

THE PREDICTED ROLE OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND DIFFERENTIATION
OF SELF ON MARITAL SATISFACTION

by

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Submitted to Graduate School of Educational Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Guidance and Counselling

Yeditepe University
2023

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I hereby declare that all information in this paper was obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that I have fully cited and referenced all non-original material and results in this work in accordance with these rules and practices.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my thesis teacher Asst. Prof. Ayşen Köse Şirin, who supported me in all circumstances with her knowledge and compassionate attitude during my undergraduate and graduate education, supported me not only academically but also emotionally when I felt unresolved, and guided me with her efforts.

I would like to thank my dear friends Aylin Zencir and Ece Alem for supporting, motivating and believing in me, not only in my graduate process but in every moment of my life. I would also like to thank my dear friend Merve Annaç, with whom we were roommates during a part of my thesis process, for her understanding and support during this process. I would like to thank my dear friend Tuğçe Hıdır, with whom I continue my education life, who supported me both as a friend and colleague. I would like to thank my postgraduate semester friends, who have made me the greatest contribution of my master's degree, for teaching me to be more flexible. I would like to thank Tolga Zencir, who supported me academically throughout my thesis process and did not spare me his valuable comments, and Fatih Işık, who supported me in technical matters and did not spare his support when I was emotionally challenged.

Finally, I would like a heartfelt thank my family, my dear mother Gülşen Aşık, my dear father Ahmet Aşık, and my dear brother Melih Can Aşık, who have been by my side all my life, who provided endless support in my education life and gave me strength with their presence.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to examine the predictive power of childhood traumas and differentiation of self on the level of marital satisfaction. This study used a quantitative, predictive correlational research design model. The data of the research were collected with the convenient sampling method. The participants of the research consist of 500 married individuals living in Turkey. In collecting the data, the demographic information form prepared by the researcher, Marriage Satisfaction Scale, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, and Differentiation of Self Scale has been applied. The obtained data were analyzed with the SPSS 26.0 package program. Independent Groups t-Test, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Tukey analysis from Post-Hoc techniques, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Hierarchical Regression were used in the analysis of the data. The findings of the research indicate that childhood traumas and differentiation of self have a predictive power on marital satisfaction. The predictive power of the independent variables on marital satisfaction is 10%. There was no significant difference between marital satisfaction and gender, education level, age, dating duration, having child and duration of marriage

Keywords: Marital satisfaction, childhood trauma, differentiation of self

ÖZET

Evlilik doyumunu incelemek amacıyla çocukluk çağı travmalarının ve benliğin ayrımlaşmasının evlilik doyumu üzerindeki yordama gücü incelenmiştir. Bu çalışmada nicel, yordayıcı ilişkisel araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları Türkiye’de yaşayan 500 evli bireylerden oluşmaktadır. Verilerin toplanmasında katılımcılara araştırmacının hazırladığı demografik bilgi formu, Evlilik Doyum Ölçeği, Çocukluk Çağı Travmaları Ölçeği ve Benliğin Ayrımlaşması Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler SPSS 26.0 paket programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde Bağımsız Gruplar t Testi, Tek Yönlü Varyans Analizi (ANOVA), Post-Hoc tekniklerinden Tukey analizi, Pearson Çarpım Moment Korelasyonu ve Hiyerarşik Regresyon kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgulara göre, çocukluk çağı travmalarının ve benliğin ayrımlaşmasının evlilik doyumu üzerinde yordayıcı bir gücü olduğu bulunmuştur. Bağımsız değişkenlerin evlilik doyumunu yordama gücü yüzde %10’dur. Evlilik doyumu ile cinsiyet, eğitim seviyesi, yaş, flört süresi, çocuk sahibi olma ve evlilik süresi arasında anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Evlilik doyumu, çocukluk çağı travması, benliğin ayrımlaşması

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ABBREVIATION LIST

MS	: Marital Satisfaction
DoS	: Differentiation of Self
CT	: Childhood Trauma
CTQ-33	: Childhood Trauma Questionnaire



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is an institution where two people live together by joining their lives as legally accepted by the state (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). With the modernization after the industrial revolution, it is seen that the perspective of marriage in society has also changed (Aydın & Baran, 2010). In modern society, people often marry people of their choice. Their expectations from the marriage relationship can also be defined as falling in love with their partners, mutual tolerance and friendship (Ondaş, 2007; Şimşek, 2017). In many marriages, although couples fall in love with each other, their relationship may end in divorce (Wallerstein, 2019). As divorce rates rise both in Turkey and globally (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021), numerous studies have been conducted to examine the idea of marital satisfaction (Canel, 2007; Litzinger & Gordon, 2007; Oprisan & Cristea, 2012; Schoenfeld, 2015).

Baumeister and Vohs (2007) describe marital satisfaction as "a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs to a particular person" (p.541). According to Heyman et al. (1994) it is the psychological satisfaction that married individuals feel as a result of the relationship quality and harmony. It is the feeling of happiness and the continuation of a harmonious dynamic within the marriage. As it is important for the continuation of the marriage, because divorce not only affects the couple in the relationship, but also the children in the family system, it is considered as a social event that affects the entire system (Canel, 2007).

Marriage satisfaction is a multidimensional concept (Oprisan and Cristea, 2012). When the literature is examined, in terms of demographic variables; gender

(Jose & Alfons, 2007; Rhonda et al., 2015), education level (Kowal et al., 2021; Tampieri, 2010), marriage length (Batık & Kalkan, 2017; Kharपुरi and Priya, 2019), length of flirt before marriage (Akkol, 2017; Öz 2019), age (Kervanoğlu, 2016) and having children or not (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2013; Onyishi et al., 2012), in relational terms; sexuality (Karami et al., 2017; Sprecher & Cate, 2014), people's relationships with their root family and the partner's family (Altuğ 2019; Tunca, 2021) and people's selves (Çelik, 2006) are some of the factors that are linked to marital satisfaction.

Childhood trauma is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) as any form of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other abuse that results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity. Exposure to chronic stress and trauma in childhood has a lifelong impact on a person's life (Chapman et al., 2004; Harris 2014). One of them is negative effects on marital satisfaction and interpersonal relationships (Meneta et al., 2014; Perry et.al, 2007; Whisman, 2006).

Individuals who experienced sexual abuse during their childhood are more prone to experiencing sexual difficulties as adults (Stephenson et. al, 2012; Zwickl & Merriman, 2011). When the literature is reviewed, among the sexual problems faced by people who were exposed to childhood sexual abuse; are less sexually satisfied, having more sexual distress and sexual dysfunction (Bigras et al., 2015; Rellini & Meston, 2007). Consequently, sexual issues in a marital relationship negatively impact the satisfaction and well-being of the marriage (Yabiku et. al., 2009; Bigras et al., 2015; Khazaei et al., 2011).

Experiencing traumatic events in childhood can have detrimental effects on both an individual's self-perception and their interactions with others (Bigras et al.,

2015; Huh et.al, 2014; Yumbul et.al, 2010). The individual may have a negative self-image and low self-worth (Ekinci & Kandemir, 2014; Kolk et. al., 2005; Kuo et al., 2011). At the same time, she/he has difficulty in establishing a bond of trust and developing intimacy with her/his partner in interpersonal relations (Davis et.al, 2001; Reyome, 2010). In conclusion, people's low self-confidence and negative self-concept, having problems with closeness and security with their partners can reduce marital satisfaction (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Mohsin et .al, 2013; Murphy and O'Leary, 1989; Oprisan& Cristea, 2012).

Bowen's Family Systems Theory posits that family and marriage therapy should focus on the intergenerational patterns that are passed down within a family (Bowen, 1978). According to this theory, differentiation of the self refers to the psychological process of an individual becoming independent and separate from the emotional and intellectual systems of their family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). When the level of differentiation of self is low, the person has low stress tolerance and difficulty regulating emotions (Roberto-Forman, 2008). In relationship conflicts, they cannot separate their feelings and thoughts and express them correctly. In conclusion, instead of solving relational problems, they often prefer to run away from problems (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Differentiation of self plays a role in the balance of intimacy and boundaries in relationships. While intimacy is essential in healthy relationships, it is also important for individuals to maintain their personal boundaries and individuality. This can only be achieved when an individual has a high level of differentiation of self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols, 2013). Research has found that differentiation of self is a crucial factor in maintaining a successful marriage over the long-term (Mohsin et. al, 2013; Skowron, 2000).

In addition to all these factors, among the factors that affect marital satisfaction, the family environment in which the person lives before entering adulthood is also of great importance (Bowen, 1978). This study aims to investigate the impact of childhood traumas and the behavioral patterns inherited from the individual's family of origin, using Bowen's theory of differentiation of self, in relation to the treatment received during childhood.

In the literature, marital satisfaction, especially the concept of differentiation of self, is a frequently studied subject. Again, there are examples that have been studied together with childhood trauma. However, these three variables have not been studied together. It will fill a gap regarding the importance of relationships with the spouse's family, especially in marital satisfaction, in the Turkish sample. At the same time, the overprotection/over controlling sub-factor, which is measured in childhood traumas, is also a sub-factor that will contribute significantly to the literature when studied on the Turkish sample. According to these statements, childhood trauma and differentiation of self would be expected to predict to marital satisfaction.

1.1 The Importance of the Study

The institution of marriage is one of the things that gives meaning to a person's life in adult life (Kim & McKenry, 2002). While getting satisfaction in the marital relationship has a positive effect on one's well-being, low marital satisfaction causes many negative conditions, including depression (Gabriel et al., 2010). Although marital satisfaction is a multifactorial concept and some aspects differ from culture to culture some issues are generally important in almost all marriages.

Marriage satisfaction is an important and frequently studied subject in the literature. When former researches are examined, it is seen that marital satisfaction

and childhood traumas have been studied together with other variables; attachment styles, emotional eating and maladaptive schemas. Additionally, marital satisfaction and differentiation of self have been studied together in other studies before. In addition to the two variables, other variables studied together are follows; adult attachment, communication styles, self-esteem and emotion regulation. As a result of the literature review, it was understood that the variables of marital satisfaction, childhood traumas and differentiation of self did not work together before. Analyzing marital satisfaction in terms of these two factors will an improved understanding of this concept. Also it is thought that conducting a research that studies these variables together will contribute to the literature.

It is thought that the findings of this study will be informative for mental health professionals working in the field and policy makers. This study is expected to provide enlightening information for mental health professionals about the effects of childhood traumas and the differentiation of self factors in marital satisfaction studies.

Educating parents about childhood traumas and differentiation of self before and after the birth of the child will have a positive effect on the adult life of the individuals. The data of this study will contribute to policy makers in creating the content of these trainings.

Finally, the continuation of the marriage and the satisfaction and well-being of individuals within marriage are important for society. Childhood traumas and low levels of differentiation of the self may cause divorce due to their impact on marital satisfaction (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Whisman, 2006). Both psychoeducation and group psychotherapy programs can be prepared for marriage partnerships established by people who have been traumatized in childhood and have low self-

differentiation. Thus, people can gain awareness about the origins of the emotional problems they experience with their partners in their marital relations. In this context, it is thought that using the results of this research as a source for training to be given to married couples will be beneficial for policy makers and mental health professionals.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate predictive power of childhood trauma and the differentiation of the self on satisfaction in marriage.

1.3. Research Questions

The research was designed to investigate the following queries.

1. According to demographic variables;
 - a) Is there a significant difference between the gender variable and childhood trauma / differentiation of self / marital satisfaction?
 - b) Is there a significant difference between education level and childhood trauma / differentiation of self / marital satisfaction?
 - c) Is there a significant difference between having child and marital satisfaction?
 - d) Is there a significant difference between age and marital satisfaction?
 - e) Is there a significant relationship between the duration of marriage and marital satisfaction?
 - f) Is there a significant difference between the flirt length before marriage and marital satisfaction?
2. Is there a significant relationship between childhood trauma, differentiation of self and the marital satisfaction?

3. To what extent do childhood trauma and differentiation of self predict marital satisfaction?

1.4. Assumptions

1. Participants who voluntarily took part in the study provided honest responses to all questions in the data collection instruments.
2. The data collection instruments ensure the research's reliability and validity.
3. It is assumed that the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire measures negative childhood experiences, the Differentiation of Self Scale measures the differentiation of the self in adults, and the Marriage Satisfaction Scale measures the marital satisfaction in married couples.

1.5. Limitations

This study has some limitations in terms of the sample and measurement tools used.

Constraints of the study;

1. The focus of the research is confined to the relationship between marital satisfaction, childhood trauma, and the ability to distinguish oneself from others.
2. The research is limited to married individuals who voluntarily participated in the study living in Turkey in 2021.
3. This research is limited to the qualifications measured by the measurement tools used in the data collection process: Personal Information Form, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Differentiation of Self Scale and Marriage Satisfaction Scale.
4. A limitation of this study is that data was collected online through google forms.

5. A constraint of this study is that data was gathered using the convenient sampling method.

1.6. Definitions

Marital Satisfaction: Marital satisfaction is the psychological satisfaction achieved by married individuals as a result of the relationship quality and harmony, the state of being happy as a result, and the continuation of the dynamics within the marriage in harmony (Heyman et al., 1994)

Childhood Trauma: Any form of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other abuse that results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity (World Health Organization, 2006)

Differentiation of Self: Psychological separation and independence of the individual from the family's intellectual and emotional system (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter includes conceptual information about marital satisfaction, childhood trauma and differentiation of self and the results of studies on these issues.

2.1. Marital Satisfaction

Marriage is a social institution in which two people commit themselves to a socially approved relationship in which sexual intercourse is legitimated and there is legally recognized responsibility for any children and each other (American Psychology Association, 2015). Marriage is the basic building block of the family and a social institution (Budak, 2017). Although people marry in the belief that marriages will last long, in 2020, 135 thousand and 22 couples divorced in Turkey and 35.3% of divorces take place in the first five years of marriage (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021). High divorce rates have drawn more attention to the discussions on marital satisfaction.

The concepts of marital satisfaction, marital quality and marital adjustment are used interchangeably in the literature. Especially there is a high correlation between the concepts of marital satisfaction and marital adjustment. It can be said that these two concepts can be regarded as synonyms for each other (Erbek et al., 2005; Heyman et al., 1994 & Gottman, 1990). There are different definitions of marital satisfaction. According to Heyman et al. (1994) marital satisfaction is the psychological satisfaction achieved by married individuals as a result of the relationship quality and harmony, the state of being happy as a result, and the continuation of the dynamics within the marriage in harmony. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) define marital

satisfaction as “a mental state that reflects the perceived benefits and costs to a particular person.” (p.541)

The system approach, which is one of the family therapies, focuses on the mutual relationship between family members (Glading, 2002). According to this approach, the family system is a gestalt, the spouses are dependent on each other, and it consists of all parts, and the parts that make up the whole significantly affect each other (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Although marriage and family are perceived as different systems from each other, they are basically complementary structures (Çelik, 2006).

Although marriage seems like a legal meeting of two people, the expectations, ways of thinking and family dynamics brought by the family of origin are also factors that determine marital satisfaction (Gülerli, 2014). Especially, the behavior patterns (coping skills, emotion regulation) brought from the family of origin for generations affect every member of the family system and are reflected in marital adjustment (Bowen, 1978; Skowron, 2000). Marriage satisfaction is a situation that concerns individuals as well as society. As the satisfaction of individuals from their marital relationship decreases, this negatively affects the physiological and psychological health of the children in the family system (Fishman & Meyers, 2000). Marital satisfaction is crucial for two reasons; it is vital for the harmony in the nuclear family and also important for the healthy upbringing of individuals who will contribute to society (Keçeli, 2020).

For a healthy marriage system to be sustainable, the needs within the system must be met. In the spouse system, meeting the emotional needs of the spouses, such as loving, and being loved, mutual sexual satisfaction and how the spouses perceive

each other are important factors in marital satisfaction (Çelik, 2006). According to Haylı et al. (2017), if the needs of the individual are not met in the marital relationship, the likelihood of satisfaction in marriage decreases significantly.

Marriage satisfaction is a dynamic and complex concept and is affected by many interrelated factors (Oprisan & Cristea, 2012). Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that various factors such as sexual satisfaction (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Schoenfeld, 2015), root family relationships (Bowen, 1978; Tunca, 2021), child care (Meier et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2008), life expectancy (Çağ & Yıldırım, 2018), self (Culp and Beach, 1998; Oprisan and Cristea, 2012), communication styles of spouses (Litzinger & Gordon, 2007), problem-solving and decision-making styles (Canel, 2007) come to the fore as sub-factors that make up marital satisfaction. In the scale used in this study and developed by Çelik (2006), marital satisfaction was discussed in three sub-dimensions: family, sexuality and self. Detailed information about these sub-dimensions is presented below.

2.1.1. Marital Satisfaction and Sexuality

Sexuality between spouses is considered one of the significant factors impacting marital satisfaction. Sexual satisfaction is related to how happy and satisfied the person is with the sexual aspects of their relationship (Sprecher & Cate, 2014). Many factors might be investigated in relation to marital sexual satisfaction. One of this factors is sexual dysfunction. Clinicians reported that major life stressors can cause sexual dysfunction such as difficulty attaining an erection. (Hamilton, 2013; Marita et.al, 2015). Additionally, chronic stress has been linked to decreased levels of testosterone and luteinizing hormone (Davidson, Smith, & Levine, 1978; Rose et al., 1969). Eventually, research has found a negative correlation between sexual dysfunction and marital satisfaction (Hamilton, 2013; Khazaei et al., 2011).

According to Schoenfeld's (2015) research sexual frequency is associated with marital satisfaction. However, it appears that sexual satisfaction or one's attitudes towards sex may be more powerful predictors of marital satisfaction (Hamilton, 2013; Morokoff & Gilliland, 1993). If a couple has good communication about their sexual life, they can teach each other about desires, sexual preferences and needs. In general, maintaining good communication about sex life between spouses is positively related to their sexual satisfaction (Gorden & Snyder, 1986; Schenk et.al. 1983).

Overall, longitudinal studies with couples have found that a decrease in sexual satisfaction also leads to a decrease in overall relationship satisfaction (Sprecher, 2002). Additionally, sexual satisfaction has a positive correlation with marital satisfaction (Litzinger and Gordon, 2005; Schoenfeld, 2015) and lower sexual frequency and satisfaction have been linked to higher rates of divorce (Yabiku et al., 2009).

2.1.2. Marital Satisfaction and Family

Another factor that influences marital satisfaction is the family unit. Marriage and family are both crucial institutions in many cultures. Marriage is a social construct in which two individuals commit to a legally and socially recognized relationship, where sexual intercourse is legitimized and both parties have legal responsibility for any children and each other (American Psychology Association, 2015). The family, on the other hand, has a more extensive definition. A nuclear family is made up of parents and their children, while an extended family includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives in addition to the parents and children (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

The family consists of a system and subsystems (mother-in-law, father-in-law, and spousal subsystems). Each part, or person in the system is affected by each other (Glading, 2002). Asian cultures like Turkey, is often described as collectivistic and hierarchical (Hofstede, 2001). In collectivistic cultures, fulfilling one's role and duties within a network of interdependent relationships, showing respect to authority, and maintaining relational harmony are considered important values (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Behaviors and attitudes of the family of origin of men and women play a very important role in the adjustment of the marital relationship (Larson, 2003). In Turkish society, after people get married, families can be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and can express their opinions. The inability to set boundaries in family relations is one of the important factors that cause conflict between husband and wife (Litzinger and Gordon, 2005; Tunca, 2021). Some of the situations that can cause problems in marriage due to the family of origin; not being able to adapt to the traditions and customs of the spouse's family, one of the spouses not being able to set limits on their family, one of the spouses being overly attached to their family. (Paş, 2020). Especially in collectivist societies such as Turkey, it has been seen that spouses treat each other's families with disrespect, which is also an important reason for divorce (Başkaya & Ünal, 2017).

In Turkey, the relationship between the bride and the mother-in-law is the most delicate and prone to issues in the extended family system that has grown with the marriage (Kaya, 2019). In fact, the conflicts in this relationship are often the subject of novels, movies and proverbs. By the mothers-in-laws, the brides can also be seen as the people who come to the family later and disrupt their relations with their sons and shake their authority (Sönmez, 2019). In China, which has a collectivist

culture just like Turkey, women place the problems they experience with their mother-in-law in the third place among the problems they encounter in their marital life (Shih & Pyke, 2009). In Sönmez's (2019) study, brides stated the following as their least favorite features about their mother-in-law. Interfering with themselves, being stingy, and interfering in family relationships.

In addition to all these, the fact that the individual carries the dysfunctional relationship patterns acquired from the family of origin to her own marital relationship also affects marital adjustment negatively (Bowen, 1978).

2.1.3. Marriage Satisfaction and Self

Self is considered one of the essential factors influencing marital satisfaction. How the person perceives her/his spouse and herself/himself, her/his wishes, expectations and being able to express all these, how she/he perceives herself/himself in the marital relationship, and the respect she/he has for her/his spouse can affect the satisfaction of the couple's relationship (Çelik, 2006).

Studies have found that there is a positive correlation between a higher self-concept and marital satisfaction (Schultz & Schultz, 1989; Sharpley & Khan, 1980). Murphy and O'Leary (1989) state that married couples with low self-concepts are more likely to attack each other psychologically and physically, and their marital satisfaction is very low.

Self-esteem is positively related to marital satisfaction. Studies show that; the level of self-esteem in men and women is a determining factor for marital satisfaction (Schultz & Schultz, 1989; Oprisan & Cristea, 2012). Low self-esteem can reduce marital satisfaction, especially for women.

Self-verifying feedback from partners, individuals prefer feedback from partners that confirms their self-views, may reduce depressive symptoms, and may be associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Katz & Beach, 1997). When one partner feels that his/her self is unverified by his/her spouse, this interferes with the relationship by making unrealistic, unmet, and incompatible expectations between the partners (Schafer, 1996). As a result, when the studies are examined, it can be stated that self-perception is an important variable that affects marital satisfaction.

2.2. Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) as any form of physical and/or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or commercial or other abuse that results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity.

Childhood trauma is a phenomenon that has been a subject in literature, art and films for many years. In the epic of Homer's *Odyssey*, written in the 8th century BC, he mentions how Odysseus shaped the character of childhood traumas (Spalletta et al., 2020). The widespread predominance of child physical abuse, as well as the various issues and results related to it, has been progressively recognized since Kempe and his colleagues, to begin with, described the symptoms of "the battered child syndrome" (Kempe, et al., 1962).

The main point that distinguishes abuse and neglect from each other is that physical abuse is active, while neglect is a passive situation. Neglect can be defined as the failure of caregivers to provide a child with the basic necessities required for their survival, such as food, shelter, education and healthcare. On the other hand, physical

abuse refers to the intentional causing of physical harm to a child by their caregivers, or actions that lead to injury to the child (Dubowitz, 2002).

One of the risk factors related to child neglect and abuse is the gender of the child (Gökçe et al., 2013), the mental disability of the child (Soylu et al., 2013), low socioeconomic level of the family, the violence of the mother by her husband and low self-esteem (Altıparmak et al., 2013), unhappiness in the family, the divorce of the mother and father, being a single-parent family, being a step-parent in the family, being a parent at a young age, alcohol in the family and addictive substance use, the presence of mental disorders in the parents, and a history of childhood abuse in the parents are important risk factors for child neglect and abuse (Sunday et al., 2008; Trocmé et al., 2003).

Childhood trauma can have serious, harmful short- and long-term effects on children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral development (Hilyard & Wolfe, 2002). Research showed that both abuse and neglect have been associated with deficit in mathematics, and language tests, and low academic success (Eckenrode et al., 1993; Hilyard & Wolfe, 2002; Wodarski et al., 1990). Furthermore, maltreated children may have difficulties with the regulation of emotions and impulses, self-perception, and interpersonal relations (Van Der Kolk et al., 2005). Also they have shown lower levels of self-esteem than their peers (Kim, & Cicchetti, 2009).

Childhood traumas increase the risk of being diagnosed with many behavioral disorders and psychological disorders both in later ages and in adolescence. For instance; depressive disorders, conduct disorder, anxiety disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and substance abuse can be given (Famularo et al., 1992; Flisher et al., 1997; Kaplan et al., 1998; Livingston et al., 1993). In addition, an increase in the aggressive behavior of young people who are

exposed to abuse is an expected situation. It is reported that they exhibit more aggressive behavior in both friendship and dating relationships than their peers (Wolfe et al., 1998).

Throughout the last few decades, childhood traumas have been seen as life-long consequences (Chapman et al., 2004). Childhood affects the psychological, physical state and social environment of the individual during adulthood (Demirer, 2015). A person who has been exposed to childhood traumas is more likely to be diagnosed with a psychological disorder in his/her adult life than a person who has not been exposed to childhood traumas. It can be said that this rate is about four times that of other people. (Johnson et al., 1999). Traumatized as a child adults treat their spouses worse than others, and abuse their own children victimized by their practicing and intimate partners (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Childhood traumas negatively affect perceived well-being, psychological stress, and daily activities in adulthood (Nurius et al. 2015).

Individuals exposed to childhood trauma begin to perceive the world with a different nervous system (Van Der Kolk, 2020). The brain normally seeks social affiliation first when faced with a stressor. The person expects his/her relatives to comfort and support him/her. If people cannot receive support from their relatives or if there is a sudden danger at that time, the brain's fight or flight system is activated (Porges, 2011). This response is controlled by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA) system, which is the primary stress response center in the brain and body. The HPA axis's main function is to regulate the stress response, and it is activated when the body perceives a threat. During this response, blood pressure increases, heart rate increases, and stress hormones such as cortisol are released. The secretion of Cortisol causes many changes one of which is the storage of glucose in

the body to provide the energy needed to handle stress (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014; Van Der Kolk, 2020). The flight-or-fight response is a highly functional response to one's survival in the face of a threat. When the threat passes, the stress response turns off and the body returns to its normal state. However, when a person is exposed to toxic stress that is chronic, uncontrollable and experienced in a way that the child cannot reach the caregiver, the reward, memory, and stress response system in the brain is affected/changed (McCrory, 2020; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014)

Cortisol, which is constantly secreted as a result of unresolved trauma, changes the person's stress response system after a while. Domestic violence or physical abuse that the person was exposed to in childhood can cause hyper-vigilance behaviors. In this case, non-stressful, non-threatening situations for others can be extremely stressful for people with childhood trauma, or they may overreact to these situations, or they may become extremely angry in the face of a minor situation because it is difficult to control their impulses. This may be reflected in their intimate and social relationships in a non-adaptive way (McCrory, 2020; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014).

Another effect of continuous cortisol release is on the hippocampus part of the brain responsible for memory and learning. The traumatized brain remembers daily experiences in less detail and recalls negative memories more often than positive ones. This is a problem because people need to draw on past experiences to help them deal with new social situations (McCrory, 2020). In addition a brain that is exposed to unresolved trauma in an early age makes people more insensitive to positive stimuli from the environment (Harris 2014; McCrory, 2020; Van Der Kolk, 2020). People with unresolved trauma are prone to use addictive stimuli such as alcohol as a way to

relieve this emotional numbness. As a result, exposure to chronic stress, especially in childhood, may affect the lifelong lives of individuals (Harris, 2014).

2.2.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes all kinds of intentional and harmful acts such as hitting, kicking, throwing a child. Physical abuse, which can be defined as moderate physical abuse, includes situations that can be seen in the child 48 hours after the experience (Sedlak et al. 2010).

Children in the 7-18 age group found that the incidence of physical abuse in Turkey is 43% (T.R. Prime Ministry Social Services and Child Protection Agency& UNICEF, 2010). According to data from The Children's Bureau (2011) the rate of physical abuse in the USA is 17%. Ninety percent of abusive incidents take place within the child's own home (Garbarino, 1976). In most cases of maltreated children perpetrators of the abuse are the child's biological parents (%85 percent). Only a small percentage of abusers are strangers or outside of the family (%11) (The Children's Bureau, 2009).

Research conducted over many years on physical abuse and children has revealed that children from families with a lower socio-economic status are more likely to experience physical abuse (Sedlak et al., 2010). Kempe al. (1962) found that children below 3 were overrepresented in samples of abused children. According to the data of the Children's Bureau (2011) children below the age of 7 years represent 57.4 percent of abused children. Therefore, it can be said that increased age is a protective factor. Additionally, Sullivan and Knutson (2000) found that children with disabilities were more likely to be physically abused compared to children without disabilities. Additionally, research has found that children who have experienced

physical abuse have more problems with attention, socialized aggression, and externalizing and internalizing behaviors compared to children who have not been physically abused (Black et al., 2001).

2.2.2. Sexual Abuse

Department of Health (2015) defines child sexual abuse as the act of forcing or persuading a child or young person to participate in sexual activities, regardless of the child's understanding of what is going on. These activities may include physical contact, including penetration and penetrating acts, as well as non-contact activities such as making children watch pornographic content, viewing sexual activities or encouraging children to engage in sexually inappropriate behavior.

According to research that UNICEF made children in the 7-18 age group was found that the incidence of sexual abuse in Turkey is 3% (T.R. Prime Ministry Social Services and Child Protection Agency & UNICEF, 2010). According to a review by Saunders and Adams (2014), conservative estimates suggest that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys experience sexual victimization, including physical contact, before the age of 18. Besides, survey answer rates across study samples may underestimate the true prevalence provided the possibility that study participants may not disclose sexually abusive experiences due to self-blame, stigma, embarrassment, fear, and/or confusion related to offender-imposed threats (Saunders & Adams, 2014; Wyatt et al., 1999). In cases of childhood sexual abuse, it has been determined that the guilty person is mostly either the parents or the person close to the family. In cases the culprit is usually less likely to be a foreigner (Berliner & Elliott, 2002).

CSA is an international problem that affects children of all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Finkelhor, 1994; Wyatt et al., 1999). Moreover, certain

groups of children seems to be at higher risk for abuse than other children (Finkelhor, 1999). Gault Sherman et.al (2009) found that girls are more than twice as likely to be victims of sexual abuse as boys. However, the rate of reporting sexual abuse among boys to an official institution is very low. The low reporting rate affects the number of male child cases in official records (Gartner, 2005). Males are generally more hesitant to disclose such experiences in cultures that are homophobic and have strict stereotypes about masculinity and sexuality (Sanderson, 2004). Also, some family-related features may be vulnerable for a child for example, presence of a stepfather, which has been considered as a risk factor (Sanderson, 2004) and substance abuse in families also has a negative effect on child safety (Gartner, 2005; Karson, 2001).

2.2.3. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse, which is a sub-title of childhood traumas, is one of the least talked about forms of abuse among childhood traumas (Baker & Brassard, 2019; Claussen & Crittenden, 1991). Although there are fewer records of emotional abuse in official records compared to other childhood traumas, in a study conducted with university students, almost 30% of the participants stated that they were exposed to emotional abuse in their childhood (Braver et al., 1992).

According to the definition by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC, 2019), emotional abuse is a repeated pattern of damaging interactions between the parent and child, although no physical contact is actually necessary. Emotional abuse may be represented by acts of commission verbal abuse (e.g. criticizing and insulting a child), spurning (e.g., verbal and nonverbal hostile rejecting/degrading behaviors), terrorizing (actions or threats that cause extreme fear and/or anxiety in child), and isolating (preventing in a child from engaging in normal social activities). Following these behaviors, the child may label himself/herself as

worthless, flawed, and unwanted (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2017, p. 4; Hart et al., 2017).

One of the main reasons why emotional abuse is less reported and understood is because such behavior from parents is often considered normal in many cultures (Cuartas et al., 2019; Vissing et al., 1991). In a study conducted in Turkey, they found that 81% of mothers do not show their love to their children, exhibit emotional abuse or neglect behavior, such as shouting at their children (%77.6), scolding them, and room locking at lower rates (%8.4), binding their hands and feet (%2.1), and 93% of mothers emotionally abuse/neglect their children has been found (Güler, et al., 2001).

Children respond to emotional abuse in two ways. They can externalize the behavior such as becoming hostile, disruptive classroom behavior, anger and conduct problems (Crittenden et al., 1994; Erickson & Egeland, 1987; Schneider et al., 2005; Vissing et al., 1991). The second way, they can internalize problem such as depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, feeling shame and self-sacrifice behaviors (Hart et al., 1997; Wright et al., 2009). Also, emotionally maltreated children are more likely than their non-maltreated peers to be insecurely attached to a parent (Finzi et al., 2001)

2.2.4 Neglect

Neglect is the most commonly reported form of childhood trauma. One of the reasons that neglect is more commonly reported is because it is easier to recognize and identify compared to other forms of child maltreatment, such as emotional abuse. According to the data from U.S Children's Bureau (2018), three-quarters of maltreated children were neglected. However, despite this prevalence, there is relatively less research done on neglect than on other types of maltreatment. Also,

Wolock and Horowitz (1984), wanted to draw attention to this and called it “neglect of neglect”.

Neglect can be defined as an omission to accommodate a child’s basic needs (Children’s Bureau, 2018). Emotional neglect is isolating the child, not getting nurtured and not providing affection (ignoring, humiliating, etc.), or expose to the child to domestic violence. Another type of neglect is physical neglect can be defined as a child’s basic needs such as nutrition, clothing, cleaning, or accommodation are not met or parents aren’t appropriately keeping safe or supervising the child (Children’s Bureau, 2018; Brandon et al., 2013).

Compared to other types of maltreatment poverty is a very strong predictor of neglect, especially physical neglect. However, this doesn’t mean that all poor families neglect their children (Brown et al. 1998; Drake & Pandey, 1996; Lefebvre et al., 2017).

Comparing the neglected children with children who are not neglected, it's seen that they may have problems in many areas. In the cognitive area, neglected children showed lower IQ scores, lower language skills, and attention compared to the control group (De Bellis et al., 2009; Hilyard & Wolfe, 2002). Both internalizing and externalizing problems are common in neglected children for example the risk of developing PTSD and being arrested rate is higher than the controls (Nikulina et al., 2011; Spratt et al., 2012). Also, they can have problems in social relations. Studies showed that neglected children encounter less peer acceptance and are more socially withdrawn (Hilyard & Wolfe, 2002). Result of the parent interaction, attachment problems are significantly higher in neglected children groups (Erickson & Egeland, 2002; Perry, 2012).

2.2.5. Over Protection – Over Controlling

Parental overprotection is a level of maternal or paternal protection that is excessive behaviors when considering the developmental stage and abilities of the child. While protecting the child from the outside world is considered normal, overprotection refers to behaviors that many parents would not do in the same situation (Thomasgard & Metz 1993; Thomasgard et al., 1995).

In his work Levy (1943) define the maternal overprotection behaviors is expressed by excessive contact (the mother always there), infantilization (the mother treats the kid like a baby), prevention of independent behavior (the mother do not let the kid grow up), together with a lack or excess of maternal control (the mother is incapable to modify the child's behavior or extremely dominating the child) (cited from Parker & Lipscombe, 1981).

Parental over-control can be explained by two subheadings namely psychological control and behavioral control. In psychological over control parents do not allow the child to express his/her individuality (e.g., self-expression, emotions, thinking process). Behavioral control can be defined as maternal or paternal behaviors that try to control or manage children's behavior (Siqueland et al., 1996; Steinberg, 1990).

Parents of children who are shy, timid, have ongoing medical conditions and experience problem during developmental stages are more likely to be overprotective (Parker & Lipscombe, 1981; Thomasgard & Metz 1993; Thomasgard & Metz, 1997). Also, in collectivistic cultures (like Turkey, Korea and China), families tend to adopt a more over-controlling parenting style (Choi et al., 2013 Kim 2005).

Studies showed that dysfunctional parenting has many negative outcomes for both childhood and adulthood. In childhood and adolescence the rate of depression, eating disorders, lower self-esteem and social anxiety is higher compared to control groups. Moreover, in adulthood times, they can have problems with emotional regulation, and behavioral autonomy and the rate of neurotic depression and chronic illness is higher (Adenzato 2019; Burbach et al., 1989; Cella 2017; Holmbeck et al., 2002; Parker 1983; Spokas & Heimberg, 2009).

2.2.6. Childhood Trauma and Marital Satisfaction

Childhood trauma has many effects on adult life. One of them is that it negatively affects marital satisfaction (Meneta et al., 2014; Perry et.al, 2007; Whisman, 2006).

Sexual abuse, which is one of the sub-dimensions of childhood trauma, has many negative effects on sexuality in adult life. These include the level of sexual satisfaction, sexual distress and sexual dysfunction (Bigras et al., 2015; Rellini & Meston, 2011; Stephenson et. al, 2012; Zwickl & Merriman, 2011). Studies show that people who are sexually abused in childhood are less sexually satisfied, and have more sexual distress and sexual dysfunction in adulthood (Bigras et al., 2015; Rellini & Meston, 2007). In conclusion, there is a negative relationship between marital satisfaction and lower sexual satisfaction and sexual dysfunction and sexual distress (Karami et al., 2017; Karami et al., 2017; Yabiku et. al., 2009).

Exposure to childhood trauma leads to lower self-esteem (Ekinci & Kandemir, 2014; Kuo et al., 2011) and lower positive self-concepts in adult life (Kolk et. al., 2005; Scharf, 2007). Studies show that the level of self-esteem in men and women is a determining factor for marital satisfaction (Culp & Beach, 1998; Oprisan & Cristea,

2012). Low self-esteem can reduce marital satisfaction, especially for women. Also, Murphy and O'Leary (1989) state that married couples with low self-concept are more likely to attack each other psychologically and physically, and their marital satisfaction is very low.

Exposure to childhood trauma, especially emotional abuse, negatively affects a person's interpersonal relationships in adulthood (Huh et.al, 2014; Goff et.al, 2006; Yumbul et.al, 2010). Significantly more fear of intimacy, (Davis et.al, 2001; Reyome, 2010), lower trust in partners, and fear of interpersonal nearness in relationships (Reyome, 2010). Relational consequences such as fear of intimacy, less trust in the partner, and wanting distance in interpersonal relationships are seen in people exposed to childhood trauma. All these negatively affect the family life of the person in marriage and reduce the satisfaction received from marriage (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Mohsin et. al, 2013).

2.3. Differentiation of Self

Bowen's Family Systems Theory approached marriage and family therapy in a conceptual way. In his theory, he is emphasized intergenerational family patterns. In Bowen's theory patterns of family interaction passes from one generation to the other generation (Bowen, 1978). In Bowen's theory, the differentiation of self has a wide and important place. According to Bowen, differentiation of the self is one of the most important keys to an adult's psychological health and coping with life stresses (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). According to Bowen's theory, differentiation of the self is the psychological separation and independence of the individual from the family's intellectual and emotional system (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Four main factors affect the level of differentiation of a person. The intrapsychic dimension is emotional reactivity and emotional disconnection; the interpersonal dimension is fusion and being able to take an I position (Bowen, 1978; Skowron & Friedlander 1998).

The first factor, emotional reactivity, is the automatic reaction of a person to situations with emotional intensity. People with a low level of differentiation have difficulty staying calm, emotions take precedence over thought, and as a result, individualization is suppressed (Glading, 2015; Kerr & Bowen, 1988)

The second factor, emotional cutoff, is when family members avoid each other because of an unresolved emotional attachment. It may be that this person is physically isolating herself/himself from the family, or it may be like staying away from subjects that will create tension even if they continue to be in the same environment. The emotionally cutoff person finds intimacy precisely threatening, they prefer to avoid rather than solve their problems (Glading, 2015; Nichols & Davis, 2017).

The third factor, fusion, is the state of being emotionally and intellectually over-involved with one's family and significant others. These people have difficulty in making decisions for themselves and when faced with a difficult situation, they find it difficult to show flexibility (Bowen, 1978; Skowron & Schmidt, 2003).

Lastly, the fourth factor, I position, is contact with one's own feelings and thoughts. Although these feelings and thoughts are different from the feelings and thoughts of the significant others in her/his life, expressing them by taking responsibility shows that the differentiation of self-level is high. In addition, these

people open up space for others to express their feelings and thoughts (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Skowron & Schmidt, 2003).

2.3.1. Marital Satisfaction and Differentiation of Self

According to research, the concept of differentiation of self is essential for a long-term and satisfying marriage. When an individual's level of differentiation of self is high, they tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Peleg, 2008; Skowron, 2000).

According to Bowen's Theory, being alive brings with it a sense of anxiety. Some people feel it higher, while others can tolerate it better (Friedman, 1991). There can be conflicts in many marital relationship issues, which can cause anxiety in partners. The level of differentiation of self-influences how disputes are handled. Suppose the person's level of self-differentiation is high partners can think logically even in stressful times and continue to be there and communicate with their partner even if they disagree. The ability to manage conflict in a relationship affects marital satisfaction (Cramer, 2002; Skowron & Dendy, 2004; Skowron, 2000).

The less the level of separation with the family of origin of the person, the less the person has a low-stress tolerance and has difficulty in emotion regulation (Roberto-Forman, 2008). In a conflict in the relationship, they cannot separate their feelings and thoughts, cannot express them correctly, and become fused or prefer to avoid stressful situations by using emotional cut-off instead of solving problems. As a result, people tend to use their family of origin coping mechanisms in stressful times (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

The differentiation of self is also affected by two opposite concepts, namely individuality and togetherness, which affect the individual's relationships and need to be balanced. Togetherness is the ability to form meaningful relationships with others. Individuality is a person's need to be free. While togetherness meets one's need for intimacy, individuality indicates the individual's ability to be autonomous and draw boundaries. A closeness-distance cycle may occur when this situation is not balanced between spouses. While one of the spouses may want more intimacy, independence may be at the forefront for another. The fact that the partners can protect their boundaries while feeling emotional belonging to the family indicates a high level of self-differentiation (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Nichols, 2013).

When anxiety cannot be managed within marriage, it can manifest in the following ways: emotional cut-off, physical or emotional dysfunction in partners, marital conflict, and focus on or projection of the problem onto children (Bowen, 1978).

In conclusion, differentiation of self is one of the factors affecting marital satisfaction. Partners who are less emotional reactive, cut-off and fused with others, can take a better I position and have higher marital satisfaction (Skowron, 2000).

2.4. Relationship between Marital Satisfaction, Childhood Trauma and Differentiation of Self

According to Bowen (1978), the trauma experienced in the family of origin is passed on through generations. Trauma is passed on to people as a family legacy, even if it has never been talked about, even before the birth of the child. (Danieli, 1998). If the person's differentiation of self level is low, she/he has difficulty in

regulating her/his emotions during stressful times (Roberto-Forman, 2008). People who have difficulty in regulating their emotions may be more likely to show neglect and abuse behaviors to their child. For example, a parent who cannot regulate her/his emotions can use violence against her/his child or make an emotional cut off with their children. Therefore, someone who has had a childhood trauma will transfer their trauma to their own nuclear family (Skowron & Platt, 2005; Skowron & Kozlowski, 2010). As mentioned in the previous sections childhood trauma negatively affects marital satisfaction. (Meneta et al., 2015; Perry et.al, 2007; Sugaya et al. 2012; Whisman, 2006).

Trauma changes the structure of the brain in people who have been traumatized, as a result, people lose their ability to think rationally in stressful moments and have difficulty in regulating their emotions (Porges, 2011). This can lead to emotional reactivity towards significant others (parents and partners) and can be explained by the concept of emotional reactivity experienced by individuals with low levels of differentiation of self (Bowen, 1978; MacKay, 2012). Emotional reactivity is also one of the factors affecting marital satisfaction. Partners with less emotional reaction have higher marital satisfaction (Skowron, 2000).

Especially growing up in an over-controlling family (over-controlling is a type of childhood trauma) causes the person not to be able to express their ideas comfortably and develop autonomy (Holmbeck et al., 2002). Likewise, growing up in a family with low differentiation of self is not supported for people to express their opinions freely. On the contrary, if there are parents with high differentiation of self, they support the autonomy of their children by controlling their anxiety, although the young adult's making decisions on their own worries the family (Bowen, 1978;

MacKay, 2012; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron & Kozlowski, 2010; Wright et al., 2009). In marriage self-expression and spousal disclosure are one of the factors that affect marital satisfaction (Gürer, 2019; Taşköprü, 2013).

According to Bowen and Kerr (1988), it is important to balance togetherness and individuality in interpersonal relationships. However, people with childhood trauma may be afraid and withdrawn from intimacy with their partners, or they may want a highly intertwined relationship. All these negatively affect the family life of the person in marriage and reduce the satisfaction received from marriage (Mirgain & Cordova, 2007; Mohsin et.al, 2013). This study argues that childhood trauma and the ability to differentiation of self can predict levels of satisfaction in a marriage.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section looks into the previous research on the topic of the study, specifically the relationship between marital satisfaction and the factors of childhood trauma and differentiation of self. Studies among demographic variables were presented respectively in gender, educational level, having children, age, duration of marriage and dating length. Lastly, studies on marital satisfaction and childhood trauma and studies on marital satisfaction and differentiation of self were presented below.

3.1. Research on Marital Satisfaction and Demographics

3.1.1. Gender

When reviewing literature on the relationship between gender and marital satisfaction, it is apparent that some research supports the idea that men and women have different levels of satisfaction in their marriages, while other studies have found no such differences. These studies will be discussed in the following order.

Rhonda et al. (2015) conducted a study to investigate whether there are any differences in marital satisfaction between men and women. The sample of the study was 1561 couples. As a result of the study, women have higher marital satisfaction than men.

Jose and Alfons (2007) also studied gender influences on marital satisfaction. They have studied 787 indiscriminately selected married adults. In conclusion, females have higher marital satisfaction scores than male. A similar result was found in the study of Wunderer and Schneewind (2008). They looked into the correlation between how content one is in their marriage and various factors. In this study

participants were 663 German married couples. According to the results, females are more satisfied with their marital relationships.

Similar findings were discovered in domestic studies as well. Keçeli (2020) looked at marital satisfaction, using a sample of 398 participants. When analyzing the data, it was found that women had higher scores of marital satisfaction than men.

Bahrami et al. (2021) conducted a research to investigate the link between marital satisfaction and various sociodemographic factors. Data collected 770 Iranian married individuals. Due to the result of analyzes made, men's marital satisfaction averages were almost twice that of women's averages. Additionally, Kharpuri and Priya (2019) examined the connection between marital duration and the well-being of the couple in relation to their level of marital satisfaction. Sample of this research were 338 couples from India. According to the findings, males experience higher marital satisfaction than females.

Some studies have shown that there is no significant difference between marital satisfaction and gender. Jackson et al. (2004) examined the relationship between marital satisfaction and gender. The research was conducted using a sample of 226 participants. According to the results of the research, no difference was found between marital satisfaction and gender. Similar conclusions were reached in a study conducted in Turkey. Kabasakal and Soylu (2016) looked at the relationship between gender, spousal support, and marital satisfaction, using a sample of 524 participants. They found that there were no significant differences in marital satisfaction between genders.

3.1.2. Educational Level

When reviewing the relevant literature, it appears that a person's level of education can have an impact on their marital satisfaction. Studies in this area will be discussed below.

Tampieri (2010) looked into the connection between having a higher education and marital satisfaction. This study, which was carried out in Britain, collected data from 10,812 individuals. In conclusion, it was found that those with higher education levels also had higher marital satisfaction scores.

Keçeli (2020) looked individuals' level of marital satisfaction, using a sample of 398 participants from Turkey. The study found that individuals with a master's degree had a higher level of marital satisfaction than those with only a high school diploma. In another study, Kervanoğlu (2016) examined the relationship between cognitive distortions and marital satisfaction, using a sample of 336 participants. The results showed that people with undergraduate or graduate education had higher levels of marital satisfaction than those with only a primary, secondary or high school education, but there were no significant differences in marital satisfaction between those with undergraduate and graduate education levels.

From another perspective, the study of Kowal et al. (2021) looked at the relationship between marital satisfaction, different demographic factors, using data collected from 7178 married people. In conclusion, more educated women and men had lower marital satisfaction scores. A similar result was found in a domestic study, Çağ and Yıldırım (2013), studied different variables predict marital satisfaction. They specifically studied 881 married individuals and found that as the education level of the participants increased, their marital satisfaction decreased,

Alder (2010) studied the connection between marital satisfaction and demographic factors using a sample of 60 married individuals. He found in his research that there was no statistical correlation between the level of education and marital satisfaction.

Onyishi et al. (2012) looked at how having children relate to marital satisfaction in Nigeria, using a sample of 374 married individuals. As the result of this study, education level was not a significant predictor for marital satisfaction.

3.1.3. Having a Child

When reviewing the literature, it is apparent that many studies on the relationship between marital satisfaction and having a children have found a correlation between these two variables. These studies will be discussed in the following order.

Rhonda et al. (2015) investigated gender differences in marital satisfaction. The sample of the study was 1561 couples. Besides the main variables of this research, other demographic variables were also reviewed. In conclusion, it has been found that having a child under the age of eighteen at home reduces marital satisfaction.

Kowal et al. (2021) examined the marital satisfaction and having child and other demographics variables. Data collected 7178 married people. As a result of this research, having children can be considered a negative correlation between marital satisfaction levels. It was found that the number of children was only related to reduced marital satisfaction among women, not men.

In contrast, Onyishi et al. (2012) looked at how having children relate to marital satisfaction in Nigeria, using a sample of 374 married individuals. Results of

the study supported that, number of the children was the positive and strongest predictor variable (according to the influence of education and age) for marital satisfaction. As the number of children increases, marital satisfaction scores increase.

Çağ and Yıldırım (2013) studied different variables that predict marital satisfaction. They have studied 881 married individuals in Turkey. As a result of the regression analysis, it has been found that having child was not predicted marital satisfaction. Similar results have been found in a study of Bahrami et al. (2021). They researched the relationship between marital satisfaction and sociodemographic variables. The data collected 770 Iranian married individuals. In conclusion, number of children was not significantly related to marital satisfaction.

3.1.4. Age

Upon reviewing related literature, it has been observed that various studies have arrived at contrasting conclusions regarding the connection between marital satisfaction and age. Some studies have found a relationship between the two, while others have found no correlation. The studies will be discussed and explained in further detail below.

Kervanoğlu (2016) investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and cognitive distortions. In this research 336 individuals participated. It was found that, as the age of the individuals increased, their marital satisfaction also increased.

On the other hand, Kayış (2019) examined the connection between the contentment of married individuals in their marriage, their personality characteristics and their problem-solving abilities. 400 married individuals participated in the research. As a result of this study, it was revealed that, as the age of the individuals increased, marital satisfaction decreased.

The study by Alder (2010) investigated the relationship between marital satisfaction and demographic variables. The sample of the study was 60 married individuals. In conclusion, it was found that there was no relationship between age and marital satisfaction. Bahrami et al. (2021) also studied the relationship between marital satisfaction and sociodemographic variables. The data collected 770 Iranian married individuals. Similar results were indicated between marital satisfaction and age. There were no relationship between marital satisfaction and age.

3.1.5. Marriage Length

When examining the literature about the correlation between contentment in marriage and the length of the marriage, it can be seen that some studies support the existence of a relationship, while others suggest that there is no difference. Research on the subject is described in this section.

Kharpuri and Priya (2019) investigated the connection between contentment in marriage and the duration of the marriage and overall well-being. The study participants was 338 couples from India. According to the result of this study, marriage satisfaction was found to be higher for men whose marriages were longer than thirty years. However, for women, the duration of marriage was not related to marital satisfaction.

Çağ (2016) examined marital satisfaction with different variables. The study group of the research consisted of 549 married individuals. Due to the outcomes of this study, marriage satisfaction score for men is highest in marriages less than one year, decreases gradually after five years, increases again between 21- 25, and finally stands at an average score for men who have been married for 31 years or more. Marriage satisfaction scores of women are also generally parallel to the averages of

men. However, it is seen that the marital satisfaction scores of women decreased again between the ages of 21-25.

Batık and Kalkan (2017) studied the variables affecting marital satisfaction and problem-solving skills. They studied 187 married individuals. In conclusion, marriage satisfaction of individuals who were married for less than 5 years was found to be significantly higher than those of individuals who were married for longer.

Kayış (2019) also researched the relationship between married individuals' marital satisfaction, sociotropy-autonomy personality traits and problem solving skills. 400 married individuals participated in the research. As a result of this study, marriage satisfaction score of individuals decreased as the length of marriage increased.

Çağ and Yıldırım (2013) studied different variables that predict marital satisfaction. They have studied 881 married individuals. Due to the outcomes of this research, no predictive role of marriage length on marital satisfaction was found.

Chi et al. (2013) studied marital satisfaction with 297 Chinese participants. The main concern of the research was to clarify effect of relationship standards and communication patterns on marital satisfaction. According to the findings of the research, marriage length not predicted to marital satisfaction.

Patrick et al. (2007) conducted a study which they investigated predictive role of intimacy and differentiation on marital satisfaction. The sample of the study was 124 married individuals. As a result of this research, length of the marriage was not a significant predictor of marital satisfaction.

3.1.6. Flirt Length

When the literature about marital satisfaction and flirt length scanned it is seen that researches about marital satisfaction and dating length are limited. The studies are described below in order.

Alder's (2010) study examined the correlation between contentment in marriage and demographic characteristics. Sample of the study was 60 married individuals. The results of the study supported that, there was no relationship between marital satisfaction and flirt length. When considering domestic research, it appears that similar findings have been obtained. Alaçam (2020) looked into the connection between marital satisfaction and tendencies towards infidelity and personality traits. Alaçam's study also reached the same conclusion that there was no significant relationship between marital satisfaction and dating duration.

From another point of view, Akkol (2017) studied the relationship between schemas and contentment in marriage. The research sample included 124 couples who were married. As a result of the analyses made, dating time before marriage is positively correlated with women's marital satisfaction. In another study, Öz (2019) studied predictive role of depression, well-being on marital satisfaction. The study participants was 404 individuals who were married. Based on the outcomes, it was found that the duration of dating before marriage was an important predictor of marital satisfaction.

3.2. Research on Childhood Trauma and Demographics

3.2.1. Gender

Upon reviewing the literature on childhood trauma and gender, it becomes apparent that several studies have supported the existence of distinctions in childhood

trauma scores between males and females. Furthermore, some studies have not found any differences between the childhood trauma scores of males and females. The studies are outlined and explained in more detail below.

Pruessner et al. (2018) conducted a study which they investigated gender differences in childhood trauma and their effect on symptomatic and functional outcome following psychosis onset. The sample of the study was 210 patients (66 women, 144 men). In conclusion, female participants represented higher rates of emotional abuse, however male participants represented higher rates of emotional and physical neglect. There were no significant differences between women and men in physical and sexual abuse scores.

Thombs et al. (2007) studied childhood trauma from across groups defined by gender and race in a sample of substance-abusing adults. They have studied 693 active drug abusers. According to the study, women's emotional abuse and physical abuse scores are higher than men. In addition, physical neglect scores were higher for men.

Sweeney et al. (2015) examined the prevalence of childhood trauma in people who have psychotic disorders. In this study participants was 391 people (%42 male, %58 female). As a result, of the 391 people, %59.2 of reported experiencing childhood trauma. Females reported childhood trauma more than male participants.

Şar et al. (2020) conducted a study culture-sensitive revision of the Turkish version of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire. They examined 783 participants, including patients with diagnoses and people who were undiagnosed. There was no significant difference between men and women's childhood trauma questionnaire total scores. A comparable outcome was discovered in Wright et al's research (2009).

They investigated long term effect of childhood emotional maltreatment among college students. They have studied 301 college students (%52 female). The conclusion of the research was that there was no notable variation between emotional abuse scores and gender.

Bilim (2012) examined the psychological well-being in terms of childhood trauma, emotion regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Of the sample, 510 (%64.8) were female and 277 (%35.2) were male. When the averages were examined, it was seen that the childhood trauma experience scale averages of men were higher than the averages of women.

O'Leary and Barber (2008) explored gender differences in childhood sexual abuse. The sample of the research consisted of 145 men and 151 women. As a result of the research, the rate of exposure to sexual abuse of women is significantly high compared to men. A similar result was found in the study of Toksöz (2022). The aim of the study examined the predict role of childhood trauma history, perceived social support levels and cognitive emotion regulation strategies that individuals use to cope with stress on aggressive behaviors of adults. The sample of the study were 300 participants that is 183 women (61%) and 117 men (39%). It is seen that the mean score of sexual abuse from childhood traumas of women is significantly higher than the mean score of men.

Köşşekoğlu (2021) studied the predicted role of childhood traumas romantic jealousy and aggression. In this study participants were 400 individuals. According to the scores obtained from the emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect sub-dimensions, it was seen that male individuals got higher scores from the emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect than female individuals.

3.2.2. Education Level

When the relevant literature is examined significant differences were spotted between childhood trauma and education level, the studies were explained below in order.

Sweeney et al. (2015) examined the prevalence of childhood trauma in people who have psychotic disorders. In this study participants were 391 people (%42 male, %58 female). As a result, of the 391 people, %59.2 of reported experiencing childhood trauma. In this research they found that, early school leavers were more likely to experience childhood trauma.

Bilim (2012) examined the psychological well-being in terms of childhood trauma, emotion regulation, and interpersonal relationships. Of the sample, 510 (%64.8) were female and 277 (%35.2) were male. In conclusion, childhood traumatic experiences are more common in the group with low education level. In the Childhood Abuse Scale, it was found that university graduates scored significantly lower than high school graduates, and high school graduates scored significantly lower than primary school graduates. A similar result was found in the study of Köşsekoğlu (2021). The aim of the study predicted role of childhood traumas romantic jealousy and aggression. In this study participants were 400 individuals. Upon analyzing the study, a negative association was discovered between the scores on the Childhood Trauma Scale and educational status.

Toksöz (2022) examined the predict role of childhood trauma history, perceived social support levels and cognitive emotion regulation strategies that individuals use to cope with stress on aggressive behaviors of adults. The sample of the study were 300 participants that is 183 women (61%) and 117 men (39%). As a

conclusion, participants with high school or lower education level had significantly higher scores for the mean score of childhood traumas and emotional abuse sub-dimension than the participants with graduate or higher education level. Also, participants with high school and below education level obtained significantly higher scores for physical abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect sub-dimensions than participants with both university and graduate and higher education levels.

Currie and Widom (2010) conducted a study which they examined the long term effects of childhood trauma on adult economic well-being. The participants were 807 individuals. In conclusion, participants with lower education levels are more likely to have a childhood abuse and neglect history. A comparable outcome was observed in the research of Hovens et al. (2011). They investigated the effect of childhood trauma on adulthood depression and anxiety disorders. It is seen that higher childhood trauma score was related to lower level of education.

3.3. Research on Differentiation of Self and Demographics

3.3.1. Gender

When reviewing the literature on the differentiation of self and gender, it becomes apparent that many studies have supported the existence of distinctions in differentiation of self scores between males and females. Furthermore, some studies have not found any differences between the differentiation of self scores of males and females. The studies are outlined and explained in more detail below.

Cavaiola et al. (2012) investigated the relation of differentiation of self in the workplace to work stress and work satisfaction. They have studied 584 individuals. In conclusion, they found significant gender differences. Females' differentiation of self scores lower than males. Women reported higher levels of emotional reactivity and

fusion compared to males. There was no significant difference in the level of emotional cutoff between the two genders.

Peleg et al. (2015) examined the relationship between separation anxiety in adolescents and separation anxiety in their parents and their differentiation of self. The participants included 88 adolescents and with their parents. According to the results of the research, they found gender differences. The level of emotional reactivity and fusion with others was found to be higher in mothers than in fathers. On the other hand, fathers had higher levels of I position and emotional cut-off than mothers.

Ferreira et al. (2015) conducted a study the relationship among sexual desire and differentiation of self in spouses. The study consisted of 33 couples (N = 66). This study has revealed the male's differentiation of self scores higher than females'. Comparable outcome was observed in the research of Gonzalez et al. (2016). They investigated relationships between differentiation of self, mate selection, and marital adjustment. They have studied 118 couples. According to the study, males showed higher differentiation scores than females.

Tönbül (2020) studied the effects of married individuals' early mismatch schemas and differentiation of self levels on marriage relationship beliefs. The participants were 301 married individuals. As a result, it was found that women's scores were higher than men's in all differentiation of self subscales.

Skowron (2004) examined the differentiation of self validity in different ethnic groups. The participants were 61 individuals. Due to the findings of the research, no difference was found between differentiation of self and gender. A similar result was found in the study of Timm and Keiley (2011). They studied the relationship between

differentiation of self, adult attachment, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and marital satisfaction. Due to the exploratory analysis of the research conducted with 205 married people, there were no gender differences in differentiation of self scores.

3.3.2. Education Level

When the literature about differentiation of self and education level is scanned, it is seen that studies about differentiation of self and education level is limited. The studies were explained below in order.

Tönbül (2020) studied the effects of married individuals' early mismatch schemas and differentiation of self levels on marriage relationship beliefs. The participants were 301 married individuals. As a result, the differentiation of self's total score and subscales (emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off and fusion) differed significantly according to education level. Moreover, it was reported that the total score of differentiation of self was lower in the high school graduate participants than the university and graduate/doctorate graduate participants.

Değirmenci (2019) examined the differentiation of self. The participants were 449 individuals. It is found that differentiation of self of the graduate and doctorate graduates is higher than the participants in other education levels, while the participants with the lowest education level have the lowest differentiation of self level in terms of emotional reactivity, emotional cut-off and fusion with others compared to other education levels. On the other hand, there was no significant difference between participants' level of education and I position subscale.

Metinoğlu (2020) studied the differentiation of the self and its relation to attachment and close relationships in adults. The study included 136 adult

participants. The results of the analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between the different educational status groups and the total score of differentiation of self and its subscales.

3.4. Researches on Marital Satisfaction and Childhood Trauma

Based on the literature review, it was determined that there is a correlation between marital satisfaction and childhood trauma. Research has shown that childhood trauma has a strong predictive effect on marital satisfaction.

Whisman (2006) investigated the childhood trauma and marital outcomes in adulthood. The sample of the study were 3428 (1,868 women and 1,560 men) people. Due to the findings of the research, current marital satisfaction was lower between people who during childhood experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse and possibility of marital disruption was higher between people who during childhood had experienced physical abuse, sexual assault, or serious physical attack.

Maneta et al. (2019) examined the relationship between childhood emotional abuse and marital satisfaction. In this study 156 couples reported that history of childhood emotional abuse. As a result, it was found that both women and men with a history of childhood emotional abuse had low marital satisfaction scores, both for themselves and for their partners.

Di Lillo et al. (2009) conducted a study which they investigated childhood maltreatment history among newlywed couples. In the sample of this longitudinal study were 202 people. As a result of this study, childhood trauma subtypes that reduce marital satisfaction for male participants; physical abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect. The childhood subtype that reduces women's marital satisfaction is neglect.

Nelson and Wampler (2000) examined the association between reported childhood physical and sexual abuse and family adjustment. 96 couples (one or both partners) of the participants stated that they were sexually or physically abused, while 65 couples stated that they had not been exposed to any childhood trauma. Marriage satisfaction of partners with childhood trauma was found to be significantly lower. There was no difference in marital satisfaction of the partners without childhood trauma.

Çelebi (2019) investigated the effect of childhood traumatic experiences on marital satisfaction. Participants of the study are 95 women who have been married for at least one year. According to the statistical results, a negative relationship was found between marital satisfaction and childhood trauma. Participants who experienced physical and sexual abuse in their childhood had significantly lower marital satisfaction. Emotional abuse, physical neglect and emotional neglect dimensions are related to each other, but it has not been found to have an effect on marital satisfaction.

Sevinç (2021) studied childhood traumas and the relationship between forgiveness and marital satisfaction. The participants of the study were 344 married individuals (175 women, 165 men). In conclusion, childhood traumas significantly predicts marital adjustment. As a result, it has been determined that being exposed to emotional abuse in childhood was found to affect marital adjustment negatively. Furthermore, physical and emotional neglect in childhood significantly predicted marital adjustment.

3.5. Researches on Marital Satisfaction and Differentiation of Self

According to the findings of the relevant literature study, there is a link between marital satisfaction and differentiation of self. Studies have supported that differentiation of self highly predicts on marital satisfaction. . In addition, some studies have found no relationship between marital satisfaction and differentiation of self scores.

Peleg (2008) explored the relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. The study included 121 Israeli individuals, none of whom were couples. It was reported that marital satisfaction was negatively connected to emotional cutoff. A lower cutoff was linked to higher marital satisfaction.

Timm and Keiley (2011) studied to relations between among differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. As a result of the analyzes made with 205 married couples differentiation of self did not have a direct effect on marital satisfaction. However, sexual communication was the mediator variable in this study, and it was found to be related to both self-differentiation and marital satisfaction.

In the study of Kahraman (2021), the moderating role of differentiation of self between bride-mother-in-law relations and dyadic adjustment was examined. Participants of the study consisted of 1660 women over the age of eighteen, married for at least one year, and whose mother-in-law is still alive. The findings of the study showed that bride-mother-in-law relations and differentiation of self positively anticipate marital satisfaction and the effect of differentiation of self on marital satisfaction is stronger than the effect of bride-mother-in-law relations on marital satisfaction. Emotional reactivity, I-position and emotional cutting from the sub

dimensions of differentiation of self anticipate positively marital satisfaction but fusion with others doesn't anticipate significantly marital satisfaction.

Skwron (2000) investigated the relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. The participants of the study were 39 couples. As a result, especially greater emotional cutoff and emotional reactivity among couples predicted greater marital unhappiness. Also, greater emotional cut off in husband uniquely explained divorce.

Lampis et al. (2018) studied to relationship between differentiation of self and dyadic adjustment. The participants of the study were 137 heterosexual Italian couples. Women's dyadic adjustment was influenced by their personal I-position and emotional cut-off as well as by their partner's I-position and emotional cut-off. However, men's dyadic adjustment depended only on their personal I-position.

Ulu Yalçinkaya (2019) explored the role of differentiation of self on couple satisfaction among married people. There were 825 married people among the participants. Consequently, people with higher emotional reactivity levels are less satisfied in their marriages. The results confirmed the significance of self-differentiation in married people's marital satisfaction.

Patrick et al. (2007) integrated theories of intimacy and differentiation with previously studied relationship variables to make an anticipative model of marital satisfaction. Sample of this study is 124 couples. Due to the findings of the research, there is no relationship between differentiation and marital satisfaction. However, intimacy and spousal support as strong variables in anticipate marital satisfaction.

3.6. Marital Satisfaction, Childhood Trauma and Differentiation of Self

When the relevant literature was examined, there were many studies on marital satisfaction both in domestic and abroad. In addition, marital satisfaction has been studied separately in many studies with the concepts of childhood trauma and differentiation of the self. However, a study examining the relationship of these three concepts together has not been found internal or international studies.



CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This section provides in-depth information regarding the research model, participants, and the methods used to collect data in the study.

4.1. Research Model

This study used a quantitative, predictive correlational research design to examine the power of married individuals' childhood traumas and self-differentiation levels on marital satisfaction. Correlational study determines the relationship between one or more variables, it does not give a cause-effect relationship. The purpose of a predictive correlational research design is to investigate the connections between different variables, and make predictions about one variable (criterion variable) based on its association with other variables (predictor variables) (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2013). In this study, the predictor variables were identified as childhood trauma and differentiation of self, while the criterion variable was identified as marital satisfaction.

4.2. Participants

The sample of participants in this research consisted of 500 married individuals who are over the age of eighteen and living in Turkey. 184 of the participants are men and 316 are women. The data of the study were collected with the convenience sampling method. Data were collected online and voluntarily via google form in April 2021, after the ethics committee approval form of Yeditepe University Ethics Committee dated 30.03.2021 and numbered E.21568116-302.14.01-776.

4.3. Data Collection Tools

Data collection for this study was done using the following tools: Personal Information Form (Appendix 1), Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) (Appendix 2), Differentiation of Self Scale (DSS) (Appendix 3) and Marriage Satisfaction Scale (MSS) (Appendix 4). Before using the scales, approval was obtained from the scale developers via e-mail. Detailed information about these measurement tools is given below.

4.3.1. Marriage Satisfaction Scale

The Marriage Satisfaction Scale (MSS) developed by Çelik and Yazgan-İnanç (2009) was used to measure the marital satisfaction of the participants. This scale consists of a total of 13 items and three factors. 5 of these items are designed to be positive and 8 to be negative. Each factor is at an acceptable level as a subscale, and these factors are 'family (item number; 2, 5, 11, 12, 13)', 'sexuality (item number; 3, 4, 7, 9)' and 'self (item number; 1, 8, 10)'. Each item on the scales used in this study was evaluated using a Likert scale with five intervals. (1) “totally suitable for me, suitable for me (2), somewhat suitable for me (3), not suitable for me (4), not suitable for me at all (5).” A total score can be obtained from the scale. The highest score can be obtained from the scale is 65, and the lowest score is 13. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.79. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the sub-factors of the scale is 0.83 for family, 0.81 for sexuality, and 0.71 for self. The Cronbach's alpha value calculated for the scale used in this study was .87.

4.3.2. Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ-33)

This scale was developed by Bernstein (1994) to measure the childhood traumas of individuals. It was adapted into Turkish by Şar (2019). In 2020, it was

revised and over protection/controlling sub-factors were added. The revised version of the scale in 2020 was used in this study. The 5-point Likert-type scale, adapted to Turkish in order to measure the childhood traumas of individuals, consists of 33 questions. Each item on the scale used in this study was evaluated using a Likert scale with five intervals, namely "never (1)", "rarely (2)", "sometimes (3)", "frequently (4)", "always (5)". The internal consistency of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient which was found to be 0.87. It consists of 6 factors in total and a total score can be obtained from the scale. Sub-factors of the scale; emotional neglect (item numbers; 28, 19, 13, 5, 7), emotional abuse (item numbers; 3, 8, 25, 14, 18), sexual abuse (24, 20, 27, 23, 21), over control/protection (item numbers; 32, 30, 29, 33, 31), physical abuse (item numbers; 17, 11, 12, 9, 15), physical neglect (item numbers; 1, 2, 4, 26, 6) (Şar et al., 2020). The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the sub-factors of the scale is 0.89 for emotional neglect, 0.88 for emotional abuse, and 0.90 for sexual abuse, 0.84 for over control/protection, 0.81 for physical abuse, and 0.77 for physical neglect. The Cronbach's alpha value calculated for the scale in this study was .88.

4.3.3. Differentiation of Self Scale

The Differentiation of Self Scale used in this research was initially developed by Skowron and Friedlander in 1998, and later revised by Skowron and Schmitt in 2003. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Işık and Bulduk in 2015. The internal consistency of the Differentiation of Self Scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha which was found to be 0.81. The 6-point Likert-type scale consists of 20 questions. A Likert-type rating was used, ranging from (1) not suitable for me to (5) suitable for me. The scale consists of four sub-factors and a total score can be obtained from the scale. The high score obtained from the scale indicates the high level of differentiation

of self. The sub-factors in the scale are: emotional reactivity (item numbers; 8, 11, 15, 17, and 18), I position (item numbers; 6, 10, 12, 13, 19), emotional cut-off (item numbers; 1, 3, 4, 7, 16), fusion with others (item numbers; 2, 5, 9, 14, 20). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the sub-factors is as follows; Emotional reactivity 0.78, I position 0.75, emotional cut-off 0.77, fusion with others 0.74. The Cronbach's alpha value calculated for the scale in this study was .84.

4.3.4. Personal Information Form

The Personal Information Form was created by the researcher to collect demographic information from the participants. The form included the following information that the participants were required to fill; gender, age, education level, duration of marriage, duration of dating and having child.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

5.1. Data analysis

SPSS 25 program was used for statistical analysis. Prior to analyzing the research data, preliminary analyses were conducted. These analyses included checking for multivariate normality, identifying any missing data or outliers, and examining the descriptive data. Once these analyses were completed, the main analyses pertaining to the research problem and its sub-problems were carried out.

Hierarchical regression was used to understand how much childhood trauma and differentiation of self predict marital satisfaction. One-way ANOVA and independent sample t-test were used to see whether demographic variables make a significant difference on dependent and independent variables. One-way ANOVA; Age, education level, flirt length were used to test the demographic variables. Independent sample t-test; Gender, having a child was used to test demographic variables. Pearson Correlation was used to examine the relationship between marriage duration and marital satisfaction.

5.2. Preliminary Analyses

Before proceeding to the analysis, first, the skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined to see whether the distribution of the scores of the scales provided the assumption of normality. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated that for the assumption of normality of the distribution, when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are between -1.5 and +1.5, they provide the assumption of normality. The kurtosis and skewness coefficients obtained for the distribution of the scales show that the

distribution does not deviate excessively from normality (See Table 2). Therefore, parametric tests have been used.

Second step was to check for missing data and it was found that there were no missing values in the data. After that, the possibility of outliers was assessed using Mahalanobis distance calculation. It was found that there were 32 outliers in the data. Descriptive statistics and normality analyses were examined for the study variables based on the skewness and kurtosis coefficients. Outliers were removed from the data based on these analyses. 532 data were collected, but when 32 outs were removed, analyzes were made with 500 data.

Finally, the variance increase factor (VIF) of the independent variables, and condition index (CI) are calculated to test multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). If VIF is greater than 10 and CI is greater than 30, there is a multicollinearity problem. In this study, the values are shown in the Table 1 below and it is seen that there is no multicollinearity problem between the independent variables (Paulson, 2007). The scores of all indicated the absence of the multicollinearity problem. Also, according to the Durbin-Watson coefficient calculated to investigate the independence of errors, the Durbin-Watson coefficient found as 1.916 and this value was acceptable since it was between 1.5 and 2.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 1. Results of the Analysis of the Multicollinearity assumptions of the Research Model

Coefficients	Values
VIF	1.30
CI	11.384
	(Model I)
	20.349
	(Model II)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and the Normality Indexes Related to Childhood Trauma, the Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction

Variables	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Childhood Trauma	500	56.45	14.21	0.967	1.032
Differentiation of Self	500	82.21	14.57	-0.485	-0.011
Marital Satisfaction	500	51.70	10.52	-1.044	1.005

The mean of childhood trauma levels was 56.45 ($SD = 14.21$), the mean of levels of the differentiation of self was 82.21 ($SD = 14.57$), of marital satisfaction levels was 51.70 ($SD = 10.52$).

5.3. Main Analyses

5.3.1. Examination of the Levels of Childhood Trauma, Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction of the Married Individuals by Gender

An independent samples t-test was used to determine if there were any differences in the levels of childhood trauma, differentiation of self, and marital

satisfaction among the participants based on their gender. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Independent Samples t Test Related to the Levels of Childhood Trauma, Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction According to the Gender of the Respondents

Variables	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d
Childhood Trauma	Male	184	57.88	12.90	498	1.717	.09	0.17
	Female	316	55.61	13.62				
Differentiation of Self	Male	184	85.88	12.71	437	4.581 ¹	.00**	0.41
	Female	316	80.08	15.17				
Marital Satisfaction	Male	183	23.93	9.11	421	-	.56	0.05
	Female	316	24.45	10.37		0.561 ¹		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ ¹ Equal variances not assumed

As indicated in Table 3, the levels of childhood trauma and marital satisfaction among the married individuals did not show a significant difference based on their gender ($t(421) = 1.717$, $p > .05$; $t(429) = -0.561$, $p < .05$) respectively. However, their levels of differentiation of self, differ significantly based on gender ($t_{(437)} = 2.542$, $p < .05$). Namely, males' differentiation of self scores ($M = 85.88$, $SD = 12.71$) are higher than females' ($\bar{x} = 80.08$, $SD = 15.17$) and this difference is statistically significant (Cohen's $d = 0.24$; $p < .05$).

5.3.2. Examination of Levels of Childhood Trauma, Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction According to Educational Levels of the Married Individuals

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine if there were significant differences in the levels of childhood trauma, differentiation of self, and marital satisfaction among the participants based on their education level. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of One-Way ANOVA Related to Childhood Trauma, Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction According to Educational Levels of the Married Individuals

Variables	n, $\bar{x}$, and <i>SD</i> values				ANOVA Results					
	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	<i>SD</i>		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Childhood Trauma	High School and under	76	59.25	15.97	Between Groups	713.65	2	356.83	1.773	.17
	Undergraduate	331	56.03	13.74	Within Groups	100016.00	497	201.24		
	Postgraduate	93	55.66	14.22	Total	100729.65	499			
	Total	500	56.45	14.21						
Differentiation of Self	High School and under	76	78.62	15.48	Between Groups	1428.80	2	714.40	3.398	.03*
	Undergraduate	331	82.43	14.39	Within Groups	194496.73	497	210.26		
	Postgraduate	93	84.37	14.05	Total	105925.52	499			
	Total	500	82.21	14.56						
Marital Satisfaction	High School and under	76	25.45	9.75	Between Groups	137.97	2	68.99	0.700	.50
	Undergraduate	331	24.13	9.77	Within Groups	48759.13	495	98.50		
	Postgraduate	93	23.74	10.60	Total	48897.10	497			
	Total	500	24.26	9.92						

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 4 indicates that there were no significant differences in levels of childhood trauma ($F(2,499) = 1.773, p > .05$) and marital satisfaction ($F(2,497) = 0.700, p > .05$) among participants with different education levels. However, there was a significant difference in the levels of differentiation of self between the education levels ($F(2,499) = 3.398, p < .05$). To further understand the source of this difference, a post-hoc test, specifically the Tukey HSD test was conducted, and the results were reported in Table 5. This test was chosen as the Levene's test showed equal variances among the groups, which meant the homogeneity assumption was met.

Table 5. Tukey HSD Test Results Regarding the Analysis of Differentiation of Self Levels According to Educational Levels of the Married Individuals

Dependent Variable	The field of education (I)	The field of education (J)	Mean difference (I-J)	S.E.	p
Differentiation of Self	High School and under	Undergraduate	-3.81	1.84	.10
	High School and under	Postgraduate	-5.75	2.24	.03*
	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	-1.93	1.70	.49

Note. * $p < .05$

As can be seen in Table 5, the results of the analysis indicate that individuals with lower levels of education, specifically those in high school or below ($\bar{x}=78.61$, $SD=15.49$), had lower scores for differentiation of self in comparison to those with postgraduate education ($\bar{x} = 84.37$, $SD=14.05$). The difference between these two groups was statistically significant, with a p-value of less than .05. In other words, postgraduate graduates may have a higher level of differentiation of self scores. However, no significant differences were found in the scores of differentiation of self among individuals with other levels of education.

5.3.3. Examination of Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to the Having Child of the Participants'

According to the results of the independent samples t-test, no significant difference was found between the levels of marital satisfaction of individuals who have children and those who do not have children ($p > .05$). Analysis results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results of Independent Samples t-Test Related to the Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to the Respondents' Having Child

Variables	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d
Marital Satisfaction	Yes	418	51.44	10.41	498	-1.286	.20	0.15
	No	82	53.07	11.05				

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

The Table 6 shows that the married individuals' levels of marital satisfaction do not show a significant difference based on the having child ($t_{(498)} = -1.286$, $p > .05$).

5.3.4. Examination of Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to Age of Participants

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there were any differences in levels of marital satisfaction among participants based on their age. The results of the ANOVA are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of One-Way ANOVA Related to the Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to the Age of Participants

Variables	ANOVA Results									
	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	SD		Sum of	Mean			
						Squares	df	Square	F	p
Marital	30 and younger	68	51.46	12.38	Between Groups	328.66	3	109.55	0.990	.40
Satisfaction	31 – 40 years old	147	52.54	10.20	Within Groups	54904.71	496	110.70		
	41 -50 years old	148	51.22	9.82	Total	55233.37	499			
	51 and older	137	50.50	10.59						
	Total	500	51.70	10.52						

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

The analysis of variance in the Table 7 shows that the levels of marital satisfaction ($F(3,499) = 0.990, p > .05$) did not differ in terms of age levels of participants. In other words, there is not a statistically significant difference between levels of marital satisfaction according to age levels of participants.

5.3.5. Examination of the Relationship between the Marriage Length and Marital Satisfaction Levels

The Pearson correlation was conducted in order to examine the relationship between the marriage length and marital satisfaction levels.

Table 8. Pearson Correlation Co-efficient between Marital Satisfaction and Marriage Length

Variables	Marriage Length	p
Marital Satisfaction	-.05	.29

The Pearson correlation was conducted in order to examine the relationship between the marriage length and marital satisfaction levels. There is not a significant correlation between the marriage length and marital satisfaction levels ($r = -.05$, $p > .29$).

5.3.6. Examination of Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to Flirt Length of Participants

The study used one-way ANOVA to examine if there were any differences in levels of marital satisfaction among participants based on their flirt length. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Results of One-Way ANOVA Related to the Difference among Levels of Marital Satisfaction According to the Flirt Length of Participants

Variables	n, M, and SD values				ANOVA Results					
	Group	n	$\bar{x}$	SD		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Marital Satisfaction	One year and less	216	51.58	10.14	Between Groups	22.44	3	7.48	0.067	.98
	1 – 2 years	120	51.93	10.00	Within Groups	55210.93	496	111.31		
	2 -3 years	54	52.11	10.30	Total	55233.37	499			
	3 years and more	110	51.52	11.96						
	Total	500	51.71	10.52						

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

In summary, the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis in Table 9 show that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of marital satisfaction among participants based on the length of flirt. The p-value is greater than .05, ($F(3,499) = 0.067, p > .05$)

5.3.7. The Relationship among the Levels of Childhood Trauma, the Differentiation of Self, and Marital Satisfaction of the Married Individuals

The correlation between childhood trauma, differentiation of self, and marital satisfaction among married individuals was examined using Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis.

Table 10. Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the Study Variables

Variables	n	1	2	3
1.Childhood Trauma		1		
2.Differentiation of Self		-.49**	1	
3.Marital Satisfaction		-.26**	.29**	1

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ $n = 500$

Table 10 indicates that there was a negative and statistically significant relationship between differentiation of self and childhood trauma levels of the participants ($r = -.49$; $p < .01$). This correlation is moderate. In other words, while childhood trauma levels increase the level of differentiation of self decreases. Furthermore, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between marital satisfaction levels and childhood trauma ($r = -.26$; $p < .01$). This correlation is low. As the people have the high marital satisfaction levels, they have the low childhood trauma levels. However, correlation between levels of marital satisfaction and differentiation of self was found to be positive and statistically significant ($r = .29$; $p < .01$). This correlation is also low. Accordingly, marital satisfaction levels increase, differentiation of self levels increase.

5.3.8. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Marital Satisfaction

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine if the levels of childhood trauma and the differentiation of self significantly predicted the respondents' marital satisfaction levels, and the results are in Table 11.

Model 1. Childhood Trauma

Model 2. Childhood Trauma and Differentiation of Self

Table 11. Hierarchical regression analysis results on the prediction of marital satisfaction

Model		B	SE	β	t	p
1	Costant	62.64	1.86		33.60	.00**
	Childhood trauma	-0.19	0.03	-0.26	-6.05	
		R=.261			p=.000	
		R ² =.068	F _(1,498) = 36.551			
2	Costant	45.70	4.28		10.68	.00**
	Childhood trauma	-0.12	0.04	-0.16	-3.26	.00**
	Differentiation of self	0.15	0.04	0.21	4.38	.00**
		R=.321	ΔR =.039		p=.000	
		R ² =.103	F _(2,497) = 28.542			

Note. *p<.05, **p<.01.

Table 11 indicates that in the first model, levels of the childhood trauma significantly predicted the respondents' marital satisfaction level and explained %7 of the total variance ($F_{(1,498)}=36.551$; $p<.01$; $R=.261$, $R^2=.068$). The childhood trauma was a negative predictor of marital satisfaction ($\beta=-0.26$; $p<.01$).

In the second model, the differentiation of self variable was added and the model provided a change of approximately %4 in the model ($\Delta R = .039$). The second model suggested that the levels of differentiation of self predicted the marital satisfaction levels positively and significantly ($\beta=0.21$; $p<.01$). The childhood trauma stayed as significant even after differentiation of self was added to the model.

The final model overall explained %10 of the total variance of marital satisfaction ($F_{(2,497)} = 28.542$; $p < .01$; $R = .321$, $R^2 = .103$). Briefly, it was found that childhood trauma was a negative predictor of marital satisfaction while differentiation of self was a positive predictor of marital satisfaction.



CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The study looked at how childhood trauma and differentiation of self can predict marital satisfaction. The results were analyzed and compared to previous research in the field.

6.1.1. Discussion of Findings on Marital Satisfaction Scores According to Sociodemographic Variables

One of the main questions of this study was to investigate if there were any variations in marital satisfaction scores based on demographic factors such as gender, education, age, flirt length, having children and marriage length.

As a result of the independent sample t-test, the difference was not found between marital satisfaction and gender. In the literature numerous studies support differences in marital satisfaction levels between men and women. On the contrary, many research did not found a difference in marriage satisfaction between men and women like this current research

For example, some studies in the literature showed that women's marital satisfaction was higher than men's (Jose and Alfons, 2007; Keçeli, 2020; Rhonda et al., 2015; Wunderer & Schneewind, 2008). However, in other studies, men's marital satisfaction was higher than women's (e.g. Bahrami et al., 2021; Kharपुरi & Priya, 2019). Besides these findings, in the research of Jackson et al. (2004) and Kabasakal and Soylu (2016), found that there was no statistically significant difference in the marital satisfaction scores between men and women. Findings of this study paralleled the findings of Jackson et al. (2004), Kabasakal and Soylu's (2016) studies. The reason why there was no difference between marital satisfaction and gender in this

study may be due to the high level of education of the study participants (most of them university and master's degree graduates). As the level of education increases, gender equality and the sharing of domestic duties may increase. At the end of this, there may not be a significant difference between marital satisfaction and gender.

As a result of the one-way ANOVA test, it was not found difference between marital satisfaction and educational level. In most of the studies in literature, it is seen that there was a significant difference between education level and marital satisfaction. In the studies of Tampieri (2010), Keçeli (2020) and Kervanoğlu (2016), it was found that as the level of education increased, marital satisfaction also increased. Unlike these studies, Kowal et al. (2021) and Çağ and Yıldırım (2013) concluded that as the education level of married individuals increases, their marital satisfaction decreases. It is also seen that there was which no differences between marital satisfaction and education level, same as in this study (e.g. Alder, 2010; Onyishi et al., 2012). The education level of the participants of this study is quite high. Generally graduated from university or higher education level. The result may have been this way because they did not represent the general group.

It was determined through the one-way ANOVA test that there was no significant difference in the levels of marital satisfaction among participants based on their age. Despite the fact that some studies in the literature have identified a connection between marital satisfaction and age, other studies have not. In Kervanoğlu (2016)'s study, it was found that as age increases, marital satisfaction also increases, but in Kayış's (2019) study, on the contrary, it was seen that increasing age decreases marital satisfaction. Consistent with the findings of this study, no significant difference was found between age and marital satisfaction in Alder (2010) and Bahrami et al. (2021)'s studies. The average age of the participants of this group

is high, very few people under the age of 30 participated in the research. As a result, more representative participants may be needed for comparison.

In this study, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference in levels of marital satisfaction based on the flirt length of the participants. In the literature, different results have been reached in the direction of the difference between marital satisfaction and flirt length. As in this study, there were studies in the literature that found no difference between marital satisfaction and flirt length (e.g., Alaçam, 2020; Alder, 2010). In contrary, Akkol (2017) and Öz (2019) found in their research that length of flirt was positively related to marital satisfaction. The majority of the participants dated for less than a year in this current study. As a result, the outcome might have changed if there had been more representative participants.

The t-test was used to examine the difference between marital satisfaction and having child. As a result of the analysis, it was found that there was no statistically significant difference between marital satisfaction and having child. Çağ and Yıldırım (2013) and Bahrami et al. (2021), in parallel with the findings of this study, no difference was found between having child and marital satisfaction. Also, there were findings in the literature that the difference between marital satisfaction and having child was both negative and positive (e.g. Kowal et al., 2021; Rhonda et al., 2015; Onyishi et al., 2012). Due to the high average age of the participants, the vast majority of the participants have children. Having children can negatively affect marital satisfaction earlier in marriage and when the children are young. When children are younger, their responsibilities are greater and this may cause conflict between spouses. However, as children grow older, their responsibilities decrease and having children in marriage can be a positive reflection of it.

The Pearson correlation was conducted in order to examine the relationship between marriage length and marital satisfaction levels. There was not a significant correlation between marriage duration and marital satisfaction levels. In the literature, Çağ and Yıldırım (2013), Chi et al. (2013) and Patrick et al. (2007) found that marriage length was not a predictor of marital satisfaction. On the other hand, Batık and Kalkan (2017) and Kayış (2019) indicated that marriage satisfaction and marriage length are negatively correlated. These studies also found that there was no significant difference between marital satisfaction and flirt length like Çağ and Yıldırım (2013), Chi et al. (2013) and Patrick et al.'s (2007) studies. This result can be interpreted as follows; may be a result specific to the participants of this study.

6.1.2. Discussion of Findings on Childhood Trauma Scores According to Gender and Education Level

The results of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between levels of childhood trauma and gender. In the literature, contradictory findings were found. For example, Şar et al. (2020) and Wright et al. (2009) found that no differences between male and female total childhood trauma scores. The findings of this study are similar to Şar et al. (2020) and Wright et al. (2009)'s studies. On the other hand, Pruessner et al. (2018) and Köşşekoğlu (2021), found that men were exposed physical neglect and emotional neglect more than women. Also, O'Leary and Barber (2008) and Toksöz (2022) found that the mean score of sexual abuse from childhood traumas of women is significantly higher than the mean score of men. Childhood traumas mostly pertaining to women seem to be high in government official records (Sherman et al., 2009). One of the reason for this may be the higher rate of under-reporting of traumas experienced by boys (Sanderson, 2004). With the voluntary participation of people in this study, the

rate of declaring their personal trauma might be genuine. Therefore, in this study, childhood trauma scores may not differ between men and women.

As a result of one-way ANOVA test, it was not found relationship between childhood trauma and educational level. Results are not compatible with studies in literature examining the relationship between childhood trauma and educational level. Studies in literature generally found that there is a negative correlation between education level and childhood traumas. In other words, the lower the education level, the higher the risk of encountering childhood trauma (Bilim, 2012; Currie & Widom, 2010; Hovens et al., 2011; Köşşekoğlu, 2021; Sweeney et al., 2015; Toksöz, 2022). While some subtypes of childhood traumas (e.g. neglect) decrease as the level of education increases, sexual harassment, which is another subtype of childhood trauma, can happen to any child regardless of education level and socio-economic level (Finkelhor, 1994; Wyatt et al., 1999).). Therefore, these results can also be considered in the light of this findings.

6.1.3. Discussion of Findings on Differentiation of Self Scores According to Gender and Education Level

As a result of an independent sample t-test, a significant difference was found between differentiation of self and gender. Males' differentiation of self scores are higher than females' and this difference is statistically significant. This result is consistent with research in literature. For example, according to the Ferreira et al. (2015) and Gonzalez et al.'s (2016) male's differentiation of self scores is higher than females. In other perspective, in Cavaiola et al.'s (2012) study females stated higher levels of emotional reactivity and fusion than males did. There was no significant

difference in the level of emotional cutoff. It can be said that there were conflicted results in the literature about gender differences on differentiation of self.

The results of the one-way ANOVA test indicated that there was a significant difference in the levels of differentiation of self among participants with different educational levels. This suggests that educational level may have an impact on an individual's level of differentiation of self. Specifically, individuals with lower levels of education (high school and below) had lower scores for differentiation of self compared to those with postgraduate education. However, there was no significant difference in differentiation of self scores among other groups based on their educational level. These findings align with previous studies in the literature that have shown a correlation between lower education levels and lower scores for differentiation of self (Değirmenci, 2019; Tönbül, 2020). The reason for this may be that people question their own root family beliefs and emotional values as their education level increases.

6.1.4. Discussion of Findings on Relationship between Childhood Trauma, Differentiation of Self and Marital Satisfaction

The other research question of this study was to investigate the relationship between childhood trauma, differentiation of self and marital satisfaction. The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables in question, taking into account the relevant literature.

A negative correlation was found between marital satisfaction and childhood trauma. This correlation was low. According to these results, participants with a low childhood trauma score have a high marital satisfaction score. This result was relevant with studies in the literature (Çelebi, 2019; Di Lillo et al., 2009; Maneta et al., 2019;

Nelson & Wampler 2000; Sevinç, 2021; Whisman, 2006). Based on these results, it can be said that childhood traumas have long-term consequences, as mentioned in the literature. It is known that people with childhood trauma have difficulties in their sexual lives and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, their negative opinions about their self-perceptions are also reflected in their married life. It can be thought that all these reasons negatively affect marital satisfaction.

A positive correlation was found between marital satisfaction and differentiation of self. This correlation is low. Accordingly, participants with a lower differentiation of self score have a lower marital satisfaction score. This finding aligns with previous studies in the literature that have shown a positive correlation between marital satisfaction and differentiation of self (Kahraman, 2021; Peleg, 2008; Skwron, 2000; Ulu Yalçinkaya, 2019). People with high differentiation of self score tend to be a partner who talks about their feelings and problems instead of making emotional cut-offs in relational problems, and they may be better at conflict resolution skills. The fact that they can achieve a balance in relation to individuality and togetherness may also support them to maintain a more balanced marriage life in marriage. Considering all these, it is expected that people with high levels of self-differentiation will have high marital satisfaction.

A negative correlation was found between differentiation of self and childhood trauma levels. This correlation is moderate. This study found that individuals with high levels of childhood trauma tend to have low levels of differentiation of self. This study is the first to examine the relationship between childhood traumas and differentiation of self, and no previous research in the literature has been found that studies this relationship.

6.1.5. Discussion of Findings on the Power of Childhood Trauma and Differentiation of Self to Predict Marital Satisfaction Levels

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the predict of childhood trauma and differentiation of self on the level of marital satisfaction. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis revealed that both childhood trauma and differentiation of self significantly predict the level of marital satisfaction.

In the hierarchical regression analysis, the childhood trauma scale was first added to the model. Specifically, the analysis found that childhood trauma is a significant negative predictor of marital satisfaction levels. This result means that as the childhood trauma level increases, marital satisfaction level decreases. This result was relevant with studies in the literature (Çelebi, 2019; Di Lillo et al., 2009; Maneta et al., 2019; Nelson & Wampler 2000; Sevinç, 2021; Whisman, 2006).

In the next step of the hierarchical regression analysis, the differentiation of self scale was added to the model. It is seen in this model that differentiation of self levels significantly and positively predict marital satisfaction levels of the participants. In other words, if differentiation of self level increases, marital satisfaction level increases. Hierarchical regression analysis results are compatible with studies in the literature examining the relationship between differentiation of self and marital satisfaction (Kahraman, 2021; Peleg, 2008; Skwron, 2000; Ulu Yalçinkaya, 2019). Also, childhood trauma was a negative predictor of marital satisfaction while differentiation of self was a positive predictor of marital satisfaction.

Based on these results, it can be said that childhood trauma has a long-term effect on people's adult life as well. The fact that childhood traumas were still

effective after the differentiation of the self was added to the model, it can be interpreted that childhood traumas was a strong variable in this model.

6.2. Implications, Recommendations and Limitations

The results of this research have several implications and recommendations for practitioners, field researchers, and policy makers. These include suggestions for how to use the findings in a practical setting, as well as ways to improve future research in the field. Additionally, limitations of the research are discussed, highlighting areas where further investigation is needed.

6.2.1. Implications and Recommendations for Practitioners

This research found that childhood traumas predicted marital satisfaction negatively. Mental health professionals can explain to traumatized clients how trauma affects the nervous system and what effects it can have on their adult life. In addition, trauma-oriented approaches (such as somatic experience) can be used for individuals who have been exposed to childhood trauma in individual and group counseling interventions.

The findings of this study can provide information for mental health professionals, school counselors and educators working with children and their families. They can convey information to parents about the importance and effects of early childhood experiences.

Mental health professionals working in the field of marriage and relationship counseling can also use the findings of this study to look at marital satisfaction from the perspective of childhood traumas and inform their clients about this issue.

School psychological counselors can screen childhood trauma in schools, then inform parents about traumas long term effects and carry out preventive work with children about trauma.

It was found that differentiation of self scores also had power in marital satisfaction. In this context, therapists can carry out studies that will support the differentiation of the self in couple family studies.

Results show that men have higher differentiation of self scores than women. The reason for this may be that the independence of men is more supported due to the inequality of gender roles in people's families of origin. It is important for mental health professionals working with families to inform families about gender equality. In addition, it is important that psychological counselors working in schools design a program for children on gender equality as a preventive intervention.

It was also found that differentiation of self scores increased proportionally with education level. Therefore, in relation to the level of differentiation of self in education programs, emotion regulation and taking I position may be important for psychoeducational programs designed for couples.

6.2.2. Implications and Recommendations for Field Researchers

In this study, individuals answered the questions individually, and in the next studies, the participants' answering the questions in couples will make an important contribution to the literature. This study examined the predictive power of childhood trauma and self-differentiation when studying marital satisfaction however, did not examine the directional relationship between the variables. With this in mind, it may be helpful to perform path analysis in future research to understand the cause-effect relationship between the research variables.

This research is a quantitative study. In future studies, using a mixed method research method, it can be investigated in more detail in which areas childhood trauma mainly affects marital satisfaction. At the same time, for the concept of differentiation of self, which sub-dimensions of this concept affect the satisfaction of married people can be investigated in a qualitative way.

6.2.3. Implications and Recommendations for Policy Makers

Local authorities may organize psychoeducational interventions for couples who need psychological support in their relationships. In such interventions the long-term effects of childhood traumas on marital satisfaction and differentiation of self should be considered.

It can be recommended that the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education include topics related to emotional regulation and taking I positions, which are related to the concept of differentiation of the self, in order to help individuals better understand and manage their emotions. Gender equality programs should be prepared for each education level by the Ministry of National Education, so that the difference between the differentiation of self scores between men and women can be closed. At the same time, Ministry of National Education can include trauma screening for students in the guidance curriculum at schools.

It can be suggested to increase the possibilities of obtaining information and support regarding childhood traumas in primary health care institutions with the support of the state.

Continuing Education Centers of universities should organize awareness-raising workshops on the long-term effects of childhood traumas on people intimate relationships. Studies on marital satisfaction should be increased through the

establishment of community mental health centers and the family therapy services to be provided in these centers.

6.2.3. Limitations

This study contains some demographic limitations. First of all, the study was conducted with a limited number of participants. In this study, convenience sampling was used, so the data cannot be generalized. The education level of the participants of the research is quite high, so it does not represent the general population. Participants did not solve the questionnaires as a couple.

Apart from these, other limitations of the study may have affected the process, as research data was collected online. Since the researcher was not present with the participants while filling out the questionnaire, it is not known under what conditions and at what time they solved it. Since the study was based on self-report, the data was based on the statements of individuals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Personal Information Form

1. Sex: Female () Male ()
2. Age : _____
3. Educational Level
Primary School () Middle School () High School () University () Master
Degree/ Doctoral Degree ()
4. Length of Marriage ---year ----month
5. Length of Flirt -----year ----month
6. Having a child? Yes () No ()

Appendix B: Childhood Traumas Scale

Çocukluğumda ya da ergenliğimde...

1) Yeterli yemeğim olurdu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

2) Gündelik bakım ve güvenliğim sağlanıyordu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

3) Anne ya da babam kendilerine layık olmadığımı ifade ederlerdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

4) Fiziksel ihtiyaçlarım tam olarak karşılanırdı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

5) Ailemde sorunlarımı paylaşabileceğim biri vardı

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

6) Üst baş açısından bakımsızdım.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

7) Sevildiğimi hissediyordum.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

8) Anne ya da babam kendimden utanmama neden olurdu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

9) Ailemden birisi bana öyle kötü vurmuştu ki doktora ya da hastaneye gitmem gerekmişti.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

10) Ailemde değiştirmek istediğim şeyler vardı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

11) Ailemdekiler bana o kadar şiddetle vuruyorlardı ki vücudumda morartı ya da sıyrıklar oluyordu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

12) Kayış, sopa, kordon ya da başka sert bir cisimle vurularak cezalandırılıyordum.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

13) Anne ya da babam fikirlerimi önemserdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

14) Ailemdekiler bana kırıcı ya da saldırganca sözler söylerlerdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

15) Fiziksel bakımdan hırpalanmış olduğuma inanıyorum.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

16) Çocukluğum mükemmeldi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

17) Bana o kadar kötü vuruluyor ya da dövülüyordum ki öğretmen, komşu ya da bir doktorun bunu fark ettiği oluyordu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

18) Ailemde birisi benden nefret ederdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

19) Ailemdekiler kendilerini birbirlerine yakın hissederlerdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

20) Biri bana cinsel amaçla dokunmaya ya da kendisine dokundurtmaya çalıştı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

21) Kendisi ile cinsel ilişki kurmadığım takdirde bana zarar vermekle tehdit eden biri vardı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

22) Benim ailem dünyanın en iyisiydi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

23) Birisi beni cinsel şeyler yapmaya ya da cinsel şeylere bakmaya zorladı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

24) Birisi bana cinsel tacizde bulundu.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

25) Ailemdekiler bana karşı suçlayıcıydı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

26) İhtiyacım olduğunda beni doktora götürecek birisi vardı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

27) Cinsel istismara uğradığım kanısındayım.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

28) Ailem benim için bir güç ve destek kaynağı idi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

29) Ailemdekiler yaşlılarımla ve arkadaşlarımla görüşmemi kısıtlardı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

30) Ailemdekiler her şeye karışırdı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

31) Anne ve babam bir işi kendi başıma yapmama fırsat verirdi.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

32) Ailemdekiler rahat vermeyecek derecede peşimdeydiler.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

33) Anne ya da babam beni kontrol etmek için kişisel eşyalarımı benden habersiz karıştırırdı.

1.Hiçbir Zaman 2.Nadiren 3.Kimi Zaman 4.Sık Olarak 5.Çok Sık

Appendix C: Differentiation of Self Scale

Aşağıda kendinizle ve başkalarıyla olan ilişkilerinize yönelik düşünce ve duygularınızı içeren ifadeler yer almaktadır. Sizden istenen her bir ifadeyi dikkatlice okuyarak 1’den 6’ya kadar olan seçeneklerden sizi en iyi ifade eden seçeneği işaretlemenizdir. Eğer herhangi bir madde sizinle direk ilgili gözükmiyorsa (örn., şu anda bir eşiniz/partneriniz yoksa), olması halinde nasıl düşünüp nasıl davranabileceğinizle ilgili en iyi tahmininizi belirtiniz. İçten yanıtlarınız için teşekkürler.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6

Hiç Uygun

Çok

Değil

Uygun

1. Ailemin yanındayken genellikle kendimi kısıtlanmış hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Önemli bir işe ya da göreve başlarken genellikle başkalarının cesaretlendirmesine ihtiyaç duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. İnsanlar benimle yakınlık kurmaya çalıştıklarında, kendimi onlardan uzak tutarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. İnsanlar benimle yakınlık kurmaya çalıştıklarında, bundan genellikle rahatsızlık duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Hemen hemen hayatımdaki herkesten onay alma ihtiyacı hissedirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Değiştiremeyeceğim şeyler için üzülmenin bir anlamı yok.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Yakın ilişkilerimde kısıtlanma kaygısı yaşarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Eleştirilmek beni oldukça rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Anne/babamın beklentilerine göre yaşamaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Kendimi olduğum gibi kabul ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Eşimle/partnerimle bir tartışma yaşarsam, tüm gün bu tartışma üzerine düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Başkaları tarafından baskı altında olduğumu hissettiğim zamanlarda bile onlara “hayır” diyebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Yaptığım şeyin doğru olduğunu düşünüyorsam başkalarının ne dediğini pek de umursamam.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Bir karar alırken danışacağım birileri yoksa kolay kolay karar veremem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Başkaları tarafından incitilmek beni aşırı derecede rahatsız eder.	1	2	3	4	5	6

16. Eşimin/partnerimin yoğun ilgisi beni bunaltır.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. İnsanlar üzerindeki izlenimimi merak ederim.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Duygularımı genellikle çevremdekilerden daha yoğun yaşarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Hayatımda ne olursa olsun, kendimle ilgili düşüncelerimden asla taviz vermem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Anne/babamın fikrini almadan karar veremem.	1	2	3	4	5	6



Appendix D: Marital Satisfaction Scale

Aşağıda evlilik ilişkiniz ile ilgili bir takım ifadeler bulunmaktadır. Her ifadeyi dikkatlice okuduktan sonra yanındaki kutularda bulunan seçeneklerden size uygun olan seçeneği (X) ile işaretleyiniz lütfen hiçbir ifadeyi boş bırakmayınız. İçten ve doğru verdiğiniz yanıtlar için teşekkür ederiz.

	Bana hiç uygun değil	Bana uygun değil	Bana biraz uygun	Bana uygun	Bana tamamen uygun
1. Eşimin bana değer vermediğini hissediyorum.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Ailelerimizin evliliğimize müdahale etmeleri ilişkimizi olumsuz etkiliyor.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Eşimin bedenini iyi tanırım.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Eşim cinsel açıdan yeterlidir.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Eşimin anne ve babasına evliliğinden daha çok önem vermesi beni mutsuz ediyor.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Eşimle olan cinsel yaşamımda ön sevişme önemli bir yer tutuyor.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Cinsel yönden eşimle uyumluyum	1	2	3	4	5
8. Eşimin bana güven duymadığını düşünüyorum.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Eşimle her ikimizde cinsel doyuma ulaşıyoruz	1	2	3	4	5
10. Bir topluluk içinde eşim beni komik duruma düşürür.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Eşimin ailesi ile birlikte yaşamak benim için bir kabustur.	5	4	3	2	1

12. Eşimin ailesinin etkisinde kalması evlilik ilişkimizi kötü etkiliyor	5	4	3	2	1
13.Eşimin ailesine hayır diyememesi beni mutsuz ediyor.	5	4	3	2	1

