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THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND PERCEIVED ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN EMERGING ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND PERCEIVED ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP QUALITY IN EMERGING ADULTS

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Master of Science, Psychological Counseling and Guidance
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The purpose of the current study is to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults living in Türkiye. The sample was composed of 424 emerging adults (218 women, 206 men) between the ages of 18-29 and who have been in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months. Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory, Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form, and a demographic form were used to collect data. Multiple regression analysis was performed to see whether the dimensions of differentiation of self predict overall perceived romantic relationship quality. Multiple regression analysis results revealed that I-position and the low level of fusion with others positively predicted perceived romantic relationship quality, whereas emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff did not significantly predict perceived romantic relationship quality. As a result, the findings

were examined considering the relevant literature, implications were highlighted, and recommendations for additional research were presented.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, perceived romantic relationship quality, differentiation of self

ÖZ

BELİREN YETİŞKİNLERDE BENLİK AYRIMLAŞMASI İLE ALGILANAN ROMANTİK İLİŞKİ KALİTESİ ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

KEVSER SARES YENİGELEN
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Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de yaşayan beliren yetişkinlerde benliğin ayrımlaşmasının boyutları (duygusal tepkisellik, ben-pozisyonu, duygusal kopma ve başkalarıyla iç içe geçme) ile algılanan romantik ilişki kalitesi arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktır. Örneklemi, 18-29 yaş aralığında ve en az altı aydır romantik bir ilişki içinde olan 424 beliren yetişkin (218 kadın, 206 erkek) oluşturmuştur. Verilerin toplanmasında Algılanan Romantik İlişki Kalitesi Ölçeği, Benliğin Farklılaşması Envanteri-Kısa Formu ve demografik form kullanılmıştır. Benliğin ayrımlaşması boyutlarının genel olarak algılanan romantik ilişki kalitesini yordayıp yordamadığını görmek için çoklu regresyon analizi yapılmıştır. Çoklu regresyon analizinin sonuçları, ben-pozisyonu ve düşük düzeyde başkalarıyla iç içe geçmenin algılanan romantik ilişki kalitesini olumlu yönde yordadığını, duygusal tepkisellik ve duygusal kopmanın algılanan romantik ilişki kalitesini anlamlı düzeyde yordamadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Sonuç olarak bulgular ilgili alanyazın dikkate alınarak incelenmiş, çıkarımlar vurgulanmış ve ilave araştırmalara yönelik öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: beliren yetişkinlik, algılanan romantik ilişki kalitesi, benliğin ayrımlaşması

To my husband, who has witnessed my life since my childhood

& to my beloved family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BFST	Bowen Family Systems Theory
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
DSI-SF	Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
PRQCI	Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Emerging adulthood has become significant for examining the lives of individuals aged between 18 and 29 who are neither adolescents nor adults but are in transition toward adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014). The concept of emerging adulthood was introduced by Arnett (2000) to describe a developmental stage that examines individuals who are between 18 and 25. Nevertheless, the age range has been extended to 18–29, due to academic life taking more time and marriage and parenthood experience being gained at later ages (Arnett et al., 2014). This stage is related to making life choices that have long-term implications, thus the most important life events occur during this stage (Martin & Smyer, 1990). In this context, decisions made regarding career and romantic relationships at this stage affect individuals' careers and romantic relationships in late adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014). During this stage, individuals tend not to be fully aware of their responsibilities as adults and may have difficulty completely giving up the dependency they acquired during adolescence (Arnett, 2000). In this context, this stage is different from both adolescence and middle adulthood, and individuals at this stage of development have their own characteristics (Arnett, 2004). Contrary to adolescents, emerging adults are individuals who have reached sexual and physical maturity, have professional and educational qualifications, and are in romantic relationships based on long-term commitment (Arnett et al., 2014). Moreover, emerging adulthood is categorized differently from adulthood because it includes more serious life experiences related to the philosophy of life, career, and romantic relationships (Erikson, 1968). Because of all these serious experiences, for many people, this stage is characterized by instability and frequent changes (Arnett et al., 2014). This frequent change means that little is certain in the lives of individuals and that the future is full of possibilities. Therefore,

this stage is characterized by hopes and expectations (Atak & Çok, 2010). On the other hand, experiences, and decisions in areas such as philosophy of life, career, and romantic relationships provide opportunities for emerging adults to identity exploration and identity formation (Arnett, 2000). In this context, emerging adulthood is characterized by identity formation that includes individuals becoming independent from others in terms of emotion, thought, and behavior, establishing healthy close relationships, adopting their values, and creating their worldview (Yörükoğlu, 2016). This means that emerging adulthood does not only represent a demographic transition but is also characterized by the task of individuals' identity formation (Arnett, 1998). Therefore, when it comes to developmental stages, there are tasks that individuals must complete at each developmental stage. In this context, establishing close relationships and differentiation of self are two basic tasks of emerging adulthood that are related to identity formation (McGoldrick et al., 2016). Bowen's family systems theory (BFST) (Bowen, 1978) indicates that these two tasks are closely related. Individuals who differentiate themselves from their family of origin form a unique identity and accept their partner's identity without fusion, thus they can establish close relationships with intense emotions.

Romantic relationships, which have an important place in close relationships are described as continuing, mutual communication between individuals that involves particular expressions of compassion (Collins et al., 2009). Romantic relationships are important during emerging adulthood as they are developmental tasks (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). That is why, romantic partners are the people emerging adults most enjoy being with, seek intimacy from, and want to be with when they feel sad (Collins & Laursen, 2004). Emerging adults experience romantic relationships to make decisions about commitment, including cohabitation and marriage, as well as to find a sense of emotional stability, intimacy, and love (Arnett, 2004; Fincham & Cui, 2010). It is claimed that initiating romantic relationships and being intimate in these relationships is a crucial task of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). However, romantic relationships are not only for intimacy but also support healthy identity formation by helping emerging adults discover their values, beliefs, choices, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000). In this context, establishing romantic relationships in emerging adulthood related to some competencies which are self-awareness, self-

perception, verbal expression, and cognitive closeness (Eryılmaz & Atak, 2009). Therefore, establishing romantic relationships during emerging adulthood helps identity formation by relating to emotional, social, and cognitive domains of identity (Furman & Shaffer, 2003). Additionally, individuals attempt to establish a family and engage in romantic relationships during the sixth stage of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory which is intimacy versus isolation (Miller, 2009). In other words, during this developmental stage, emerging adults require close relationships and without them, they suffer from loneliness and isolation (Erikson, 1968). Also, how this stage is completed in terms of romantic relationships impacts the way individuals behave in social, sexual, and psychological domains as well as partner choice and relationship expectations in the future (Furman, 2002). For this reason, the quality of romantic relationships gains importance at this stage (Arnett, 2000). Considering the importance of establishing quality romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, it is important to investigate the factors associated with romantic relationship quality during emerging adulthood.

Another task that is as important as establishing a romantic relationship in emerging adulthood is the differentiation of self (Bowen, 1978; McGoldrick et al., 2016). The degree to which a person maintains a balance between closeness and independence in relationships and the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes is known as differentiation of self (Bowen, 1978). More specifically, differentiation of self is characterized by individuals' capacity to differentiate between emotional and intellectual processes, and also the capacity to establish close relationships with others while maintaining a sense of autonomy (Lampis, 2015). According to Tanner (2006), differentiation of the self, which means that individuals dependent on their family of origin differentiate themselves emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally and become independent and responsible, is a developmental task of emerging adults. BFST (Bowen, 1978) states that differentiation of the self begins in early infancy, continues throughout childhood and adolescence, and is fully formed in emerging adulthood when emerging adults establish themselves independently from their family of origin. For this reason, Bowen (1978) stated that differentiation of self is an important developmental task for emerging adults.

According to Erikson (1950), identity formation occurs in adolescence which corresponds to the fifth stage of psychosocial development theory, and at this stage, individuals avoid role confusion by fulfilling the task of differentiation of self. However, today it is accepted that identity formation begins in adolescence and continues throughout emerging adulthood (Schwartz et al., 2015). Yörükoğlu (2016) mentioned that identity formation in emerging adulthood occurs by establishing a balance between individuality, which refers to being an independent person, and togetherness, which refers to developing close relations with others. It means that individuals develop emotional, mental, and behavioral autonomy from their family of origin during the emerging adulthood stage. Therefore, emerging adulthood does not only represent a demographic transition, but it also includes individuals' differentiating their selves by taking responsibility for their actions and deciding for themselves independently from their family of origin (Arnett, 1998). Furthermore, McGoldrick et al. (2016) created a life cycle for families that includes stages that involve specific tasks moving through their lives. Considering this, emerging adults' differentiating themselves from their families of origin by acquiring independence and responsibility is an essential developmental task for the initial stage of the family life cycle (Gerson, 1995). Considering the importance of differentiation of self in emerging adulthood, it is crucial to investigate the factors associated with the differentiation of self during emerging adulthood. Also, for a better understanding of the differentiation of self, Lampis et al. (2019) recommended that research is necessary across various cultural groups. However, studies on the differentiation of self in Türkiye are very few (Işık et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct studies on the differentiation of self.

When it comes to the association between establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self, recent research has shown that the differentiation of self strongly predicts the perceived romantic relationship quality (Calatrava et al., 2022; Griffin & Apostal, 1993; Holman & Busby, 2011; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Rodríguez-González et al., 2023; Skowron, 2000). Research investigating the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self was conducted in the literature frequently with married participants in middle adulthood (Calatrava et al., 2022; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi

et al., 2009). Several studies have proposed that the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self needs to be investigated among unmarried individuals as well (Işık et al., 2020; İnce & Işık, 2022; Tönbül & Kocayörük, 2021). Furthermore, there is relatively little research that investigates the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with emerging adults. Considering that establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self are crucial tasks of emerging adults, the current study aimed to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with the unmarried emerging adult sample.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The current study's main goal is to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults living in Türkiye. Aligned with the purpose of the study, the correlational design that examines the association between two or more variables (Heppner et al., 2007) was used. To achieve the purpose of the study, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine if the four dimensions of differentiation of self significantly predicted perceived romantic relationship quality.

1.3. Research Question and Hypotheses of the Study

R.Q.1. "How well do the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) predict perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults?"

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) will predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

H1a: The low level of emotional reactivity will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

H1b: I-position will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

H1c: The low level of emotional cutoff will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

H1d: The low level of fusion with others will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The main aim of the current study is to investigate the association between the dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults living in Türkiye. Bowen (1978) proposed a theoretical framework for family therapy that examines families from a systemic perspective. The degree to which a person maintains a balance between closeness and independence in relationships and the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes is known as differentiation of self and it is a fundamental concept of BFST (Bowen, 1978). However, the claim that Bowen's theory is reliable needs to be further investigated as there aren't many studies on the differentiation of self with samples including individuals from different cultures (Miller et al., 2004). Research across diverse cultural groups is required to gain a greater understanding of the differentiation of self (Lampis et al., 2019). Similarly, there isn't much research on the differentiation of self in Türkiye (Işık et al., 2020). Therefore, this study is very important as it expands the literature.

Moreover, the differentiation of self is investigated using various samples. However, studies on the differentiation of self with emerging adult samples are quite rare (e.g., Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Hocaoğlu & Işık, 2022; Kurt & Gündüz, 2020; Piteo & MacKay, 2021; Skowron et al., 2009).Furthermore, there are few current studies in the literature examining perceived romantic relationship quality with an emerging adult sample (e.g., Cui & Fincham, 2010; Demir, 2007; Eryılmaz & Doğan, 2013; Sağkal & Özdemir, 2019; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012). Therefore, the selection of this particular sample enhances the study's uniqueness.

In addition, although establishing romantic relationships is a crucial task of emerging adulthood (McGoldrick et al., 2016) and the quality of romantic relationships becomes

important in this stage (Arnett, 2000), there are very few studies examining the association between differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adulthood. Also, as far as the researcher's knowledge, no studies have been carried out to comprehend the association between differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality with an unmarried emerging adult sample. That is why the current study aimed to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with the unmarried emerging adult sample. Thus, the selection of this particular sample enhances the study's originality.

As for counseling, the current study sheds light on the psychological counselors working with couples by presenting findings on how the association between the differentiation of self dimensions and perceived romantic relationship quality of emerging adults. As the most common goal in couple counseling is to increase clients' perceived romantic relationship quality; knowing what kind of change in the dimensions of differentiation of self is associated with the increase in the perceived romantic relationship quality may help achieve the goal in the couple counseling.

Additionally, The Differentiation of Self Inventory-Short Form (DSI-SF) used in this study can be used in counseling sessions to get an idea about their clients' degrees of differentiation of self. This may facilitate the counseling process by enabling the identification of the client's maladaptive behavioral patterns and the development of preventive interventions (Skowron, 2000).

1.5. Definition of the Terms

Differentiation of Self: The degree to which a person maintains a balance between closeness and independence in relationships and the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes (Bowen, 1978). The differentiation of self is comprised of four fundamental dimensions mentioned below:

Emotional Reactivity: The tendency of individuals to react with emotions that suppress their thoughts (Bowen, 1978).

I-Position: The capacity of individuals to speak in a responsible and independent way about their own thoughts, emotions, and beliefs (Bowen, 1978).

Emotional Cutoff: The tendency to distance oneself from a significant other and physically or psychologically isolated to deal with interpersonal conflict (Bowen, 1978).

Fusion with Others: The condition of developing dependent relations with significant others and lacking a distinct sense of self and others (Bowen, 1978).

Relationship quality: Individuals' perceptions of their romantic relationships and partners (Fletcher et al., 2000). The Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventory was developed by Fletcher et al. (2000) and it includes the following six different constructs represent distinct components of perceived relationship quality:

Satisfaction: The evaluation by individuals of their partners' good feelings and the attractiveness of their relationship (Rusbult, 1983).

Commitment: Choosing to love someone and committing to continue that love long-term (Sternberg, 1986).

Intimacy: The feelings of interconnectedness and closeness in love relationships (Sternberg, 1986).

Trust: The degree to which a person believes their partner's benevolence and honesty (Larzelere & Huston, 1980).

Passion: Impulses that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual intercourse in love relationships (Sternberg, 1986).

Love: Complex emotion that consists of three components: commitment, intimacy, and passion, which combine in various ways to form eight types of love (Sternberg, 1986).

Emerging adulthood: The developmental stage that examines the lives of individuals within the 18 to 25 age range (Arnett et al., 2014).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overall, this chapter presents the definition and nature of perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self along with the research on these concepts. Specifically, the first section describes the importance of romantic relationships and differentiation of self in emerging adulthood. In the subsequent section, the definition and the nature of perceived romantic relationship quality are presented along with the relevant research findings. In the third section, the definition and nature of differentiation of self are presented along with the relevant research findings. Finally, in the last section, research on the association between differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality is presented.

2.1. Romantic Relationships and Differentiation of Self in Emerging Adulthood

In the 2000s, Arnett described emerging adulthood as a developmental stage that examines the lives of individuals within the 18 to 25 age range. Nevertheless, the age range has been extended to 18–29, due to academic life taking more time and marriage and parenthood experience being gained at later ages (Arnett et al., 2014). In the literature, emerging adulthood is categorized differently from adulthood because it includes more serious life experiences related to the philosophy of life, career, and romantic relationships (Erikson, 1968) which shape an individual's identity (McAdams, 1985). This developmental stage includes a few fundamental tasks like establishing close relationships and differentiation of self (McGoldrick et al., 2016). BFST (Bowen, 1978) indicates a strong relationship between these two tasks. Individuals who differentiate themselves from their family of origin establish a distinct identity and appreciate their partner's identity without fusion; as a result, they can establish close relationships with strong feelings. In terms of close relationships, romantic relationships, which have an important place in terms of developmental tasks

that begin in adolescence, significantly influence the lives of individuals. However, the importance of relationships with romantic partners is especially crucial in emerging adulthood (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Romantic relationships, which were mostly based on hanging out and having fun during adolescence, become more intimate and serious at this stage (Padgham & Blyth, 1991), long-lasting, and committed (Arnett, 2004) in emerging adulthood. That is why, in addition to seeking intimacy and love, emerging adults experience romantic relationships to make decisions about commitment, such as cohabitation and marriage (Fincham & Cui, 2010). In the sixth stage of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, the individual has a romantic relationship and takes steps to establish a family (Miller, 2009). In essence, close relationships are essential for emerging adults to effectively navigate their developmental tasks. Without such closeness during this period, individuals may experience feelings of loneliness and become isolated (Erikson, 1968). How this stage is resolved in terms of romantic relationships influences future relationships, partner choices, and relationship expectations during adulthood and also leads to social, sexual, and personality changes in individuals (Furman, 2002). For this, romantic relationships are valued at all stages of life, but they are especially crucial during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

Another task that is as important as establishing a romantic relationship in emerging adulthood is differentiation of self which is maintaining a balance between closeness and independence in relationships and the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes (Bowen, 1978). According to BFST (Bowen, 1978), differentiation of the self begins in early infancy, continues throughout childhood and adolescence, and is fully formed in emerging adulthood when emerging adults establish themselves independently from their family of origin. For this reason, Bowen (1978) stated that differentiation of self is an important developmental task for emerging adults. Likewise, Yörükoğlu (2016) identified several tasks individuals ought to accomplish during the stage of emerging adulthood. Those tasks mention that individuals are required to develop emotional, mental, and behavioral independence from their families. This means that emerging adulthood does not only represent a demographic transition but also individuals differentiate their selves by taking responsibility for their actions and deciding for themselves independently from their

family of origin (Arnett, 1998). Considering that establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self are crucial tasks of emerging adults, the current study will examine the perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self during emerging adulthood.

2.2. Definition and Nature of Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality

Romantic relationships, which have an important place in close relationships are described as continuing, voluntary interaction between two partners that includes specific displays of affection (Collins et al., 2009). Sternberg (1986) described a romantic relationship as a relationship in which there is commitment, intimacy, and passion between the partners. Romantic relationships which naturally occur during an individual's development are the kinds of relationships that have a profound impact on the person's spiritual and experiential development (De Andrade et al., 2015).

Perceived romantic relationship quality, first comprehensively defined by Fletcher et al. (2000), refers to individuals' subjective evaluation of their relationships in terms of various constructs. When assessing perceived romantic relationship quality, it is important to consider multiple constructs because romantic relationships are complex and vary according to the individuals' perceptions. Accordingly, six basic components have been defined in measuring the perceived romantic relationship quality: satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. Considering the theoretical background of perceived romantic relationship quality, no single theory explains perceived romantic relationship quality but many of its components have their origins in different theoretical perspectives (Fletcher et al., 2000). For example, commitment relies on the interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Trust is a core concept of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Also, intimacy, passion, commitment, and love concepts rely on Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love.

2.2.1. Components of Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality

Perceived romantic relationship quality has six basic components. All components have their origins in different theoretical perspectives (Fletcher et al., 2000). The

components of perceived romantic relationship quality and the theoretical background of these components are stated below.

2.2.1.1. Satisfaction

Satisfaction as conceptualized in the investment model, is defined as individuals' positive feelings towards their partners or relationships (Rusbult, 1983). This component is correlated with love, sexual attitude, self-disclosure, commitment, and investment (Hendrick, 1988). Although satisfaction and commitment are correlated with each other, Rusbult (1980) indicates that there is a difference between the concepts of commitment and satisfaction. This means that commitment does not guarantee satisfaction in every relationship. That is why, Fletcher et al. (2000) examined the satisfaction component as a separate component when determining perceived romantic relationship quality.

Especially, when satisfaction is examined in the emerging adulthood developmental stage, relationship satisfaction is positively related to the value that emerging adults put on their romantic relationships (Barutçu Yıldırım et al., 2021). Also, emerging adults' romantic relationship satisfaction is correlated with relationship intimacy (Jain, 2022). Therefore, when evaluating romantic relationship satisfaction, emerging adults often evaluate how intimate their romantic relationships and partners are (Clark & Beck, 2011).

2.2.1.2. Commitment

In triangular theory of love, Sternberg (1986) states that commitment is choosing to love someone and committing to continue that love long-term. Also, Adams and Jones (1997) define commitment according to three dimensions. These are the devotion of the partners to each other, the partners' view of marriage as a holy institution, and the partners' desire to avoid economic and social difficulties that may arise due to divorce. These dimensions reflect the degree of individuals' intention to continue the marriage. Additionally, commitment is a core concept in the interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and it states that relationships are assessed using two criteria. These are the comparison level and comparison level for alternatives. The rewards gained from

the relationship and the costs paid throughout the relationship determine the comparison level. The relationship is considered satisfying if the rewards that an individual receives from the relationship are higher than the comparison level; if they are less than the comparison level, the relationship is considered unsatisfactory. Commitment is indicative of a high level of satisfaction (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Even though satisfaction is one of the biggest indicators of commitment, it cannot alone decide whether an individual is committed to a romantic relationship or not (Macher, 2013). Another criterion that people use to determine whether to keep a relationship going is the comparison level for alternatives. It refers to people comparing the outcomes of their present romantic relationship with those that may be attained through an alternative one (Rusbult, 1980). When the outcomes of the current relationship are above the comparison level for alternatives, people become dependent on their partners. On the other hand, when outcomes fall below the comparison level for alternatives people may choose to end a relationship (Rusbult & Arriaga, 1999). Additionally, commitment is also a core concept of the investment model (Rusbult, 1980). Within the framework of the investment model, Rusbult (1983) defines commitment as a construct in which a set of variables encourage the continuation of the relationship.

Especially, when commitment is examined in the emerging adulthood developmental stage, establishing committed romantic relationships at this stage is a developmental task. However, due to career and life plans, marriage, and similar forms of committed romantic relationships are postponed (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). For this reason, emerging adults have more committed romantic relationships in their love lives towards their thirties (Arnett et al., 2014).

2.2.1.3. Intimacy

Intimacy is the feelings of interconnectedness, and closeness in romantic relationships (Sternberg, 1986). It is a relationship dynamic that requires time to develop and allows partners to freely express their thoughts and feelings to one another (Anderson, 2016). In the triangular theory of love, Sternberg (1986) states that intimacy which is one of the fundamental elements of love contributes to the formation of sincerity and commitment. According to Haack and Falcke (2014), enhancing the partner's well-

being, sharing life experiences, showing mutual respect, the ability to be present when the partner needs, sharing material goods and life with the partner, offering and receiving emotional support, communication, and accepting the partner's value are all components of intimacy.

Especially, when intimacy is examined in the emerging adulthood developmental stage, emerging adults achieve the competence to establish and maintain intimate relationships (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Romantic relationships, which were mostly based on hanging out and having fun during adolescence, become more intimate at this stage (Padgham & Blyth, 1991). Also, the intimacy that emerging adults experience in their romantic relationships helps them take steps towards a more committed relationship as their trust in their relationships increases (Mackinnon et al., 2011).

2.2.1.4. Trust

Another component of perceived romantic relationship quality is trust and it is critical to sustaining a romantic relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Trust is the degree to which individuals believe in the goodwill and trustworthiness of their partners (Larzelere & Huston, 1980) and fosters the growth of intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Fletcher et al. (2000) state that Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory both rest on the theoretical foundation of trust. The first stage of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory is associated with establishing trust in the caregiver, the world, and people. At this stage, the infant who receives care establishes trust. On the other hand, an infant who does not receive care develops mistrust. Similarly, Bowlby (1969) states that when a baby's basic needs, like love and care, are met, the trust which is the main component of the attachment forms between the baby and its caregiver. An individual's secure attachment style has an impact on every relationship they form throughout their life, starting in infancy (Ainsworth, 1979). This basic belief in trust also manifests itself in adult relationships (Erikson, 1950) and a pattern similar to the attachment style established with the mother also emerges in adult attachment. Accordingly, while individuals with secure attachment in infancy can easily feel trust and intimacy in romantic relationships in

adulthood, insecurely attached individuals have difficulty trusting and establishing intimacy in romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

Especially, when trust is examined in the emerging adulthood developmental stage, it was found that trust is correlated with intimacy and romantic relationship satisfaction (Jain, 2022). Also, breakup experiences in earlier relationships and parental divorce are negatively associated with emerging adults' trust in their current romantic relationships (Roth et al., 2014). Additionally, emerging adults' trust in their romantic relationships is negatively related to insecure attachment styles and positively related to healthy relationship beliefs (Yılmaz et al., 2023).

2.2.1.5. Passion

Passion, based on Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love, describes the desires that lead to romantic affection, physical attraction, and sexual consummation. Passion should not be restricted to the physical attraction, it can also include emotional nourishment and self-esteem (Anderson, 2016). Also, the intimacy and passion components are likely to be very interactive and reciprocal (Sternberg, 1986). Nevertheless, compared to intimacy, the psychological and physical arousal of passion frequently develops more quickly and can also fade just as quickly (Anderson, 2016). That is why, in relationships, passion is not found in a steady or predictable way because it is motivational and arousing by nature. Therefore, compared to other factors, it has a comparatively moderate impact on the quality of romantic relationships, and its significance can decrease over time (Sternberg, 1986).

2.2.1.6. Love

Love is the last component of perceived romantic relationship quality (Fletcher et al., 2000). Rubin (1970) states that love means liking someone intensely which includes the tendency to offer help, the orientation toward exclusivity and absorption, and the state of being affiliated. According to Sternberg (1986), love is a complex emotion that consists of three components: commitment, intimacy, and passion. These three components come together in different combinations to create various types of love.

Especially, when love is examined in the emerging adulthood developmental stage, as this stage includes dramatic changes, unlike a stable adult life, love experiences are often unstable (Arnett et al., 2014). For this reason, temporary and different types of love relationships are often experienced in emerging adulthood (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Also, at this stage, love relationships include sexual relationships triggered by passion (Michael et al., 1995) and are often experienced with temporary partners (Shulman & Connolly, 2013).

As stated, perceived romantic relationship quality has six basic components that have their origins in different theoretical perspectives (Fletcher et al., 2000). That is why, when assessing perceived romantic relationship quality, it is important to consider multiple constructs. Thus, the total score was used in this study instead of evaluating the scores derived from each component of perceived romantic relationship quality separately. For this reason, specifically, the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and relevant variables has been mentioned below.

2.2.2. Research on Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality

The association between perceived romantic relationship quality and various concepts has been investigated frequently in the literature with adult samples. Accordingly, low romantic relationship quality is associated with increased anxiety (Leach et al., 2012), low well-being (Gere & Schimmack, 2013), insecure attachment style (Hadden et al., 2013; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Li & Chan, 2012; Sağkal & Özdemir, 2019), childhood maltreatment (Zamir, 2021), parental divorce (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Rhoades et al., 2012; Washington & Hans, 2013), depressive symptoms (Joosten et al., 2021; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012), alcohol use (Pieh et al., 2021), and relationship conflict (Gere & Schimmack, 2013). On the other hand, high romantic relationship quality positively correlated with overall health (Gómez-López et al., 2019; McShall & Johnson, 2015), well-being (Eryılmaz & Doğan, 2013; Pieh et al., 2021; Wazid & Shahnawaz, 2017), happiness (Demir, 2007; Gómez-López et al., 2019), empathy skill (Kimmes et al., 2014; Ulloa et al., 2017), better parent-child relationships (Johnson & Galambos, 2014) and healthy social relationships (Pieh et al., 2021).

Furthermore, in many studies perceived romantic relationship quality has been investigated in the literature with samples of adults (e.g., Birditt et al., 2009; Gere & Schimmack, 2013; Kimmes et al., 2014; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; McShall & Johnson, 2015; Pieh et al., 2021; Rhoades et al., 2012). However, as studies conducted with adult samples include emerging adults, middle adults, and late adults, there is a very wide age range. Additionally, there are few current studies in the literature examining perceived romantic relationship quality with an emerging adult sample (e.g., Cui & Fincham, 2010; Demir, 2007; Eryılmaz & Doğan, 2013; Sağkal & Özdemir, 2019; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012). On the other hand, as stated, since establishing romantic relationships is a crucial task during emerging adulthood (Erikson, 1968; McGoldrick et al., 2016), the quality of romantic relationships becomes important at this stage (Arnett, 2000). Therefore, the sample for this study was limited to emerging adults only.

2.3. Definition and Nature of Differentiation of Self

Several theories developed in the early 1940s and 1950s in the field of family therapy (Broderick & Schrader, 1991). However, BFST (Bowen, 1978) was a cornerstone in the field of family therapy. Bowen started his career as a psychiatrist and studied children with schizophrenia and their mothers. The mother-child symbiosis, his main field of study at that time, inspired him to develop the building blocks of his theory and the differentiation of self (Nichols & Davis, 2017). According to Bowen (1978), the differentiation of self refers to the degree to which an individual balances closeness and independence in relationships and the functioning of cognitive and emotional processes (Bowen, 1978).

Although this concept was introduced by Bowen (1978), other theories or pioneers also touched upon the importance of this concept. For example, the fifth stage of Erikson's psychosocial development theory, is related to the individual's avoidance of role confusion by fulfilling the task of differentiation of self (Erikson, 1950). Furthermore, McGoldrick et al. (2016) created a family life cycle that consists of tasks and stages that identify the points at which families move throughout their entire existence. Accordingly, the differentiation of self is an important developmental task

for the first stage of the family life cycle in terms of emerging adults differentiating from their families of origin by gaining independence and responsibility (Gerson, 1995). In addition, Salvador Minuchin (1974), a pioneer in structural family therapy, referred to the importance of the differentiation of self and he introduced the concept of boundaries by arguing that the function of boundaries is to protect the differentiation. In this context, fused relationships occur when boundaries are too open, and relationships are cutoff when boundaries are too closed. Therefore, healthy family boundaries are necessary as a guarantee of differentiation of self. However, in the current study, the BFST (Bowen, 1978) will be followed since the differentiation of self is the core concept of the BFST and it provides a well-grounded theoretical framework.

2.3.1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Bowen (1978) proposed a theoretical framework for family therapy that examines families from a systemic perspective. In this context, the theory defines three distinct but connected systems. According to Bowen (1978), the mental processes of people constitute the intellectual, emotional, and feeling systems. The intellectual system, which relates to cognitive processes, develops together with the brain (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). It refers to the capacity to consider, reflect, and logical reasoning regarding life experiences (Bowen, 1978). The emotional system that exists in all living things is a function of the life energies that are genetically inherited. In this sense, it also describes emotional states in animals, such as pleasure following a meal or nap, and restless moods during starvation. It is a deep system that is in contact with physical and biological functions and works automatically, thus it is similar to instinct. Additionally, the emotional system has connections with the feeling system, and each has an impact on the other. The last system which is the feeling system connects the intellectual and emotional systems, allowing the cerebral cortex to register subjective states from the emotional system's higher levels. Thus, the conscious mind makes particular emotional states obvious (Bowen, 1978). In this context, it can be said that the emotional system is instinctive and in contact with sensory processes. However, the feeling system is related to the subjective consciousness of emotional states. On the other hand, the intellectual system is related with the reasoning about emotional

states that have reached consciousness. Regarding this, for example, when anxiety occurs, the emotional system is responsible for contacting sensory processes to cause autonomic nervous system reactions such as sweating and increased pulse. However, the emotional system is responsible for the subjective consciousness of anxiety and is associated with the function of the cerebral cortex. Furthermore, the intellectual system is accountable for reasoning about anxiety that has reached consciousness.

From these three distinct systems, BFST (Bowen, 1978) primarily concerns the emotional system as it is genetically inherited. Accordingly, families are regarded as emotional systems, and interactions of family members shape the emotional environment within the family. Therefore, individuals may be said to both influence and be impacted by the family environment depending on their phenomenological emotional reality (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Additionally, the emotional system of a family is passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, in the BFST, similar to psychodynamic approaches, there is the idea that the past influences the present (Gladding, 2015). In this context, families are examined by looking at the multigenerational perspective (Bowen, 1976) as family interactions and relationship patterns are inherited by the following generation (Carr, 2006). Therefore, unless people review and change the patterns passed from earlier generations, these behaviors will likely be repeated in the current generation (Kerr, 2003). The repetition of certain behaviors is more likely to occur if family members tend to be either emotionally overinvolved (fused) or emotionally cutoff (psychologically or physically) from one another (Gladding, 2015). This situation is closely related to the differentiation of self.

2.3.2. The Concept of Differentiation of Self

According to Bowen (1978), interpersonal relationships are characterized by the harmony produced by two opposing extreme structures: individuality, which refers to being an independent person, and togetherness, which refers establishing close relations with others. Those who are successful in balancing these two opposing structures are able to regulate their emotional side, which is a step toward differentiating themselves (Nichols & Davis, 2017). In this context, Schnarch (1997)

states that when individuality and togetherness are in balance, a healthy relationship develops that avoids emotional fusion.

According to Bowen (1978), differentiation of self happens when people can balance their intrapsychic and interpersonal levels and set themselves apart from their families in terms of their cognitive and emotional aspects. The intrapsychic level encompasses the capacity to differentiate between emotional and intellectual processes. Increased differentiation allows one to adopt the I-position and sustain one's sense of self in deeply emotional relations. On the other hand, the interpersonal level encompasses the capacity to establish close relationships with others while maintaining a sense of autonomy (Lampis, 2015). Differentiation of self can be described on a grading line, with autonomy (differentiation) at one end and fusion with others (non-differentiation) at the other. Briefly, Peleg and Messerschmidt-Grandi (2018) state that the differentiation of self happens basically in two levels: the intrapsychic level is based on balancing the emotional and cognitive capacity of the person, while the interpersonal level is based on balancing the autonomy and closeness that the person experiences in relationships. According to Drake (2011), the ability to think realistically and rationally during intensely emotional situations is one of the signs of differentiation of self. Individuals who can differentiate themselves tend to maintain their relationships with a sense of autonomy and intimacy, without fear of rejection (Bowen, 1978). Also, when dealing with stress and anxiety, people are better able to resist emotional cut-off and fusion if they have higher levels of differentiation of self on an interpersonal level (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

The basis of differentiation of self is revealed in infancy and continues in later ages through fostering the child's early ability to control his/her emotions, behaviors, and other aspects of life (Kerr, 2003). Success or failure of this process is closely related to the child's having more or less differentiation of self in later adult life. In this context, Bowen (1978) defines two selves; the essential self is one of them, while the pseudo self is the other. The first, the essential self, is fairly stable and established throughout the child's growth (Papero, 1983). It is also called the solid self because it consists of integrated thoughts and concepts that remain constant in all kinds of relationships and conditions (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Contrarily, the pseudo self can alter depending on the circumstances and interpersonal interactions (Bowen, 1978).

This is the basic differentiation primarily determined by the extent of emotional detachment from the family of origin (Papero, 1983). In this context, Griffin and Apostal (1993) found that individuals' pseudo self differentiation levels increased with relationship development training, but their essential self differentiation levels did not change.

2.3.3. Dimensions of Differentiation of Self

The differentiation of self is comprised of four fundamental dimensions: emotional reactivity, taking an I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. These dimensions fall under the umbrella of differentiation of self and function as indicators of one's degree of differentiation of self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The dimensions of differentiation of self are stated below.

2.3.3.1. Emotional Reactivity

Emotional reactivity is the tendency of individuals to react with emotions that suppress their thoughts, and this is also a suppression of differentiation of self (Bowen, 1978). Emotionally reactive individuals cannot distinguish between thoughts and feelings, causing individuals to struggle with maintaining calm when facing anxiety (Skowron and Friedlander, 1998). In this context, less emotional reactivity refers to the capacity to react with less intense emotions. In other words, emotional reactivity can be defined as paying more attention to one's emotions (low differentiation) or experiencing one's emotions as desired without being consumed by them (high differentiation) (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000). For instance, low emotional reactivity refers to maintaining calm in stressful circumstances, finding feasible alternative solutions, and making concessions (Lampis et al., 2018). Conversely, high emotional reactivity describes an individual's tendency to respond to stressors with strong, unreasonable emotions (Bowen, 1978). Therefore, emotional reactivity indicates people's capacity to decide how to behave in the face of life's incidents. In this context, people who exhibit emotionally reactive behavior often respond to circumstances by counterattacking or withdrawing. People who have a high degree of differentiation of self respond to circumstances logically and consider alternative solutions (Bartle-Haring et al., 2007).

2.3.3.2. I-position

Among the dimensions of differentiation of self, the healthiest one is the ability to take an I-position (Tönbül & Kocayörük, 2021). Taking an I-position refers to the capacity of individuals to speak in a responsible and independent way about their own thoughts, emotions, and beliefs (Bowen, 1978). Individuals who can adopt the I-position may establish relationships with their family of origin and other people that maintain a balance between independence and togetherness. They don't feel under pressure to live up to others' expectations since they have the capacity to own their thoughts and feelings (Tuason & Freidlander, 2000). They can accept responsibility for their own actions and communicate their thoughts to the other party without worrying about acquiring their approval (Bowen, 1978). Shortly, individuals who can't take an I-position have a lack of self-confidence, conform to others' expectations, and care little about their own feelings, thoughts, and behaviors due to their dependence on others. Conversely, individuals who can take an I-position do not feel compelled to comply with others' wishes because they are self-assured and do not adopt an aggressive attitude by openly expressing their opinions (Tuason & Freidlander, 2000).

2.3.3.3. Emotional Cutoff

The tendency to cut contact physically or psychologically with a significant other to resolve an interpersonal disagreement is known as the emotional cutoff (Bowen, 1978). In this context it may be a way for individuals to cope with their unresolved issues with their parents (Bowen, 1976). Individuals who tend towards emotional cutoff tend to keep an exaggerated distance from others and isolate themselves (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003). In other words, emotional cutoff can be defined as becoming emotionally isolated and withdrawn (low differentiation) or maintaining the ties with the environment without fear of losing its identity (high differentiation) (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000).

2.3.3.4. Fusion with Others

Lastly, fusion with others refers to the condition of establishing dependent relations with significant others and lacking a distinct sense of self and others. Fused

individuals perceive remaining away from others as an unsafe situation and they wish to be deeply involved in the lives of others because their sense of self is fairly weak (Bowen, 1978). In other words, fusion with others can be defined as being overly attached to others (low differentiation) or maintaining relationships with a clear sense of self (high differentiation) (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000). According to Bowen (1976), highly fused individuals are either dogmatic or obedient, remain emotionally stuck in their roles in their families, have few firmly held ideas and values, and place a great value on acceptance and approval. Within families, the borders between fused individuals get blurred and they have difficulties accepting differences of opinion and making their judgments (Bowen, 1978). That is why, when making judgments, they comply with the opinions of individuals whom they think essential. They accept other people's opinions and ideals without questioning them (Skowron and Schmitt, 2003).

Bowen (1978) argues that people who are fused or emotionally cutoff have reduced degrees of differentiation from their family of origin. However, the process for handling emotional reactions in the family differs between the two. Individuals who are emotionally cutoff withdraw from family and other relationships. Individuals who have fused have extremely intimate connections in order to preserve equilibrium. Similarly, both groups might be emotionally reactive. On the other hand, individuals who take an I-position utilize any of these methods less or not at all. Such people are more likely to develop an identity apart from their family of origin and, as a result, can balance individuality and togetherness within relationships (Kerr and Bowen, 1988). In other words, a highly differentiated individual can take an I-position and also, has a low level of emotional cutoff, fusion with others, and emotional reactivity (Murdock et al., 2022).

2.3.4. Research on Differentiation of Self

Differentiation of self is widely recognized among researchers (Rodríguez-González et al., 2018). Therefore, many studies have been conducted in the literature investigating the association between the differentiation of self and various concepts. In this context, it is discovered that differentiation of self is negatively correlated with anxiety (Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), depression (Hooper & DePuy, 2010), school

stress (Skowron et al., 2004), interpersonal relationship issues (Choi & Murdock, 2017; Skowron, 2000), irrational relationship beliefs (Kurt & Gündüz, 2020), psychological symptoms (Murdock & Gore, 2004; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998), physiological symptoms (Murray et al., 2006; Peleg-Popko, 2002; Rodríguez-González et al., 2018), and social anxiety (Peleg-Popko, 2002; Rodríguez-González et al., 2018). Additionally, the differentiation of self is positively correlated with high psychological maturity (Gavazzi et al., 1993), few relationship problems (Wei et al., 2005), marital satisfaction (Peleg, 2008; Skowron, 2000), high self-esteem (Sarıkaya et al., 2018), cognitive flexibility (Kurt & Gündüz, 2020), high psychological well-being (Skowron & Schmitt, 2003; Skowron et al., 2009), healthy relationships (Skowron et al., 2009), higher level of satisfaction with life (Ross & Murdock, 2014), and higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Lal & Bartle-Haring, 2011).

Until now, varying findings have been presented to support the idea that BFST is reliable. However, for a better understanding of the differentiation of self, research is necessary across various cultural groups (Lampis et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2004). Also, Similarly, Rodríguez-González et al. (2018) state that, although Bowen's theory was developed in the United States, many components of it may apply to more collectivistic nations as well. For this reason, the current study aimed to examine the differentiation of self in Turkish culture. Also, various studies conducted with cross-cultural samples regarding the differentiation of self are mentioned below.

In their study of 268 Jewish and Arab women, Biadsy-Ashkar and Peleg (2013) discovered that well-differentiated working women were more satisfied with life than poorly differentiated unemployed women. In another study conducted with a sample of 466 Spanish adults, Rodrguez-González et al. (2018) discovered that medical and psychological issues were less common in those with higher levels of differentiation. Also, in their study investigating the relationship between family functioning, trait anxiety, and differentiation of self with 185 Spanish participants, Dolz-Del-Castellar and Oliver (2021) found that there was a positive association between family functioning and differentiation of self. Also, the higher level of differentiation of self is associated with lower levels of trait anxiety. Another study investigating the association between dyadic adjustment and the differentiation of self with a sample of

137 Italian couples, Lampis et al. (2018) discovered that men's dyadic adjustment was solely determined by their I-position. On the other hand, women's I-position and emotional cut-off, as well as those of their partners, had an impact on their dyadic adjustment.

On the other hand, considering the studies examining the differentiation of self in Türkiye, there are very few studies (Işık et al., 2020). For instance, in their study with 515 Turkish university students, Hanımoğlu and Akbaş (2018) discovered that high emotional reactivity and emotional cut-off were significant predictors of perceived stress level, anxiety, and depression. In another study carried out with 256 Turkish university students ages ranged from 18 to 26, Mert and Topal (2018) found that spiritual orientation and differentiation of self are significantly positively correlated. In a different study investigating the relationship between the differentiation of self and altruism with 317 Turkish university students, it was found a positive correlation between differentiation of self and altruism (Mert & Kahraman, 2020). In their study of 113 Turkish married couples, Işık et al. (2020) discovered that higher degrees of life satisfaction and marital adjustment were associated with differentiation of self. In another study conducted with a sample of 480 Turkish married individuals, Kalkan and Aydoğan (2019) found significant associations between differentiation of self, marital relationship quality, and relational authenticity. In a different study conducted with 362 Turkish married individuals, it was found that differentiation of self was negatively correlated with stress and depression and positively correlated with dyadic adjustment (Polat & İlhan, 2018). In another study conducted with a sample of 240 Turkish married individuals, Telli and Güler (2021) found that differentiation of self was significantly associated with satisfaction, forgiveness, and relationship adjustment, and strongly negatively associated with envy, and neglect responses.

Furthermore, differentiation of self has been investigated in the literature with samples of adults (e.g., Hooper & DePuy, 2010; Murray et al., 2006; Peleg, 2008; Rodríguez-González et al., 2018; Ross & Murdock, 2014; Sarıkaya et al., 2018; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998; Skowron, 2000; Skowron & Schmitt, 2003; Skowron et al., 2004). However, as studies conducted with adult samples include emerging adults, middle adults, and late adults, there is a very wide age range. Additionally, there are few

current studies in the literature examining the differentiation of self with an emerging adult sample (e.g., Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Hocaoğlu & Işık, 2022; Kurt & Gündüz, 2020; Piteo & MacKay, 2021; Skowron et al., 2009). On the other hand, as stated, since successful differentiation from family of origin is the emerging adult's main developmental task (Bowen, 1978), this study's sample was restricted to emerging adults.

2.4. Research on the Association among Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality and Differentiation of Self

Numerous studies conducted in recent years have revealed that perceived romantic relationship quality can be significantly predicted by the differentiation of self (Calatrava et al., 2022; Griffin & Apostal, 1993; Holman & Busby, 2011; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Rodríguez-González et al., 2023; Skowron, 2000). In the literature, studies investigating the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self were often conducted with married participants in middle adulthood (Calatrava et al., 2022; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009). In some studies, it has been suggested that the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self should also be investigated among unmarried individuals (Işık et al., 2020; İnce & Işık, 2022; Tönbül & Kocayörük, 2021). Also, there are very few studies investigating the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self conducted with emerging adults. Considering that establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self are crucial tasks of emerging adults, the current study aimed to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with the unmarried emerging adult sample. Additionally, some studies investigating the association among perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self are mentioned below.

In their study of 1839 couples with an average age of 30 who were dating, engaged, cohabiting, or married, Holman and Busby (2011) discovered that for both men and women, differentiation of self is a powerful predictor of the romantic relationship quality of oneself and one's partner. Additionally, they state that those with high degrees of differentiation of self can sustain close emotional relationships with

romantic partners and cope well with the ups and downs of such relationships. In another study conducted with a sample of 479 couples with an average age of 43 who were cohabiting or married, Rodríguez-González et al. (2023) discovered that differentiation of self predicts increased romantic relationship quality. Also, the study by Griffin and Apostal (1993) investigated how the Relationship Enhancement program influences the degree of differentiation of self among 20 married couples ages ranged from 22 to 53. According to research findings, the program significantly raised participants' level of differentiation of selves and thus improved their romantic relationship qualities. Similarly, Calatrava et al. (2022) discovered that differentiation of self predicts relationship quality among married individuals. Also, in a study conducted with a sample of 480 Turkish married individuals ages ranged from 18 to 63, Kalkan and Aydoğan (2019) found that emotional cutoff and taking an I-position are strong predictors of relationship quality among married individuals. This means that less emotional cutoff and more taking an I-position predict relationship quality. In another study conducted with a sample of 560 individuals, Yousefi et al. (2009) discovered that dimensions of differentiation of self are correlated with higher relationship quality among married individuals. It indicates that individuals who less suffer from emotional cutoff, fusion with others and emotional reactivity and who take a better I-position might have a higher level of relationship quality. Similarly, Skowron (2000) found that differentiation of self is positively associated with higher relationship quality among married individuals. It indicates that couples who could take the I-position in relationships and were less emotionally reactive, were less showing emotional cutoff, and were less fused with others might have a higher level of relationship quality.

Additionally, studies on the differentiation of self and relationship satisfaction which is a component of perceived romantic relationship quality are also seen in the literature. In this context, in a study carried out with 240 Turkish married individuals ages ranged from 20 to 69, Telli and Güler (2021) discovered that relationship satisfaction was strongly associated with differentiation of self. Similarly, in their study, Lal and Bartle-Haring (2011) found that differentiation of self predicts relationship satisfaction. Also, Gardner et al. (2007) investigated the association between relationship satisfaction, and emotional reactivity, which is the differentiation

of self-dimension. In this context, in their study conducted with a sample of 736 premarital couples with an average age of 25, they discovered that emotional reactivity is associated with low romantic relationship satisfaction. In another study conducted with a sample of 334 married couples with an average age of 47, Price et al. (2020) found that romantic relationship satisfaction of both men and women was negatively correlated with their emotional cutoff. Similarly, in her research consisting of 121 participants ages ranged from 27 to 50, Peleg (2008) found that men's relationship satisfaction correlated positively with I-position and negatively with emotional reactivity and emotional cut-off. However, it was found that only emotional cut-off had a negative correlation with women's marital relationship satisfaction. In another study, Khaddouma et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between differentiation of self and satisfaction in dating relationships with a sample of 104 individuals aged 18 and over. The results showed that in particular, I-position and low fusion with others are associated with relationship satisfaction.

2.5. Summary

Emerging adulthood is characterized by certain basic tasks such as establishing close relationships and differentiation of self (McGoldrick et al., 2016). Therefore, at this stage, romantic relationships are especially crucial in emerging adulthood. In the sixth stage of Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, individuals establish romantic relationships (Miller, 2009), thus emerging adults need to complete this task to effectively pass through this developmental stage. That is why, the quality of romantic relationships gains importance during this stage (Arnett, 2000). Considering the significance of establishing quality romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, it is important to investigate the factors associated with romantic relationship quality during emerging adulthood.

Another task that is as important as establishing romantic relationships in emerging adulthood is the differentiation of individuals' selves. At this point, Bowen (1978) identified successful differentiation from the family of origin as the emerging adult's main developmental task. Considering the importance of differentiation of self in emerging adulthood, it is crucial to investigate the factors associated with the

differentiation of self during emerging adulthood. Additionally, Lampis et al. (2019) suggested that research needs to be carried out among various cultural groups to better understand the differentiation of self. However, there aren't many studies on the differentiation of self in Türkiye (Işık et al., 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct studies on the differentiation of self.

As another point, according to various studies (Calatrava et al., 2022; Griffin & Apostal, 1993; Holman & Busby, 2011; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Rodríguez-González et al., 2023; Skowron, 2000), perceived romantic relationship quality can be significantly predicted by the differentiation of self. On the other hand, it has been noted that there are very few studies investigating the association between the differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults. Numerous studies in the literature have examined the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with married participants in middle adulthood, and the results have shown that there is a positive association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self (Calatrava et al., 2022; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009). In some research investigating the relationship between differentiation of self and various variables related to romantic relationships using a sample of married couples, it has been suggested that the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self should also be investigated among unmarried individuals (Işık et al., 2020; İnce & Işık, 2022; Tönbül & Kocayörük, 2021). Considering the two important tasks of emerging adulthood, establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self, it is crucial to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with the unmarried emerging adult sample. In this context, considering the research findings and theoretical reasoning, the aim of the current study is to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults living in Türkiye.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The methods needed to achieve the goal of the current study are introduced in this chapter. Firstly, the main study's research design is presented. Secondly, information about the participant characteristics is presented. Thirdly, the pilot study is presented along with the psychometrics of the data collection instruments. Moreover, the participants and procedure of the pilot study, the assumption tests, and the pilot study results are presented. Fourthly, the main data collection procedure and data analyses procedure are explained. Lastly, the limitations of the current study are presented.

3.1. Research Design

The current study aimed to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality in emerging adults living in Türkiye. Aligned with the purpose of the study, the correlational design that examines the association between two or more variables (Heppner et al., 2007) was used. In this context, the multiple regression statistical method was utilized. Furthermore, as all predictor variables were added to the regression equation at the same time, a special type of multiple regression analysis called simultaneous multiple regression was utilized.

Multiple regression analysis, a statistical technique, is applied for investigating the separate and collective roles of predictive variables in a dependent variable's variance (Wampold & Freund, 1987). It is a prominent method in the counseling literature that illustrates how numerous predictive variables are associated with a single dependent (criterion) variable (Heppner et al., 2007). In the current study, predictor variables are differentiation of self dimensions: emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff,

and fusion with others, and the criterion variable is perceived romantic relationship quality.

3.2. Participants of the Main Study

The study's sample was selected by convenience sampling, and the data were collected from volunteer participants. The following inclusion criteria were used to assemble the main study's sample: (a) being at least 18 and at most 29 years old, (b) not being married, and (c) being in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months. In this context, 462 emerging adults were recruited into the study. However, six did not meet the age criterion, and 32 did not meet the relationship duration criterion; therefore, they weren't included in the analysis. The last sample of the main study comprised 424 participants aged between 18 and 29 (M = 23.17, SD = 2.41). Regarding the gender of the sample, 51.4% were women (n = 218), and 48.6% were men (n = 206). While the majority of the total sample (81.8%) (n = 347) was students, 18.2% (n = 77) were not. Of the total sample, 68.4% (n = 290) were high school graduates, and 25% (n = 106) graduated from a university. The remaining had a master's (5.7%) (n = 24) or a Ph.D. (.9%) (n = 4) degree. Regarding the income ranges of participants, 37.5% (n = 159) had no income, 36.8% (n = 156) had an income between 1 ₺- 11402 ₺, 8.7% (n = 37) had an income between 15001 ₺- 25000 ₺, 8.3% (n = 35) had an income of 25001 ₺- 40000 ₺, 8% (n = 34) had an income between 11403 ₺- 15000 ₺ and .7% (n = 3) had an income of 40001 ₺ and above. When the romantic relationship status of the participants was evaluated, most participants had a romantic partner (70.1%) (n = 297). The remaining were engaged (11.6%) (n = 49), cohabiting (10.8%) (n = 46), or both cohabiting and engaged (7.5%) (n = 32) as illustrated in Table 3.1. The relationship duration of the sample varied between six and 84 months (M = 19.68 months, SD = 13.51).

Table 3.1 *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants of the Main Study (N=424)*

	Women		Men		Total	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Student						
Yes	180	82.6	167	81.1	347	81.8
No	38	17.4	39	18.9	77	18.2
Total	218	100	206	100	424	100
Education						
High school	135	61.9	155	75.2	290	68.4
University	68	31.2	38	18.4	106	25
Master's degree	13	6	11	5.3	24	5.7
Ph.D.	2	0.9	2	1.1	4	.9
Total	218	100	206	100	424	100
Income						
No	96	44	63	30.6	159	37.5
1 ৳ - 11402 ৳	67	30.7	89	43.2	156	36.8
11403 ৳ - 15000 ৳	18	8.3	16	7.8	34	8
15001 ৳ - 25000 ৳	17	7.8	20	9.7	37	8.7
25001 ৳ - 40000 ৳	20	9.2	15	7.3	35	8.3
40001 ৳ and above	–	–	3	1.4	3	.7
Total	218	100	206	100	424	100
Romantic relationship status						
Having a romantic partner	147	67.5	150	72.8	297	70.1
Cohabitation	28	12.8	18	8.7	46	10.8
Engaged	26	11.9	23	11.2	49	11.6
Both cohabitation and engaged	17	7.8	15	7.3	32	7.5
Total	218	100	206	100	424	100

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data collection was conducted in the current study. To get information about participants' perceived romantic relationship quality and their differentiation of self, in addition to their individual and relational characteristics such as romantic relationship status, and romantic relationship duration, an online survey was conducted. Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQCI; Fletcher et al., 2000) was used to get data for the perceived romantic relationship quality (see Appendix C for sample items). Moreover, Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form (DSI-SF; Drake et al., 2015) was used for measuring the differentiation of self level of the of participants (see Appendix C-2 for sample items). Furthermore, a demographic form was utilized to obtain information regarding the participants' age, gender, education, and income, as well as relational characteristics including romantic relationship status, and romantic relationship duration (see Appendix C-3). A pilot study was carried out before the main study to test the psychometric properties of the instruments.

3.3.1. Pilot Study

The characteristics of the pilot study sample, data collection procedure, and assumption checks of confirmatory factor analysis are examined in detail in the section that follows. Then, the instruments with the psychometric properties were presented. The data from the pilot study wasn't incorporated into the main study. A different dataset was used in the main study.

3.3.1.1. Participants of the Pilot Study

The following were the inclusion criteria used to choose the pilot study sample: (a) being at least 18 and at most 29 years old, (b) not being married, and (c) being in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months. Data were collected from 265 individuals for the pilot study. However, eight did not meet the age criterion, 30 did not meet the relationship status criteria, and 25 did not meet the relationship duration criterion; therefore, they were not included in the analysis. In this context, the final pilot sample comprised of 202 participants aged between 18 and 29 (M = 24.54, SD =

3.24). Regarding the gender of the sample, 60.4% were women (*n* = 122), and 39.6% were men (*n* = 80). From the total sample, 32.7% (*n* = 66) were students and 67.3% (*n* = 136) were not. Most participants graduated from a university (42.6%) (*n* = 86), or high school graduate (40.6%) (*n* = 82). The remaining had a master's (14.4%) (*n* = 29) or a Ph.D. (2%) (*n* = 4) degree. Only .4% (*n* = 1) was a secondary school graduate. Of the participants, 33.6% (*n* = 68) had an income between 15001 ₺- 25000 ₺, 24.3% (*n* = 49) had no income, 14.3% (*n* = 29) had an income between 11403 ₺- 15000 ₺, 13.9% (*n* = 28) had an income between 1 ₺- 11402 ₺, and 12.4% (*n* = 25) had an income of 25001 ₺- 40000 ₺ and 1.5% (*n* = 3) had an income of 40001 ₺ and above. Regarding romantic relationship status, most participants had a romantic partner (58.4%) (*n* = 118) and were engaged (23.8%) (*n* = 48), whereas the remaining were cohabiting (12.4%) (*n* = 25) or both cohabiting and engaged (5.4%) (*n* = 11) as illustrated in Table 3.2 The duration of the relationships of the sample varied between six to 98 months (*M* = 20.43 months, *SD* = 16.66).

Table 3.2 *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants of the Pilot Study (N = 202)*

	n	%
Gender		
Women	122	60.4
Men	80	39.6
Student		
Yes	66	32.7
No	136	67.3
Education		
Secondary school	1	.4
High school	82	40.6
University	86	42.6
Master's degree	29	14.4
Ph.D.	4	2

Table 3.2 (continued)

	n	%
Income		
No	49	24.3
1 ₺- 11402 ₺	28	13.9
11403 ₺- 15000 ₺	29	14.3
15001 ₺- 25000 ₺	68	33.6
25001 ₺- 40000 ₺	25	12.4
40001 ₺ and above	3	1.5
Romantic relationship status		
Having a romantic partner	118	58.4
Cohabiting	25	12.4
Engaged	48	23.8
Both cohabiting and engaged	11	5.4

3.3.1.2. Procedure of the Pilot Study

Firstly, approval was acquired from TED University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (see Appendix A). Following the committee's approval, the convenience sampling technique was utilized to collect data from emerging adults. Convenience sampling involves choosing respondents based on their willingness and availability (Shaughnessy et al., 2012). Although convenience sampling restricts the generalizability of the results, non-random samples are used by most counseling studies due to practical constraints (Heppner et al., 2007). In this context, taking into account practicality such as participant accessibility and current contact within the population of interest, the non-probability sampling technique known as convenience sampling was utilized. In the current study, being an emerging adult between the ages of 18-29 living in Türkiye and being in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months were the most crucial inclusion criteria. However, married individuals were excluded from the study, as this study was planned to be conducted with an unmarried emerging adult sample. In addition, in terms of the criteria of being in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months, Overbeek et al. (2007) state

that components of perceived romantic relationship quality occur over time and are positively related to the relationship duration. Therefore, participants being in a romantic relationship that has lasted at least six months were included in this study.

In the pilot study, data collection was done with an online survey. In this context, an online version of the informed consent and instruments were created with Google Forms and shared with participants through Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. During this process, the text of the announcement necessary for the invitation to the study was provided on the Google Forms link. In this way, it was stated to participants that the current study investigates factors associated with their perceived romantic relationship quality. Also, each participant provided their informed consent before the data were collected voluntarily. The instruments took about roughly 10-15 minutes to be filled out. Data were collected from July 2023 to the end of August 2023.

3.3.1.3. Assumptions of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Before the pilot study analysis, the sample size, missing values, and outliers were checked. Then, normality, multicollinearity, and linearity assumptions of CFA were checked (Ullman, 2007). At least 200 participants were recommended in order to conduct CFA (Kline, 2011). This criterion was met in the pilot study with a sample size of 202. Following the CFA sample size criterion, missing value checks were done on the data. However, no missing data were found since participants had to fill out every question in the online form.

Following that, both univariate and multivariate outliers were checked. Cases with z-scores less than -3.29 and more than +3.29 are outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). To identify univariate outliers, each variable's z-score was determined. Results show that none of the cases was outside of the range of 3.29 and cases ranged between -2.17 and 1.60. Then, the multivariate outliers were identified by the calculation of Mahalanobis distances. The p-values of each Mahalanobis distance were computed to see if any of the distances were statistically significant. Cases under the critical value of .001 are labeled multivariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). In the current pilot study, no cases were out of the range of .001.

Following that, the assumption of normality was tested. According to Kline (2011), a distribution is considered skewed if the skewness value exceeds 3. A normal distribution is indicated by a kurtosis value close to 3. Furthermore, positive kurtosis is indicated by values larger than 3, while negative kurtosis is shown by values less than 3. Table 3.3 demonstrates that the skewness and kurtosis values were regularly distributed due to their range. The skewness values range between -.12 and -.62, whereas the kurtosis values range between -1.49 and -.99. Consequently, the findings of the normality analysis showed that the current study's sample had a normal distribution.

Table 3.3 *Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis Values*

	M	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
ER	20.77	9.41	-.12	-1.49
IP	24.82	7.39	-.51	-.99
EC	11.94	4.73	-.40	-1.26
F	19.42	7.36	-.39	-1.23
PRQC_SCORE	94.08	24.40	-.62	-1.07

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. ER= Emotional reactivity; IP = I-position; EC = Emotional cutoff; F = Fusion with others; PRQC_SCORE = Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory Total Score.

The multicollinearity and linearity assumptions were also checked prior to performing CFA. The residual plots and scatterplots were used to verify the linearity assumption. The plots' visual examination demonstrated that the linearity assumption was verified. Then, the multicollinearity assumption was checked. The tolerance value, the variance inflation factor (VIF), and bivariate correlation coefficients were taken into consideration to assess multicollinearity. Multicollinearity can pose an issue when there is an association among a minimum of two independent variables higher than anticipated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

In this context, the criteria for evaluating multicollinearity that have been suggested in the literature are as follows: the correlation coefficients should be less than .85 (Kline, 2011), tolerance values should be higher than .20 and VIF values should be lower than 10 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) are the criteria that have been proposed. In the current pilot study, bivariate correlation coefficients were less than the threshold value as seen in Table 3.4 Additionally, the tolerance values were within the ranges between .32 and .72 higher than .20. Also, all the VIF values were lower than 10, ranging from 3.33 to 6.27. In this case, the findings did not point to a multicollinearity problem.

Table 3.4 *Bivariate Correlations among the Study Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional reactivity	–				
2. I-position	.79**	–			
3. Emotional cutoff	.82**	.70**	–		
4. Fusion with others	.85**	.84**	.77**	–	
5. Perceived romantic relationship quality	.40**	.61**	.41**	.54**	–

Note. Higher scores on emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others subscales indicate less emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Additionally, higher scores on the I-position subscale indicate higher ability to take an I-position.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Following that, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out using AMOS Version 24 (Arbuckle, 2016) to evaluate the construct validity of the measures. The approximate fit indices were utilized as the confirmatory factor analysis model fit evaluation criteria. Comparative fit indices, absolute fit indices, and parsimony-adjusted fit indices are the three categories Kline (2011) used to categorize fit indices. TLI, CFI, and AGFI were the comparative fit indices utilized in the current study. Accordingly, TLI which evaluates the model's performance in comparison to the null model was recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). Also, the comparative fit index (CFI) evaluation was proposed by Kline (2011). Following the recommendation of Byrne (1994), it was determined that the TLI and CFI threshold values of the current study should be higher than .90 for a good model fit. Also following the

recommendation of Browne and Cudeck (1993) AGFI values more than .80 signify an acceptable degree of fitness.

In terms of absolute fit indices, According to Brown (2006), χ^2 and χ^2/df-ratio as one of the absolute fit indices. For a better fit, χ^2 is anticipated to be near zero. In the current study, the cutoff point for the χ^2/df-ratio was determined as 3, as recommended by Kline (2011) thus χ^2/df-ratio less than 3 was regarded as a sign of a good model fit.

In addition, Hu and Bentler (1999) suggested goodness of fit (GFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) parsimony-adjusted fit indices that reveal how well the suggested model fits the population. In the current study, the recommendation of Browne and Cudeck (1993) for the criteria of GFI and RMSEA was used. Accordingly, GFI values more than .80 signify an acceptable degree of fitness. On the other hand, in terms of RMSEA, values less than .05 are seen as indicative of a good fit. values between .05 and .08 are acceptable, and values higher than .10 indicate a poor fit. Also, Maydeu-Olivares (2017) recently provided a method for utilizing the SRMR to estimate the degree of model misfits. In addition to the RMSEA, the SRMR can now be used to calculate confidence intervals and, if desired, tests of close fit (Pavlov et al., 2020). It has been demonstrated that the SRMR produces more accurate confidence intervals and tests of a close fit than the RMSEA (Maydeu-Olivares et al., 2017). In this context, a SRMR of less than .08 was preferred, in accordance with the recommendation of Hu and Bentler (1999).

3.3.1.4. Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventory

PRQC Inventory was developed by Fletcher et al. (2000) to measure various components of perceived relationship quality such as satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. It was developed using a sample consisting of male and female university students with romantic relationships. The inventory consists of six sub-dimensions which are respectively satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. One sample item for the satisfaction sub-dimension is “How satisfied are you with your relationship?". A sample item for the commitment sub-dimension is “How committed are you to your relationship?”. One sample item for the intimacy sub-dimension is “How intimate is your relationship?". One sample item for

the trust sub-dimension is “How much do you trust your partner?”. One sample item for the passion sub-dimension is "How passionate is your relationship?" and a sample item for love sub-dimension is “How much do you love your partner?”. There are a total of 18 items in the scale, three for each sub-dimension, and there are no reverse items. Each item is answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). These items evaluate the relationship and partner. The higher the scores obtained from PRQC, the higher the perceived romantic relationship quality. The total scores obtained from the answers given to the inventory items vary between 18 and 126. Moreover, the PRQC Inventory item-total correlations were .45 and above (ranged from .48 to .77 in Study 1; ranged from .45 and .80 in Study 2). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .85 and above ($\alpha = .88$ in Study 1; $\alpha = .85$ in Study 2); (Fletcher et al., 2000).

PRQC Inventory was adapted into Turkish by Özgülük Üçok et al. (2024) in a study that comprised an adult sample. The adaptation of the PRQC Inventory started with the translations of the items into Turkish by three bilingual psychological counselors. Then, the translated version was evaluated by the Turkish authors. Özgülük Üçok et al. (2024) reported that the PRQC factor structure was validated using confirmatory factor analysis in AMOS 21 (Arbuckle, 2012). According to confirmatory factor analysis, the six-component model suited the data well. [χ^2 (120) = 382.59, p = .05, and χ^2/df ratio was 3.19; CFI = .91, TLI = .89, NFI = .88, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .07]. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was .95. Sample items from the PRQC Inventory are presented in Appendix C.

3.3.1.4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of PRQC Inventory

To check whether the six-factor structure of the PRQC Inventory fits the current data, confirmatory factor analysis was performed (see Figure 3.1). It was carried out using AMOS Version 24 (Arbuckle, 2016). The following shows the confirmatory factor analysis findings.

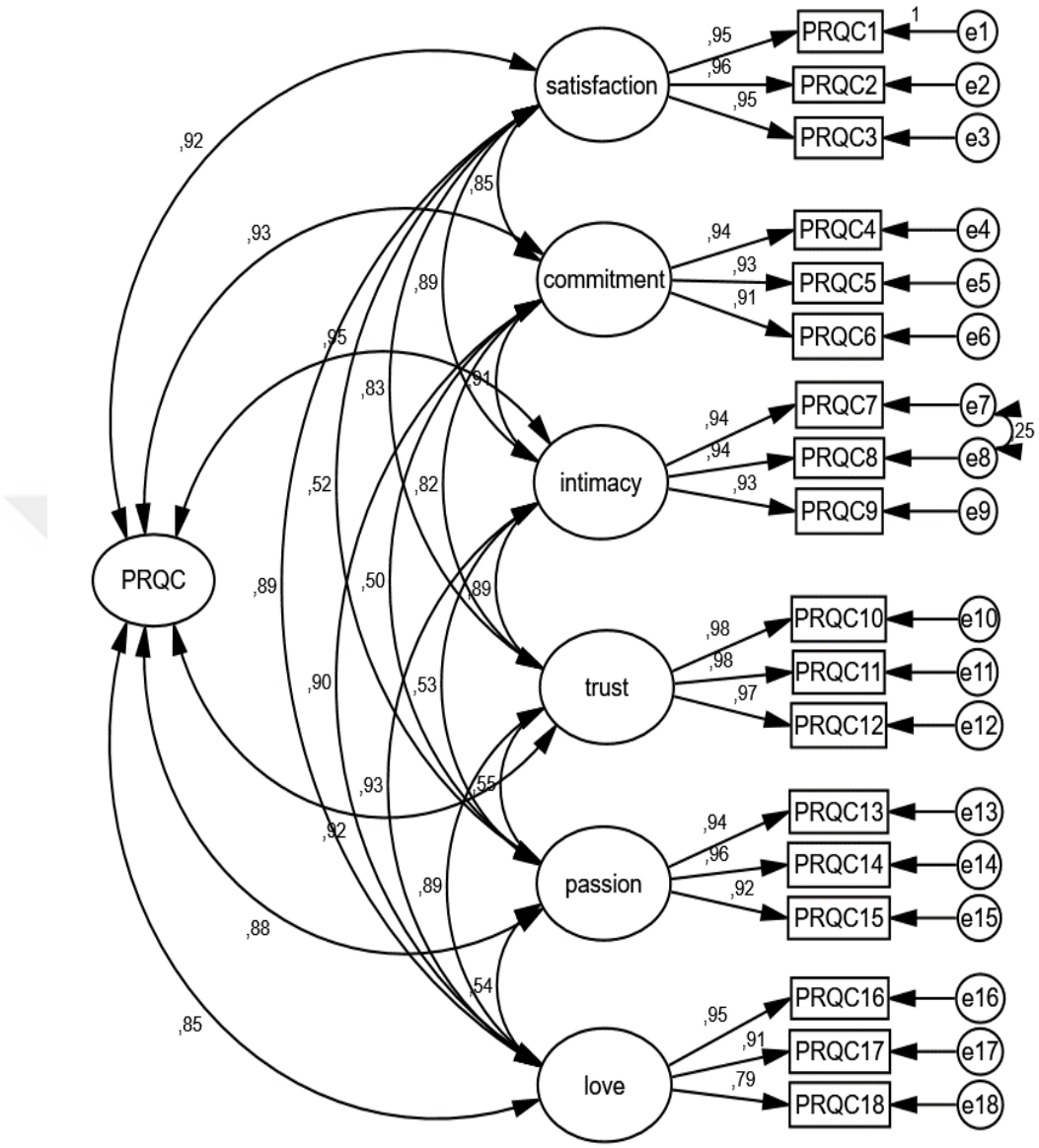

Figure 3.1 *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Perceived Relationship Quality Components (PRQC) Inventory*

Note. Items are numbered in the order presented in the text. All modeled correlations and path coefficients are significant ($p < .05$).

The results showed a good fit of the six-factor model to the data [χ^2 (120) = 378.93, p = .00, and χ^2/df ratio was 3.15; CFI = .95, TLI = .94, GFI = .82, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .04] (Table 3.5). The modification indices were examined, and the error covariance of item 7 (How intimate is your relationship?) and item 8 (How close is your relationship?) was estimated. These items were from the intimacy subscale. Following item examination, it was clear that there was a theoretical basis for correlating the covariance of errors of these terms because the items measured similar perceptions of intimacy. The model fit was better after the modification. Results indicated a non-significant Chi-square statistic: χ^2 (119) = 346.47, p = .00, and χ^2/df ratio was 2.91 which was inside the range of suggested good fit requirements, which is 3 (Kline, 2011). CFI and TLI showed a good fit as they were higher than .90 (Byrne, 1994). Also, the RMSEA value of .08 is acceptable (Browne & Cudeck, 1993) and SRMR which is less than .08 showed a good fit, following the recommendation of Hu and Bentler (1999). Additionally, GFI showed a good fit as it is larger than .80 and AGFI was below the cutoff point of .80 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

However, GFI and AGFI were not within the expected ranges of values. These indices are very sensitive to sample size. Considering the relatively smaller sample size of the pilot study, the recommendation of Hooper et al. (2008) and Wang et al. (2019) was followed, and the lower values of these indices were ignored, following that the other indices were acceptable.

Table 3.5 *Goodness of Fit Indices for Six- Factor Model of PRQC Inventory*

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	AGFI
Model 1	378.93*	120	3.15	.95	.94	.09	.04	.82	.74
Model 2	346.47*	119	2.91	.96	.95	.08	.04	.84	.77

Note. *p<.05

Standardized estimates ranged from .95 to .96 for Satisfaction, from .91 to .94 for Commitment, from .93 to .94 for Intimacy, from .97 to .98 for Trust, from .92 to .96 for Passion, and from .79 to .95 for Love (see Table 3.6). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), as the results were over the .30 threshold value, they were considered acceptable.

Table 3.6 *Standardized Regression Weights and Squared Multiple Correlations of PRQC Inventory*

Construct	Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	Unstandardized Estimates	*t*	R^2
Satisfaction	PRQC1	.95	1.00		.87
	PRQC2	.96	1.17	23.80	.85
	PRQC3	.95	1.09	25.59	.89
Commitment	PRQC4	.94	1.00		.87
	PRQC5	.93	.94	23.54	.83
	PRQC6	.91	1.02	17.93	.69
Intimacy	PRQC7	.94	1.00		.77
	PRQC8	.94	.99	23.02	.73
	PRQC9	.93	1.19	20.94	.85
Trust	PRQC10	.98	1.00		.93
	PRQC11	.98	1.01	38.56	.95
	PRQC12	.97	1.01	30.27	.88
Passion	PRQC13	.94	1.00		.86
	PRQC14	.96	1.09	25.67	.95
	PRQC15	.92	1.04	17.50	.69
Love	PRQC16	.95	1.00		.91
	PRQC17	.91	1.05	20.25	.73
	PRQC18	.79	1.07	29.35	.89

Note. All t values are significant at *p< .001.

3.3.1.4.2. Reliability Analyses

The inventory's internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Van Griethuijsen et al. (2014) state that the lowest Cronbach's alpha value that may be accepted for social science research is .70. In the pilot study, the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .97. Also, the internal consistencies for

each subscale were high. Accordingly, .95 for satisfaction, .91 for commitment, .93 for intimacy, .97 for trust, .93 for passion, and .93 for love in the pilot study.

Additionally, the internal consistencies for the main study were calculated. The overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .98. Furthermore, the internal consistencies for each subscale were high. Accordingly, .94 for satisfaction, .93 for commitment, .93 for intimacy, .95 for trust, .91 for passion, and .93 for love.

3.3.1.5. Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form (DSI- SF)

The Differentiation of Self Inventory (DSI), developed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998), measures the differentiation of self in a multidimensional manner. This inventory was revised by Skowron and Schmitt (2003). However, since the Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-R) consists of 46 items and creates a time and energy burden on the participants, the Differentiation of Self Inventory- Short Form (DSI-SF) was developed by Drake et al. (2015). It was developed with samples of three different studies consisting of adults ages ranged from 18 to 62. The inventory consists of four subscales which are respectively emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. One sample item for the emotional reactivity subscale is “At times my feelings get the best of me and I have trouble thinking clearly". A sample item for the I-position subscale is “I tend to remain pretty calm even under stress.” One sample item for the emotional cutoff subscale is "I tend to distance myself when people get too close to me" and a sample item for fusion with others subscale is “I usually need a lot of encouragement from others when starting a big job or task.” The inventory contains 20 items, 15 of which are reverse. Each item is answered on a 6-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all characteristic of me* 6 = *very characteristic of me*). Moreover, the overall inventory's Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .88. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others were .80, .70, .79, and.68, respectively. Also, the 4-week test-retest reliability coefficients for the subscales ranged from .82 (emotional reactivity) to .72 (fusion with others) and it was .85 for the total score of the inventory (Drake et al., 2015).

DSI- SF was adapted into Turkish by Sarıkaya et al. (2018) with a sample of adults over 20 years old. The inventory consists of four subscales as in the original form. There are 20 items in the scale: six items each for the emotional reactivity and I-position subscales, three items for the emotional cutoff subscale, and five items for the fusion with others subscale. Also, the inventory contains 15 reverse items. Since the emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others subscales consist entirely of reverse items, higher scores obtained from these subscales indicate that the individual displays the relevant trait less. On the other hand, since the I-position subscale contains only one reverse item, higher scores obtained from this subscale indicate that the individual has a better ability to take an I-position. The higher the scores obtained from DSI-SF, the more differentiation of self. The total scores obtained from the answers given to the inventory items vary between 20 and 120. The adaptation study of Sarıkaya et al. (2018) reported that the four-factor structure of the Turkish form as in the original form was confirmed by the values derived from the findings of confirmatory factor analysis [$\chi 2$ (163) = 558.98, ($p < .001$), $\chi 2 / df$ = 3.43, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, NFI = .88, NNFI = .90, GFI = .89, AGFI = .86; SRMR = .07]. For the total inventory, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .83. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others were .78, .61, .66, and .72, respectively. Sample items from the DSI- SF are presented in Appendix C-2.

3.3.1.5.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis of DSI- SF

To check whether the four-factor structure of the DSI- SF fits the current data, confirmatory factor analysis was performed (see Figure 3.2). It was carried out using AMOS Version 24 (Arbuckle, 2016). The following shows the confirmatory factor analysis findings.

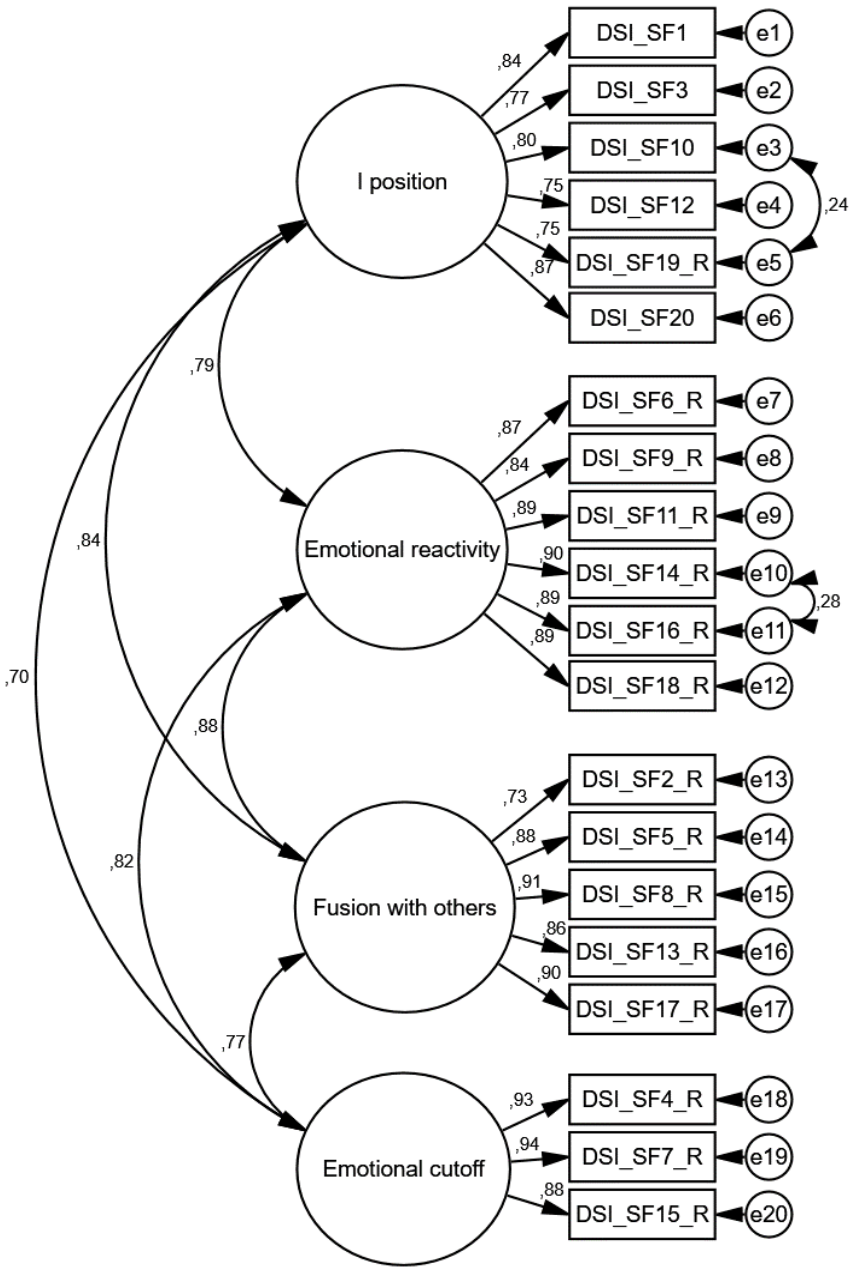

Figure 3.2 *Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Differentiation of Self Inventory-Short Form (DSI- SF)*

Note. Items are numbered in the order presented in the text. All modeled correlations and path coefficients are significant ($p < .05$).

The results showed a good fit of the four-factor model to the data [χ^2 (164) = 500.88, p = .00, and χ^2/df ratio was 3.05; CFI = .91, TLI = .90, GFI = .78, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .05] (Table 3.7). The modification indices were examined, and the error covariance of item 10 (There's no point in getting upset about things I cannot change.) and item 19 (My self-esteem depends on how others think of me.) was estimated. These items were from the I-position subscale. Also, the error covariance of item 14 (If I have argued with my spouse/partner, I tend to think about it all day.) and item 16 (If someone is upset with me, I can't seem to let it go easily.) was estimated. These items were from the emotional reactivity subscale. After examining the items, it was clear that there was a theoretical basis for correlating the covariance of errors of these terms because they were measuring similar conduct. The model fit was better after the modification. Results indicated a non-significant Chi-square statistic: χ^2 (162) = 438.13, p = .00, and χ^2/df ratio was 2.70 which was inside the range of suggested good fit requirements, which is 3 (Kline, 2011). CFI and TLI showed a good fit as they were higher than .90 (Byrne, 1994). Also, the RMSEA value of .08 is acceptable (Browne & Cudeck, 1993) and SRMR which is less than .08 showed a good fit, following the recommendation of Hu and Bentler (1999). Additionally, GFI showed a good fit as it is larger than .80 and AGFI was below the cutoff point of .80 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

Nevertheless, GFI and AGFI were not within the expected value ranges. These indices are quite sensitive to sample size. In this context, considering the relatively small sample size of the pilot study, the recommendation of Hooper et al. (2008) and Wang et al. (2019) taken into account and low values of these indices were disregarded.

Table 3.7 *Goodness of Fit Indices for Four- Factor Model of DSI- SF*

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	AGFI
Model 1	500.88*	164	3.05	.91	.90	.09	.05	.78	.72
Model 2	438.13*	162	2.70	.93	.92	.08	.05	.81	.75

Note. *p<.05

Standardized estimates ranged from .75 to .87 for I-position, from .84 to .90 for Emotional reactivity, from .73 to .91 for Fusion with others, and from .88 to .94 for Emotional cutoff (see Table 3.8). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), as the results were over the .30 threshold value, they were considered acceptable.

Table 3.8 *Standardized Regression Weights and Squared Multiple Correlations of DSI- SF*

Construct	Items	Standardized Factor Loadings	Unstandardized Estimates	*t*	R^2
I-position	DSI_SF1	.84	1.00		1.00
	DSI_SF3	.77	.74	10.22	.84
	DSI_SF10	.80	.91	12.00	.92
	DSI_SF12	.75	.69	10.09	.69
	DSI_SF19	.75	.83	12.23	.83
	DSI_SF20	.87	.88	13.17	.89
Emotional reactivity	DSI_SF6	.87	1.00		1.00
	DSI_SF9	.84	.91	13.94	.91
	DSI_SF11	.89	1.08	18.05	1.08
	DSI_SF14	.90	1.10	15.89	1.10
	DSI_SF16	.89	1.01	15.26	1.02
	DSI_SF18	.89	1.07	16.24	1.07
Fusion with others	DSI_SF2	.73	1.00		1.00
	DSI_SF5	.88	1.47	10.11	1.47
	DSI_SF8	.91	1.49	10.46	1.49
	DSI_SF13	.86	1.28	9.70	1.29
	DSI_SF17	.90	1.39	10.39	1.39
Emotional cutoff	DSI_SF4	.93	1.00		1.00
	DSI_SF7	.94	1.03	20.84	1.03
	DSI_SF15	.88	.86	15.71	.87

Note. All t values are significant at *p<.001.

3.3.1.5.2. Reliability Analyses

The inventory's internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Van Griethuijsen et al. (2014) state that the lowest Cronbach's alpha value that may be accepted for social science research is .70. In the pilot study, the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .97. Also, the internal consistencies for each subscale were high. Accordingly, .94 for emotional reactivity, .88 for I-position, .91 for emotional cutoff, and .91 for fusion with others in the pilot study.

Additionally, the internal consistencies for the main study were calculated. The overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .94. Furthermore, the internal consistencies for each subscale were high. Accordingly, .90 for emotional reactivity, .81 for I-position, .85 for emotional cutoff, and .87 for fusion with others.

3.3.1.6. Demographic Form

The researcher prepared a demographic form to find out if the participants fit the inclusion criteria and to get information about the participants' demographic and relational characteristics. The demographic form was utilized to gather data regarding the participants' individual information such as age, gender, education, income, and relational characteristics such as romantic relationship status, and romantic relationship duration. The Demographic Form is presented in Appendix C-3.

3.4. Main Data Collection Procedure

Before starting the main data collection, approval was acquired from TED University HREC (see Appendix A). Data were collected from September 2023 to the end of October 2023. The sample was chosen by convenience sampling, and data were gathered from willing participants. The data was gathered using an online survey. In this case, Google Forms was used to create an online version of the informed consent and instruments, which were then sent to participants via social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram. The Google Forms link included the announcement that was required for the study invitation. In this way, it was stated to participants that the current study investigates factors associated with their perceived romantic relationship quality. Also, prior to the data collection, each participant gave their informed consent.

In this case, an informed consent form that was necessary to be approved was displayed when the participants first clicked on the link. If participants approved, the demographic form and measures were displayed. The instruments took about roughly 10-15 minutes to be filled out.

3.5. Data Analyses Procedure

The current study aimed to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality. To achieve this aim, the data were analyzed using a number of steps. Before the main analysis of the data, the raw data were screened. At this stage, it was checked whether the participants met the inclusion criteria, and the data of the participants who failed to fulfill the inclusion criteria were determined and these participants were excluded from the analyses. Before performing the analyses, sample size adequacy, missing values, and outliers were checked. Then the multiple regression analysis assumptions (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, independent errors, and influential observations) were checked. Secondly, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the associations among the dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality. Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed to see whether the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) predict overall perceived romantic relationship quality. SPSS Version 22 was used for all analyses (IBM Corp., 2013).

3.6. Limitations of the Study

First of all, considering the cross-sectional structure of the study, causal relationship between the variables can't be inferred and it is a threat to internal validity. Moreover, as the perceived romantic relationship quality is a dynamic construct that evolves and transforms over time, cross-sectional studies cannot adequately explain these facts. Secondly, as self-report measurement instruments were used in the study, participants may have given socially desirable responses, resulting in a social desirability effect.

Thirdly, since the convenience sampling method is used in this study, selection bias may be present. Although this method is helpful for reaching individuals who are

available and eager, there is limited control over the sampling process. As the convenience sampling method is not a random sampling technique, this restricts generalizability (Heppner et al., 2007). Furthermore, the sample consisted of emerging adults who were mostly university students, and all were heterosexual. Thus, the result of this study isn't generalizable to all emerging adults. Additionally, the study sample was diverse regarding gender and romantic relationship status. Thus, this situation may have impacted individuals' dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality. This may make it difficult to investigate the association between the dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality.

Lastly, since the data for this study was gathered via an online Google form, the researcher did not have the opportunity to confirm whether participants met the inclusion criteria. Anyone who clicks on the online form can answer the questions as if they have met the inclusion criteria, even if they have not meet. In this context, situations that threaten validity may arise during data collection, such as the inclusion of participants who do not meet the criteria. Furthermore, there is a possibility that results may be compromised by not following the testing procedure because the researcher was not present when each instrument was administered (Kazdin, 1992). This might jeopardize the data's reliability. On the other hand, including only participants with internet access in the study poses a problem in terms of generalizability.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The statistical analyses of the main study's findings are presented in this chapter. Firstly, preliminary analyses including data screening for missing data, sample size adequacy, and influential outliers were presented. Then the multiple regression analysis assumptions (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, independent errors, and influential observations) were checked. Secondly, correlations among the variables were presented. Finally, multiple regression analysis was performed to see whether the dimensions of differentiation of self predict overall perceived romantic relationship quality.

4.1. Preliminary Analyses

Before the analyses, it was checked whether the participants met the inclusion criteria, the data of the participants who didn't fit into the inclusion criteria were determined, and these data were excluded. Then the data were screened and respectively missingness, sample size adequacy, and influential outliers were checked. Finally, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, independent errors, and influential observations were conducted before analyses. SPSS Version 22 was used for all preliminary analyses (IBM Corp., 2013).

4.1.1. Missing Data and Sample Size Adequacy

To prevent missing data, each of the inventory items delivered via the online survey was conducted to require answers to the questions. There were no missing data since participants filled out every question in the online form Considering the sample size adequacy, Green (1991) suggests a formula for calculating the sample size required for the analysis of multiple regression: $N > 50 + 8m$ (m number of predictors). Moreover, Stevens (2002) proposed a 15-subject ratio to each predictor. In the current

study, predictor variables are the differentiation of self dimensions: emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Also, the study was conducted with 424 emerging adults. Therefore, the sample size of the current study complied with all the stated criteria.

4.1.2. Influential Outliers

Both univariate and multivariate outliers were investigated in the current study. Cases with z-scores less than -3.29 and more than +3.29 are outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Each variable's standardized z-scores were calculated in order to identify univariate outliers. The findings showed that none of the cases fell outside of the range of 3.29 and cases ranged between -2.60 and 1.82.

Multivariate outliers are instances when the scores on multiple variables have been combined in an unexpected way and Mahalonobis distances are used to identify multivariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, Mahalanobis distances were computed then the p-values of each Mahalanobis distance were computed to see if any of the distances were statistically significant. Cases under the critical value of .001 are labeled multivariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The findings showed that three cases fell outside the range of .001. In order to determine whether outliers impacted the analyses' results, all analyses were carried out twice using two separate data sets, one containing the outliers and the other not. The analyses findings showed that there weren't any significant differences between the two data sets. As a result, the dataset kept the outliers.

4.1.3. Assumptions of Multiple Regression Analysis

Following the examination of the missing values and outliers, multiple regression analysis assumptions were tested. The main study's assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity, independent errors, and influential observations are presented below.

4.1.3.1. Normality

The assumption of normality was assessed using the skewness and kurtosis values. Hair et al. (2010) state that a skewness number between -1 and +1 is often seen as excellent, although a value between -2 and +2 is generally regarded as adequate. In cases where the values of skewness and kurtosis are close to 0, the sample has a normal distribution. Accordingly, Table 4.1 demonstrates that the skewness and kurtosis values were regularly distributed due to their range. The skewness values range between .10 and -1.13, while the kurtosis values range between -.13 and -1.28.

Table 4.1 *Descriptive Statistics, Skewness, and Kurtosis Values*

	M	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
ER	19.04	7.96	.20	-1.24
IP	23.53	6.70	-.28	-.90
EC	10.64	4.37	.10	-1.28
F	17.82	6.58	-.05	-1.23
PRQC_SCORE	101.63	23.76	-1.13	-.13

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. ER= Emotional reactivity; IP = I-position; EC = Emotional cutoff; F = Fusion with others; PRQC_SCORE = Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory Total Score

4.1.3.2. Linearity and Homoscedasticity

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), the linearity assumption examines whether scores have a linear relationship, and it is illustrated as a straight line between two variables. On the other hand, the homoscedasticity assumption examines whether the dependent variable has variance levels that are equivalent across all predictor variables (Hair et al., 2010). To check the linearity and homoscedasticity assumptions, regression plots were created. Figure 4.1 shows the scatterplot of the criterion variable (perceived romantic relationship quality), and it displays that across the range of predictor variables, the criterion variable has equivalent variance. This indicates that the homoscedasticity assumption was met. Also, a partial regression residual plot was used to check the linearity assumption. As seen in Figure 4.2 below, the plot shows a

generally elliptic form, indicating that the linearity assumption was met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

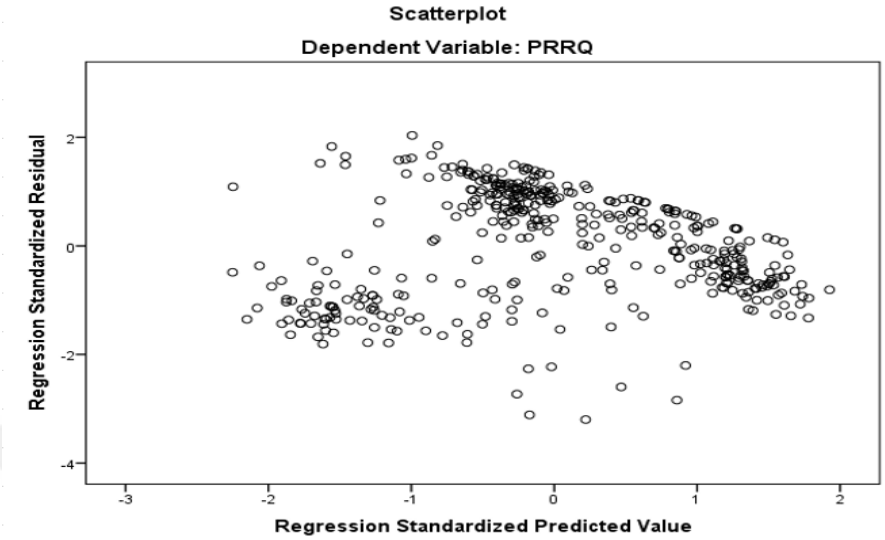

Figure 4.1 *Scatterplot for Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality*

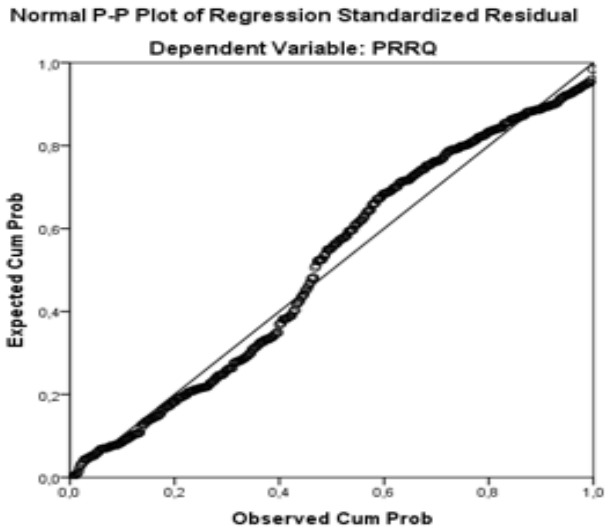

Figure 4.2 *Partial Regression Residual Plot*

4.1.3.3. Multicollinearity

When independent variables are correlated more than anticipated, multicollinearity may become problematic (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). That is why, the multicollinearity assumption was checked in the current study. Tolerance value, VIF,

and the inter-correlation coefficients among the variables were taken into consideration to assess multicollinearity. The criteria for evaluating multicollinearity that have been suggested in the literature are as follows: tolerance values should exceed .20, VIF values should be lower than 10 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), and correlation coefficients should be less than .85 (Kline, 2011). The correlation coefficients ranged from .43 to .81 and were all less than the cutoff value of .85 (Kline, 2011). The tolerance values were within the ranges between .26 and .66 higher than .20. Also, all the VIF values were lower than 10, ranging from 1.51 to 3.80. In this case, the findings did not point to a multicollinearity problem.

4.1.3.4. Independent Errors

The independent errors assumption suggests that there is no relationship between the residuals and that they do not exhibit a pattern (Field, 2009). The Durbin-Watson test, which should be in the range of 1 and 3, might be utilized for testing this assumption (Durbin & Watson, 1951). In this study, the Durbin-Watson value was found to be 1.7, and since this value was within the recommended range, the independent errors assumption was met.

4.1.3.5. Influential Observations

The Cook's Distance Test, which analyzes a case's overall impact on the model, may be utilized for checking the influential observation assumption (Field, 2009). Values above 1 cause the assumption is not met (Cook & Weisberg, 1982). In this study, the value of Cook's Distance was discovered to be .04, and since this value was within the recommended range, the influential observations assumption was met.

4.2. Bivariate Correlations

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were utilized to investigate correlations among the variables. Table 4.2 shows bivariate correlations among the criterion variable (perceived romantic relationship quality) and the predictors (differentiation of self dimensions: emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others).

Davis (1971) proposed a scale for measuring the strength of correlation between the variables: very high (.70- 1.00), high (.50- .69), moderate (.30- .49), low (.10- .29), and to be disregarded (.01- .09). In this context, Table 4.2 shows significant correlations of different directions and different strengths (low, moderate, high) among the variables. All the correlations were in the expected direction.

When correlations among the predictor variables were examined separately, there was a positive correlation between emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff ($r = .76$, $p < .01$); emotional reactivity and fusion with others ($r = .81$, $p < .01$); emotional cutoff and fusion with others ($r = .77$, $p < .01$). Also, the low level of emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff and fusion with others were positively correlated with I-position ($r = .51$, $p < .01$; $r = .49$, $p < .01$; $r = .58$, respectively).

Additionally, as demonstrated in Table 4.2, the low level of emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff and fusion with others were positively correlated with perceived romantic relationship quality ($r = .43$, $p < .01$; $r = .45$, $p < .01$; $r = .52$, $p < .01$, respectively). On the other hand, there was a positive correlation between I-position and perceived romantic relationship quality ($r = .55$, $p < .01$).

Table 4.2 *Bivariate Correlations between Study Variables*

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Emotional reactivity	19.04	7.96	–				
2. I-position	23.53	6.70	.51**	–			
3. Emotional cutoff	10.64	4.37	.76**	.49**	–		
4. Fusion with others	17.82	6.58	.81**	.58**	.77**	–	
5. PRQC	101.63	23.76	.43**	.55**	.45**	.52**	–

Note. M and *SD* are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory Total Score. Higher scores on emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others subscales indicate less emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Additionally, higher scores on the I-position subscale indicate higher ability to take an I-position.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.3. Multiple Regression Analysis

The main aim of the current study was to investigate the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality. In this regard, multiple regression analysis was carried out to determine if the four dimensions of differentiation of self significantly predicted perceived romantic relationship quality. The findings of multiple regression analysis revealed that overall the predictors explained 37% variance in perceived romantic relationship quality [F (4, 419) = 60.64, $p < .001$]. When the predictors were examined separately, it was found that I-position ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$) and low level of fusion with others ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$) positively predicted perceived romantic relationship quality. On the other hand, emotional reactivity ($\beta = -.05$, $p > .05$) and emotional cutoff ($\beta = .11$, $p > .05$) didn't significantly predict perceived romantic relationship quality (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 *Regression Coefficients of Dimensions of Differentiation of Self on Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality*

Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95%CI
Constant	50.54	3.47	14.55	.00	[43.71, 57.36]
Emotional reactivity	-.15	.21	-.73	.47	[-.57, .26]
I-position	1.30	.17	7.66	.00	[.97, 1.63]
Emotional cutoff	.61	.36	1.68	.09	[-.10, 1.31]
Fusion with others	.95	.27	3.49	.00	[.42, 1.49]

Note. Higher scores on emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others subscales indicate less emotional reactivity, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others. Additionally, higher scores on the I-position subscale indicate higher ability to take an I-position.CI = Confidence interval.

4.4. Hypotheses Testing

The results of testing the hypotheses presented in the introduction were summarized below.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) will predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

H1a: The low level of emotional reactivity will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality. The hypothesis was rejected (β = -.05, p > .05).

H1b: I-position will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality. This hypothesis was confirmed (β = .37, p < .001).

H1c: The low level of emotional cutoff will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality. The hypothesis was rejected (β = .11, p > .05).

H1d: The low level of fusion with others will positively predict perceived romantic relationship quality. This hypothesis was confirmed (β = .26, p < .01).

4.5. Summary of the Findings

The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that I-position and the low level of fusion with others positively predicted perceived romantic relationship quality whereas emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff did not significantly predict perceived romantic relationship quality. In this case, while hypotheses H1b and H1d were confirmed, H1a and H1c were rejected. Lastly, the current study's findings demonstrated that individuals who take a better I-position and are less fused with others have more perceived romantic relationship quality.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter presents discussions about the findings derived from the statistical analyses. Firstly, the discussion of multiple regression analysis findings on the association between differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality is presented. Then, the conclusion and implications are presented. Lastly, recommendations are discussed.

5.1. Discussion of Multiple Regression Analysis Findings on the Association between Differentiation of Self and Perceived Romantic Relationship Quality

According to the findings of the current study, contrary to what was expected in the proposed Hypothesis 1, all dimensions of differentiation of self didn't predict perceived romantic relationship quality. Accordingly, I-position and the low level of fusion with others predicted perceived romantic relationship quality whereas emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff did not predict perceived romantic relationship quality. This means that the individuals who take a better I-position and are less fused with others have more perceived romantic relationship quality.

Contrary to what was expected in the proposed Hypothesis 1a, the low level of emotional reactivity didn’t predict perceived romantic relationship quality. Research has shown that a low level of emotional reactivity is associated with romantic relationship quality (Lampis, 2015; Lampis et al., 2017; Skowron, 2000) and romantic relationship satisfaction, a component of perceived romantic relationship quality (Gardner et al., 2007; Khaddouma et al., 2015; Peleg, 2008). Similarly, in their study with a sample of Turkish individuals, Kalkan and Aydoğan (2019) found that the low level of emotional reactivity did not predict romantic relationship quality. Also, Polat and İlhan (2018) found that couple adjustment, which includes perceived romantic relationship quality components such as satisfaction and commitment, was not

associated with emotional reactivity. In this context, it is evident that emotional reactivity is negatively correlated with romantic relationship quality in studies comprising American or European individuals. However, there wasn't any association between emotional reactivity and romantic relationship quality in studies comprising Turkish individuals can be explained by cultural differences. Emotional reactivity is characterized by individuals reacting with emotions that suppress their thoughts (Bowen, 1978). However, in Turkish culture, there are difficulties in realizing, recognizing, and communicating emotions (Voltan-Acar, 2019). In this case, emotions that are not recognized or even spoken do not have the opportunity to suppress thoughts.

As mentioned in Hypothesis 1b I-position predicted perceived romantic relationship quality. Taking an I-position refers to the capacity of individuals to speak responsibly and independently about their thoughts, emotions, and beliefs (Bowen, 1978). Individuals who are capable of taking the I-position may establish relationships that maintain a balance between independence and togetherness (Tuason & Freidlander, 2000), and this balance creates quality relationships (Schnarch, 1997). This explains how the I-position predicts perceived romantic relationship quality. Numerous studies revealed that taking the I-position predicted romantic relationship quality (Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009) and romantic relationship satisfaction, a component of perceived romantic relationship quality (Čepukienė, 2020; Khaddouma et al., 2015; Peleg, 2008; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998).

Contrary to what was expected in the proposed Hypothesis 1c, the low level of emotional cutoff didn’t predict perceived romantic relationship quality. Research has shown that a low level of emotional cutoff is associated with romantic relationship quality (Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009) and romantic relationship satisfaction, a component of perceived romantic relationship quality (Čepukienė, 2020; Khaddouma et al., 2015; Price et al., 2020; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Emotional cutoff can be defined as becoming emotionally isolated and withdrawn (Tuason & Friedlander, 2000). Isolation is negatively associated with the collectivistic social structure (Heu et al., 2018) thus, it is less evident in the Turkish society which has a more collectivistic social structure (Hofstede, 1980). In Turkish society, being

together more than enough is valued, and being alone as an individual is perceived as being isolated. That is why, although emotional cutoff is rare in Turkish society, individuals are highly fused with others and it is negatively associated with romantic relationship quality (Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009).

Lastly, as mentioned in Hypothesis 1d the low level of fusion with others predicted perceived romantic relationship quality. This means that the individuals who are less fused with others have more perceived romantic relationship quality. Numerous studies revealed that less fusion with others predicted romantic relationship quality (Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009) and romantic relationship satisfaction, is a component of perceived romantic relationship quality (Čepukienė, 2020; Khaddouma et al., 2015; Peleg, 2008; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Fusion with others refers to the condition of establishing dependent relations with significant others and lacking a clear sense of self and others (Bowen, 1978). The notion of self, which is crucial to comprehending fusion with others, influences the perception of romantic relationship quality (Aron & Aron, 1996). Individuals who have higher levels of self-concept clarity have a consistent self-image. Also, there is a correlation between improved relationship quality and greater self-concept clarity (Lewandowski et al., 2009). This explains how individuals who are less fused with others, have greater self-concept clarity and have more perceived romantic relationship quality.

5.2. Conclusion

The current study highlighted the crucial tasks of emerging adults which are establishing romantic relationships and differentiation of self. In this context, the association between the differentiation of self dimensions (emotional reactivity, I-position, emotional cutoff, and fusion with others) and perceived romantic relationship quality was investigated. The result of the current study revealed that I-position and the low level of fusion with others positively predicted perceived romantic relationship quality whereas emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff did not significantly predict perceived romantic relationship quality.

5.3. Implications

In this section, the implications of the current study are presented. At this point, for a better consideration, firstly theoretical implications are stated. Then, practical implications are presented.

5.3.1. Theoretical Implications

Since there aren't enough studies on the differentiation of self, there is more research is required to validate the claim that Bowen's theory is reliable (Miller et al., 2004). Research across diverse cultural groups is also necessary for an increased understanding of the differentiation of the self (Lampis et al., 2019). However, research on the differentiation of self is scarce in Türkiye (Işık et al., 2020). Therefore, this study is very important as it expands the literature.

As another point, there isn't much research on the differentiation of self with emerging adult samples (e.g., Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Hocaoğlu & Işık, 2022; Kurt & Gündüz, 2020; Piteo & MacKay, 2021; Skowron et al., 2009), although differentiation of self is a crucial task of emerging adults (McGoldrick et al., 2016). Therefore, this study examined the task of differentiation of self with emerging adults. On the other hand, as stated, establishing romantic relationships in emerging adulthood is an important task (McGoldrick et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there aren't many recent studies in the literature investigating perceived romantic relationship quality with an emerging adult sample (e.g., Cui & Fincham, 2010; Demir, 2007; Eryılmaz & Doğan, 2013; Sağkal & Özdemir, 2019; Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012). For this reason, this study, whose sample is limited to emerging adults, is very important in terms of expanding the literature.

Additionally, in the literature, studies investigating the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self were often conducted with married participants in middle adulthood (e.g., Calatrava et al., 2022; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009). In some studies, it has been suggested that the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self should also be investigated among unmarried individuals (Işık

et al., 2020; İnce & Işık, 2022; Tönbül & Kocayörük, 2021). That is why the current study aimed to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with an unmarried emerging adult sample. Therefore, the selection of this particular sample enhances the study's uniqueness.

5.3.2. Practical Implications

Besides its theoretical implications, the study also has practical implications. As the most common goal in couple counseling is to increase the perceived romantic relationship quality of clients; to increase the perceived romantic relationship quality, psychological counselors can increase clients' levels of differentiation of self through counseling (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). As the I-position and the low level of fusion with others dimensions of differentiation of self positively predicted perceived romantic relationship quality, psychological counselors can perform interventions that will enable clients to take an I-position without being fused with others.

Additionally, by using the DSI-SF, psychological counselors can get an idea about their clients' degrees of differentiation of self. Getting information about the clients' degrees of differentiation of self may help the counseling sessions in terms of recognizing the client's maladaptive behavioral patterns and planning preventive interventions (Skowron, 2000). In particular, by determining in which dimension of differentiation of self the client has problems, necessary interventions can be planned (Lampis et al., 2018).

Also, the study results may encourage psychological counselors to conceptualize cases from a more multigenerational perspective. Although not measured in the current study, in Bowen Family Systems Therapy families are examined by looking at the multigenerational perspective (Bowen, 1976) as family interactions and relationship patterns are inherited by the following generation (Carr, 2006). Therefore, unless people review and change the patterns passed from earlier generations, these behaviors will likely be repeated in the current generation (Kerr, 2003). The repetition of certain behaviors is more likely to occur if family members tend to be either emotionally overinvolved (fused) or emotionally cut off (psychologically or physically) from one another (Gladding, 2015). For this reason, working with the family as well as the

client is crucial (Dolz-Del-Castellar & Oliver, 2021). In this context, the current study encourages psychological counselors to examine clients' family interactions and relationship patterns from a multigenerational perspective using techniques such as genograms and family stories.

5.4. Recommendations

Although Bowen's theory was developed in the United States, many components of it may apply to more collectivistic nations as well (Rodríguez-González et al., 2018). To gain a deeper understanding of the differentiation of self, Lampis et al. (2019) recommended conducting research across a range of cultural groups. Nonetheless, research on the differentiation of self is scarce in Türkiye (Işık et al., 2020) thus more research is recommended. Therefore, to confirm the results of the current study and verify whether similar associations exist in other cultural groups, cross-cultural studies are recommended. Also, in the literature, studies investigating the association between differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality were often conducted with married participants in middle adulthood (Calatrava et al., 2022; Kalkan & Aydoğan, 2019; Skowron, 2000; Yousefi et al., 2009). Considering that establishing quality romantic relationships and differentiation of self are crucial tasks of emerging adults (McGoldrick et al., 2016), additional research is recommended to investigate the association between perceived romantic relationship quality and differentiation of self with an unmarried emerging adult sample.

Moreover, since this study is cross-sectional, causality cannot be inferred between the variables as stated in the limitations. For this reason, future studies can be carried out using longitudinal or experimental studies. Therefore, it can be inferred whether the changes in levels of dimensions of differentiation of self cause a change in perceived romantic relationship quality over time or whether changes in perceived romantic relationship quality cause a change in levels of dimensions of differentiation of self over time. Furthermore, the data of the current study were collected through an online Google form. To provide researchers with better control over sample and testing conditions, in future studies, it is recommended that researchers collect data in more controlled environments.

Also, since the convenience sampling method is used in this study, selection bias may be present. There is limited control over the sampling process, even though this method helps reach individuals who are available and eager. As the convenience sampling method is not a random sampling technique, this restricts generalizability (Heppner et al., 2007). Therefore, probability sampling methods can be used in future studies. Also, as the sample consisted of emerging adults who were mostly university students and all were heterosexual, the study result isn't generalizable to all emerging adults. Therefore, the study results need to be replicated with more diverse samples consisting of emerging adults with different education levels, diverse gender identities, and sexual orientations. Additionally, the current study's sample exhibited heterogeneity with respect to gender and romantic relationship status. Thus, this situation may have impacted individuals' dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality. This may make it difficult to investigate the association between the dimensions of differentiation of self and perceived romantic relationship quality. Therefore, gender and romantic relationship status may be control variables in future studies.

Lastly, in this study, to investigate whether the dimensions of differentiation of self predict overall perceived romantic relationship quality, data were collected from participants who have been in a romantic relationship. However, since there is only data about one partner's perception, it is not possible to compare it with what the other partner says. To achieve this, it is recommended that future research should include dyadic data.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

TED ÜNİVERSİTESİ
İNSAN ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU
ETİK KURUL KARARLARI
Sayı: 2023-13 Tarih: 06.07.2023

Toplantı Sayısı: 2023-13

Toplantı Tarihi: 06 Temmuz 2023

Toplantı Saati: 10.00

Toplantı Yeri: Zoom üzerinden yapılmıştır.

Katılanlar:
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Kıymet Duygu ERDAŞ - Başkan
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İbrahim YİĞİT - Raportör
Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ali KÖKPINAR - Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Duygu Onay ÇÖKER - Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Çağla Öneren ŞENDİL - Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şule Akdoğan KILINÇ – Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Melike Ünal GEZER - Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Elçin Emre AKDOĞAN - Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Beril Türkoğlu DEMİREL - Üye

Raportör: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İbrahim Yiğit - Raportör

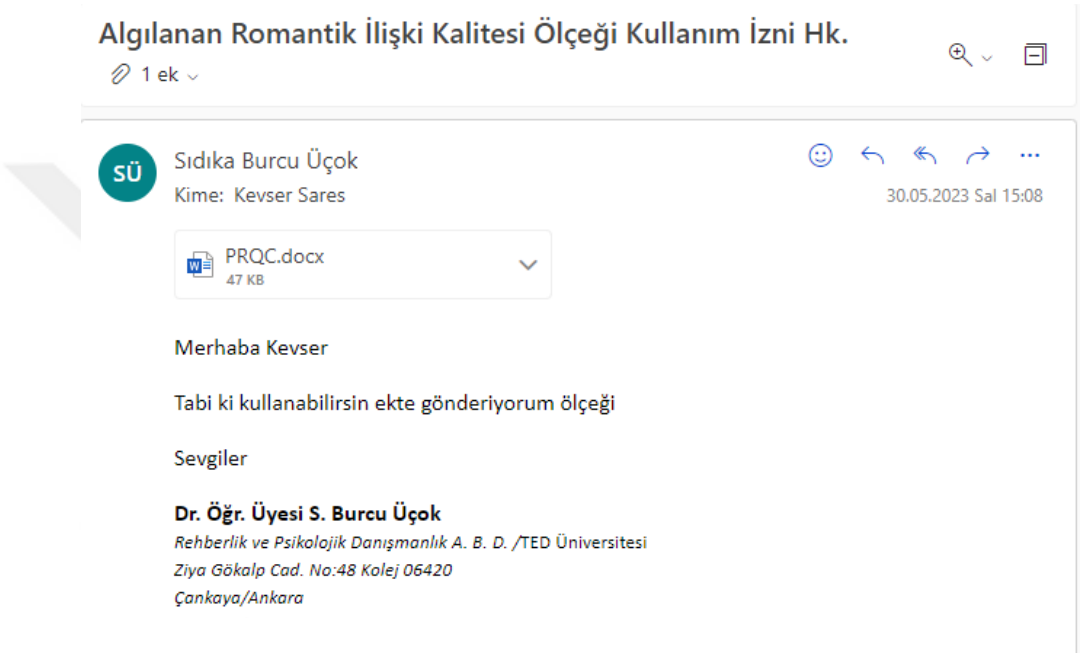
GÖRÜŞME MADDELERİ

G.08 : TED Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilim Dalı Öğretim Üyesi Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Sıdıka Burcu Üçok "Daha Fazla Farklılaşma, Daha Fazla İlişki Kalitesi: Beliren Yetişkinler Arasında Algılanan Romantik İlişki Kalitesinin Yordayıcısı Olarak Benliğin Farklılaşması" başlıklı çalışmasının araştırma etiğine uygunluğu görüşüldü.

Karar 2023-13/08 : TED Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilim Dalı Öğretim Üyesi Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Sıdıka Burcu Üçok "Daha Fazla Farklılaşma, Daha Fazla İlişki Kalitesi: Beliren Yetişkinler Arasında Algılanan Romantik İlişki Kalitesinin Yordayıcısı Olarak Benliğin Farklılaşması" başlıklı çalışmasına

ONAY KARARI VERİLDİ.

A-2. PERMISSION LETTER FOR TURKISH ADAPTATION OF PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY COMPONENTS (PRQC) INVENTORY



Algılanan Romantik İlişki Kalitesi Ölçeği Kullanım İzni Hk.

1 ek

SÜ

Sıdıka Burcu Üçok

Kime: Kevser Sares

30.05.2023 Sal 15:08

PRQC.docx
47 KB

Merhaba Kevser

Tabi ki kullanabilirsin ekte gönderiyorum ölçeği

Sevgiler

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi S. Burcu Üçok
*Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık A. B. D. /*TED Üniversitesi
Ziya Gökalp Cad. No:48 Kolej 06420
Çankaya/Ankara

A-3. PERMISSION LETTER FOR TURKISH ADAPTATION OF DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF INVENTORY- SHORT FORM (DSI- SF)



Benliğin Farklılaşması Envanteri Kısa Formunun Türkçe Uyarlamasının Kullanım İzni

2 ek

Y

yusuf.sarikaya

Kime: Kevser Sares

15.04.2023 Cmt 10:25

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1 MB

2 ek (1 MB) Tümünü OneDrive - TED Üniversitesi konumuna kaydet Tümünü indir

Kevser Hanım merhabalar,

Çalışmanızda uyarladığımız ölçeği kullanmanızdan memnuniyet duyarız. Ekte ölçek formu, puanlama anahtarı ve ölçeğin yayınlandığı makaleyi yolluyorum. Ölçekle ilgili sorunuz olursa yazmaktan çekinmeyin.
Kolaylıklar dilerim.

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Sayın Katılımcı,

Bu araştırma, TED Üniversitesi, Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Kevser Sares Yenigelen tarafından yüksek lisans tez çalışması kapsamında Dr. Öğr. Üyesi S. Burcu Özgülük Üçok danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Araştırmanın amacı, beliren yetişkinlerin algıladıkları romantik ilişki kalitesi ile ilişkili faktörleri incelemektir. Bu amaçla 18-29 yaş arası, en az 6 aydır romantik bir ilişki içerisinde olan katılımcılara ulaşılması hedeflenmektedir.

Bu çalışmaya katılım gönüllük esasına dayalıdır ve sizden kimliğinizi tanımlayıcı herhangi bir bilgi istenmemektedir. Sizden beklenen anket sorularını cevaplamanızdır. Vermiş olduğunuz yanıtlar diğer katılımcılardan toplanan verilerle birlikte değerlendirilecek ve sadece bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılacaktır. Toplanan veriler bilgisayar ortamında şifreli dosyalarda saklanacak, hiçbir koşulda izniniz olmadan harici kişilerle paylaşılmayacaktır ve gizli tutulacaktır. 15-20 dakika sürecek bu uygulamada yer alan hiçbir aşama, kişisel rahatsızlık verecek nitelikte değildir. Ancak herhangi bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz, uygulamaları nedenini açıklamaksızın yarıda bırakıp araştırmadan çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Bu durumda yanıtlarınız kullanılmayacaktır ve silinecektir. Bu çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak ve yanıtlanmasını istediğiniz sorularınız için araştırmayı yürüten Kevser Sares Yenigelen ile (E-posta: iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Araştırmaya katılmak istiyorum Evet / Hayır

Araştırmaya katılımınız ve haklarınızın korunmasına yönelik sorularınız varsa ya da herhangi bir şekilde risk altında olduğunuza veya strese maruz kalacağına inanıyorsanız TED Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na telefon numarasından veya eposta adresinden ulaşabilirsiniz.

C. SAMPLE ITEMS FROM TURKISH ADAPTATION OF PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP QUALITY COMPONENTS (PRQC) INVENTORY

İfadeler	**Hiç**			**Kararsızım.**			**Son derece çok.**
1. İlişkinizden ne kadar doyum alıyorsunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. İlişkinize ne kadar bağlısınız?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. İlişkiniz ne kadar samimi?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Partnerinize ne kadar güveniyorsunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Partneriniz ne kadar tutkulu?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Partnerinizi ne kadar seviyorsunuz?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

C-2. SAMPLE ITEMS FROM TURKISH ADAPTATION OF DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF INVENTORY- SHORT FORM (DSI- SF)

	Beni hiç yansıtmıyor.					**Beni oldukça yansıtıyor.**
1. Baskı altında bile oldukça sakin kalmaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Önemli bir iş veya göreve başlarken başkalarının beni cesaretlendirmesine genellikle ihtiyaç duyarım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. İnsanlar bana çok yakınlaştığında mesafe koymaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Bazen duygularıma yenilirim ve mantıklı düşünmekte zorlanırım.	1	2	3	4	5	6

C-3. DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

1. Yaşınız:
2. Cinsiyetiniz:
3. Eğitim Durumunuz:

( ) İlkokul mezunu

( ) Ortaokul mezunu

( ) Lise mezunu

( ) Üniversite mezunu

( ) Yüksek lisans mezunu

( ) Doktora mezunu

4. İşiniz: .....
5. Gelir Durumunuz:

( ) Yok

( ) 0- 8500 ₺

( ) 8500- 15000 ₺

( ) 15001- 25000 ₺

( ) 25001- 40000 ₺

( ) 40000 ₺ ve üzeri

6. Romantik ilişkiniz var mı? ( ) Evet ( ) Hayır

- Cevabınız "Evet" ise sorulara devam ediniz. –

7. Bu romantik ilişkiyi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

Partnerim var ( )

Partnerim var ve birlikte yaşıyoruz ( )

Nişanlıyım ( )

Nişanlıyım ve birlikte yaşıyoruz ( )

Evliyim ( )

8. İlişkiniz kaç aydır devam ediyor? .....