthetics with 4.3%. In terms of mother's education status, the highest rate of 36.6% was at the primary school level, and the lowest participation in the research was at the level of illiterate or literate with a rate of 6.7%. In terms of father's education level, the highest rate of 32.3% was at the high school level, and the lowest participation in the research was at the level of illiterate or literate with a rate of 3.7%. According to family type, the highest rate of 74.6% was core family and the lowest participation in the research is single parent family with a rate of 8.5%.

By monthly income, the group with the highest distribution was at the medium level with 60.7%, and the group with the lowest distribution was at the high level with 1.9%. According to the number of siblings, the highest distribution was three siblings, with a rate of 34.9%, and the lowest distribution was six or more siblings, with a rate of 4.5%. In terms of residence status, most of the students lived in dormitories with a rate of 50.1%, and the least of them lived elsewhere with a rate of 1.6%. According to the relationship status, 66.3% of them were not in a relationship, and 33.7% of them are in a relationship. Considering their thoughts about marriage, 49.8% had no opinion about marriage at the highest rate, and 16.4% did not consider getting married.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Exploratory Factor (EFA) Analysis was used to evaluate the data obtained from the Marriage Anxiety Scale, Family Belonging Scale, and Parental Attitude Scale. Kaiser Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was used to assess the suitability of the data set for factor analysis, and Bartlett's Test was applied to test whether the variables were correlated (Table 4). Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin (KMO) value of the Marriage Anxiety scale was 0.95, and Bartlett's test was significant (χ 2= 9036.832; p<0.00). Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin (KMO) value of the Family Belonging scale was 0.94, and Bartlett's test was significant (χ2= 9504.249; p<0.00). Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin (KMO) value of the Parental Attitude scale was 0.79, and Bartlett's test was significant ($\chi 2 = 7522.302$; p<0.00) (Table 2).

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test Results of the Scales

KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test Results of the Marriage Anxie	ety Scale	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Adequacy Measurement		0.953
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	9036.832
	Degrees of Freedom	78
	Significance	.001
KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test Results of Family Belonging	Scale	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Adequacy Measurement		0.947
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	9504.249
	Degrees of Freedom	136
	Significance	.001
KMO and Bartlett's Sphericity Test Results of the Parental Attitude	de Scale	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Adequacy Measurement		0.799
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Chi-Square	7522.302
	Degrees of Freedom	325
	Significance	.001

^{**}p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Level of Influence of University Students' Family Belonging Scale Scores, Parental Attitude Scale Scores, on Marriage Anxiety Scale Scores

Independent Variables	β	St. H _B	t	p
Constant	20.72	1.77	11.73	0.000
Family Belonging	-0.1217	0.0261	-4.65	0.000
Permissive-Tolerant	-0.86	2.63	-0.33	0.744
Permissive- Negligent	-0.34	4.69	-0.07	0.942
Democratic	0.79	2.59	0.31	0.760
	R ² (ac	dj)= 2.93% F=7.98 Sd= 4	p<0.01	

^{**}p<0.01; *p<0.05

Table 4. Multiple Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Level of Influence of University Students' Family Belonging Scale Scores, Parental Attitude Scale Scores, on Marriage Anxiety Scale Scores

Independent Variables	β	St. H _B	t	p
Constant	20.72	1.77	11.73	0.000
Family Belonging	-0.1217	0.0261	-4.65	0.000
Permissive-Tolerant	-1.649	0.638	-2.58	0.010
Permissive- Negligent	-1.13	4.02	-0.28	0.778
Authoritarian	-0.79	2.59	-0.31	0.760
	R ² (a	dj)= 2.93% F=7.98 Sd= 4	p<0.01	

^{**}p<0.01; *p<0.05

In Table 3, the equation of 3 sub-dimensions (permissive-tolerant, permissive-negligent, democratic) of the parental attitude variable is given. There is a significant relationship between Family Belonging Scale scores and Marriage Anxiety Scale scores (F= 7.98; p<0.01). When the family belongingness score was constant, no significant difference was found between marriage anxiety and the sub-dimensions of the Parental Attitude

Scale, which are permissive-neglectful, democratic and permissive-tolerant, based on the status of being authoritarian (p>0.01). However, a significant difference was found between Family Belonging score and being authoritarian (F= 7.98; p<0.01). In other words, the participants with high family belongingness did not have authoritarian parents (Table 3).

Table 4 gives the equation of 3 sub-dimensions (permissive-indulgent, permissive-negligent, authoritarian) of the parental attitude variable. There is a significant relationship between Family Belonging Scale scores and Marriage Anxiety Scale scores (F=7.98; p<0.01). In other words, the participants with high marriage anxiety had low family belonging. In a different study, when the scores of university students from the family belonging scale and marriage attitude scale were evaluated, it was concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between family belonging and marriage attitude (Tunc, 2019).

When the state of being democratic, the sub-dimension of the Parental Attitude Scale, was taken as a basis, it was observed that there was a significant relationship with marriage anxiety. In comparison, there was a significant difference between marriage anxiety and permissive-negligent and democratic sub-dimensions of the parental attitude scale (F= 7.98; p<0.01), no significant difference was found between authoritarian and permissive-negligent and democratic (p>0.01). In other words, the parental attitudes of the participants with high marriage anxiety did not have democratic attitudes but permissive-negligent attitudes (Table 4). In a study conducted, results supporting the findings were obtained. Considering the perceived family attitude, it was concluded that the family belonging of university students who thought that their family was democratic was higher than other perceived family attitudes (Aslantürk et al., 2020). A different study concluded that the family belonging of students who perceived their family attitude as indifferent was lower than those who perceived it as democratic, authoritarian, and overly caring/protective (İlik, 2019). By the same token, the variance analysis in the current study shows that marriage anxiety is significantly explained by the variables of family belonging and parental attitude (at the level of 0.10).

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to identify university students attitude toward marriage, grading their concerns about marriage and learning to what extent parental attitudes and family belonging play an active role among the causes of these concerns. In the results of this study, it was examined whether the marriage anxiety of the students participating in the research is affected by their family belonging status and parental attitudes. Family Belonging Scale and Parental Attitude Scale scores correlate moderately significantly with Marriage Anxiety Scale scores. It was found that participants with high marriage anxiety had a low level of family belonging. In addition, the participants with high marriage anxiety did not have democratic parental attitudes but rather permissivenegligent attitudes. It was found that the level of marriage anxiety was high in students with low psychological autonomy, that is, students whose parents did not allow them to show their autonomy. The students who perceived the interest given by their parents as high had low levels of marriage anxiety. Further, the level of marriage anxiety was low in students with a high level of belonging to the family.

One of the building blocks of Turkish society, the family institution is in a crucial position due to its structure and its effects on the individual. Society's view of the family, the healthy or unhealthy relationship between the parents, who are family members, affect the opinions of individuals on issues related to marriage. In addition to the effects of parental relationships on marriage anxiety in individuals, parents' attitudes towards children and children's level of family belonging were also found to affect marriage anxiety significantly. Parental attitudes seem to reduce or trigger marriage anxiety in individuals. Family belonging and parental attitudes are parallel, affecting individuals' marriage anxiety. Differences in the family structure in society, the attitudes of the parents, the level of family belonging in individuals, and the differences in the personal information of the individuals (age, gender, educational status, etc.) were also found to affect the level of marriage anxiety in individuals.

Information about parental attitudes that trigger marriage anxiety in young people can be provided to the relevant people (e.g., social worker working with families and young people) through seminars on parental attitudes through local administrations, universities, and NGOs. In order to eliminate marriage anxiety, which prevents the establishment of families that constitute the building blocks of society and create pressure on young people, collective or individual interviews can be held with experts in the field, social workers, and psychologists and reduce marriage anxiety in young people. Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that the courses titled Marriage Education for Individuals with Marriage Anxiety should be delivered to individuals through mass media, and teaching problem-solving and continuous solutions to individuals will lead to positive results both in terms of eliminating marriage anxiety and solving the problems to be experienced after marriage.

This study was carried out by taking the students aged 17-23 and above in the health sciences faculties of 5 state universities in Ankara as a sample group. By going beyond the study's limitations, in prospective studies, university students across the country can be addressed regionally, and the effects of cultural differences on marriage anxiety can be investigated. In addition to the health sciences faculties of 5 public universities, students from private universities and different faculties can be included in prospective studies, and the effects of the differences caused by the effect of economic and social aspects on marriage anxiety among university youth can be determined. Since the variables of family belonging and parental attitude, which are used together as research variables, are new concepts in the literature, the related research is limited. Therefore, it can be repeated with different variables and with various samples. The study was conducted using the relational survey model, and the data were collected using pre-standardized scales. Similar studies can be conducted using different measurement methods. In addition to measurement tools, interviews, and observations can also be used for indepth information. In the study, as a result of the test related to the question "Do the scores of the marriage anxiety scale of university students differ significantly according to age groups?" it was determined that the scale scores showed a significant difference according to age. This means that the effect of age variable on marriage anxiety can be investigated more comprehensively. In the study, as a result of the test related to the question "Do the scores of the marriage anxiety scale of university students differ significantly according to family type groups?" it was determined that the scale scores showed a significant difference according to family type. In the face of this result, studies based on family types will contribute to the literature. Finally, for the relevant researchers who will address issues such as marriage anxiety from a sociological perspective, the development of psychological and sociological studies on the family is relatively new in Türkiye. Therefore, it can be suggested that studies on family should be carried out following the social structure of Türkiye.

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