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## Relationship satisfaction among Turkish and British adults

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### ABSTRACT

We tested three theories (adult attachment, autonomy/relatedness, and gender roles) to understand relationship satisfaction among 150 British and 170 Turkish adults, all involved in romantic relationships. Avoidance, relatedness, autonomy-relatedness, and masculinity mediated the relationship between culture and romantic relationship satisfaction. Additionally, as anticipated, Turkish participants scored lower on relationship satisfaction and autonomy whereas British participants scored lower on avoidance and relatedness. Contrary to expectation, gender role differences (differences between masculinity and femininity) in the United Kingdom were not significantly smaller than in Turkey. It is concluded that adult attachment provides a useful framework for understanding country-level differences.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Relationship satisfaction and culture

Relationship satisfaction refers to the “positive versus negative affect experienced in a relationship and is influenced by the extent to which a partner fulfils the individual’s most important needs” (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998, p. 359). There has been a considerable amount of research showing that romantic relationships have various correlates. Thus, couples with more stable and satisfying relationships appear to enjoy better health and well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and the capacity to form romantic relationships is a key aspect of social adaptation in young adulthood (Dresner & Grolnick, 1996). Numerous studies have addressed the determinants of satisfaction including love styles (Contreras, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1996), social support (Xu & Burleson, 2001), expressive and instrumental behaviors or beliefs (Kamo, 1993), and self-disclosure (Adonu, 2005); yet, little is known about which determinants are mediators of relationship satisfaction from a cross-cultural perspective. The present study examines cross-cultural similarities and differences in these factors.

The present study tests three theories, namely adult attachment, autonomous/related self-construal, and gender roles to study relationship satisfaction. More specifically, the present study set out to identify to what extent cross-cultural differences in relationship satisfaction among British and Turkish adults can be mediated by factors derived from these three theories, and to what extent cross-cultural differences occur in adult attachment, autonomous related self-construal, gender roles, and relationship satisfaction. In the next section, we discuss the relevance of each of the three theoretical frameworks (attachment, autonomous related self-construal, and gender roles, respectively) for relationship satisfaction and the particular role of culture, followed by an overview of relevant studies in Turkey and the United Kingdom.

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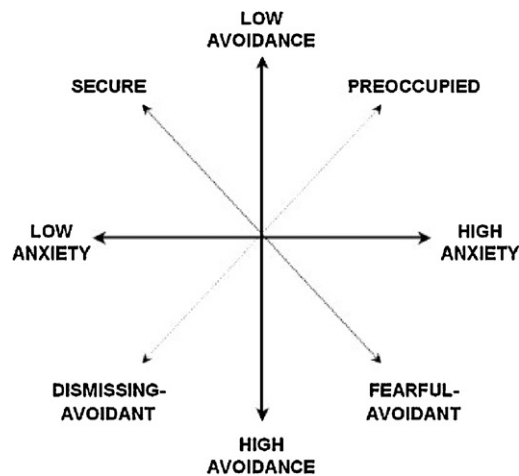


Fig. 1. Attachment dimensions and categories.

Fraley and Shaver (2000, p. 145).

## 1.2. Attachment dimensions and relationship satisfaction

### 1.2.1. Attachment in adulthood

Attachment is defined as “a way of conceptualizing the propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others” (Bowlby, 1977, p. 201). By comparing different adult attachment typologies and categories, Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998) demonstrated that adult attachment can be measured on two dimensions (anxiety and avoidance), capturing four categories (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful) (see Fig. 1). The anxiety dimension, related to the model of the self in a relationship (Sumer, 2006), refers to attachment anxiety due to the fear of abandonment in close relationships, whereas the avoidance dimension, related to the model of the other, refers to discomfort with closeness and dependency. The importance of closeness is emphasized more by anxious individuals, whereas self-reliance and emotional distance are emphasized more by avoidant individuals (Lavy, Mikulincer, & Shaver, 2010). It is thus believed that higher anxiety and avoidance result in higher insecurity.

### 1.2.2. Adult attachment dimensions, relationship satisfaction, and culture

Attachment is shaped through the quality of interaction with parents in early childhood and continues to affect expectations, beliefs, needs, and social behaviors in close relationships later in life (Ainsworth, Blehar, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1973; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Relationship satisfaction of securely attached individuals (low on anxiety and avoidance) is the highest and satisfaction of anxiously attached individuals is the lowest (see the review by Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002). For instance, Simpson (1990) found that unlike insecure attachment, secure attachment is strongly and positively related to relationship interdependence, commitment, trust, and satisfaction. Furthermore, it has been argued that differences in attachment styles lead to differences in relationship stability. In accordance, Kirkpatrick and Hazan (1994), examining couples' relationships over a four-year period, found that secure participants reported fewer break ups during this period compared to insecure participants.

Despite the fact that secure attachment (low on both anxiety and avoidance dimensions) is found to be more common than other attachment styles in most cultures, certain cross-cultural differences have been found in adult attachment dimensions (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000; Van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1996). For instance, Germans are found to be higher on avoidance whereas Japanese and Israelis are found to be higher on the anxious/ambivalent dimension (Harwood, Miller, & Irizarry, 1995). Furthermore, Koreans score higher on preoccupied attachment, have lower intimacy, and hold lower expectations about their relationships in comparison with Caucasian Americans (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). Sprecher et al. (1994) found that Americans were higher on secure attachment and lower on avoidance compared to Japanese and Russians.

Differences between cultures in avoidance are probably related to norms regarding emotion expression (mainly negative emotions such as anger) towards group members. It has been argued that individualistic and collectivistic cultures differ in the level of harmony, cohesion, and conformity; collectivistic cultures have stricter norms about the expression of negative emotions in order to maintain harmony and cohesion as opposed to individualistic cultures where less strict norms apply to the expression of emotions depending on the context and status (Matsumoto, 1990, 1991; Matsumoto et al., 2008). Thus, members of collectivistic cultures are believed to be more likely to express avoidance (discomfort with closeness and intimacy) compared to members of individualistic cultures. Members of collectivistic cultures are more likely to avoid being too close in order to minimize the risk of arguments that could challenge harmony and cohesion. For instance, Asian Americans were found to be higher on avoidance compared to Caucasian Americans (Lopez, Melendez, & Rice, 2000; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Zakalik, 2004). Individualism–collectivism may also be related to the expression of anxiety (fear of

abandonment). Members of collectivistic cultures are more attached to their group members than members of individualistic cultures; therefore, members of collectivistic cultures may be more anxious to be abandoned compared to the members of individualistic cultures (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2006; Yao, Fang, Zhu, & Zuroff, 2009).

### 1.3. *The autonomous and related self and relationship satisfaction*

#### 1.3.1. *The autonomous-related self*

Kagitcibasi (2005), building on previous work on self-construals in individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), proposed a model which positions the family as a system within the cultural and social setting. In her model, different family models and child-rearing patterns are connected to different forms of self-construal along the underlying dimensions of agency (autonomy–heteronomy) and interpersonal distance (relatedness–separateness). The combination of the two dimensions leads to the emergence of four different types of selves. The first type of self, the autonomous–separate self, is high on autonomy and low on relatedness. Such a self develops in an ‘independent’ family, where children are brought up to be self-sufficient and self-reliant. The second type, the heteronomous–separate self, emerges where parents are neglectful or indifferent. In such a setting, the children are expected to obey the rules and hierarchical structure of the family. The third type, the heteronomous-related self, is high on relatedness and low on autonomy; this develops in a family which stresses total interdependence and obedience. The final type, the autonomous-related self, is high on autonomy as well as relatedness. This emerges in a family where psychological interdependence is coupled with both control and autonomy (Kagitcibasi, 2005, p. 412). Here children combine psychological interdependence with material independence. The autonomous-related self can be seen as a combination of both independent and interdependent self-construals.

#### 1.3.2. *The autonomous-related self, relationship satisfaction, and culture*

Both the degree of autonomy and perceived relatedness in spouses influence relationship satisfaction in the sense that autonomy and relatedness exist together and both are positively correlated with relationship satisfaction (Rankin-Esquer, Burnett, Baucom, & Epstein, 1997). Additionally, married individuals who emphasize both autonomy and connectedness have the highest levels of self-validation (Harter et al., 1997). At present, there are few cross-cultural studies that focus on the role of autonomy and relatedness in interpersonal relationships, with the available evidence suggesting that despite the importance of autonomy and relatedness in romantic relationships, these dimensions have differential impacts on relationships across cultures (Hahn & Oishi, 2006). For instance, although Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, and Kasser (2001) found that self-esteem, autonomy, and relatedness were important for relationship satisfaction for both American and Korean relationships, a need for self-esteem was the strongest predictor for positive affect for Americans whereas the need for relatedness was the strongest predictor for Koreans. In addition, Wong and Goodwin (2009) examined marital satisfaction in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and China and concluded that the frequency of autonomy between the spouses varied across three cultural groups, with only participants from the United Kingdom and Hong Kong emphasizing autonomy.

Similar to adult attachment dimensions, differences in autonomy and relatedness across cultures may be understood in terms of differences in individualism and collectivism. Individualism–collectivism influences the degree a culture motivates the needs, wishes, desires, and values of an autonomous and unique self instead of a group (Matsumoto, Weissman, Preston, Brown, & Kupperbusch, 1997). Members of individualistic cultures are believed to be more autonomous and independent and to value the individual more than individuals from collectivistic cultures who are more strongly related and dependent to their in-group (Triandis, 1995).

### 1.4. *Gender roles and relationship satisfaction*

#### 1.4.1. *Gender roles*

Gender roles can be defined as the rules and expectations associated with female and male identities which direct attitudes and behaviors (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Men and women differ in their behaviors as a result of these different gender roles and their socialization experiences (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Masculinity has been often associated with an instrumental orientation (e.g., dominance, aggression, and achievement), and femininity with an expressive orientation (e.g., deference, nurturance, and affiliation) (Bem, 1974; Williams & Best, 1982). It is argued that gender role ideology varies along a continuum of traditional to modern, with more male dominance in traditional societies and more gender egalitarianism in modern societies (Williams & Best, 1991).

#### 1.4.2. *Gender roles, relationship satisfaction, and culture*

Masculinity and femininity are believed to affect romantic relationship satisfaction (Jones & Cunningham, 1996). Siavalis and Lamke (1992) found that self-perceptions of instrumentality and expressiveness, as well as partner's perceived expressiveness, are predictors of males' relationship satisfaction, whereas partners' perceived instrumentality and expressiveness significantly predict females' relationship satisfaction. Women who perceive themselves as higher on femininity are more satisfied in their relationships (Langis, Sabourin, Lussier, & Mathieu, 1994), while for men, a negative relationship has been found between the self-perception of masculinity and relationship satisfaction (Burn & Ward, 2005). Differences between masculinity and femininity are presumably related to relationship satisfaction in that salient characteristics of femininity such as good communication (empathy and self-disclosure) and supportiveness are believed to endorse the satisfaction in

close relationships as opposed to salient characteristics of masculinity such as being aggressive and dominant, which probably diminish satisfaction (Lueken, 2005). Despite the fact that both masculinity and femininity are important in relationship satisfaction, they both are highly related to socioeconomic development, religion, and urbanization (Williams & Best, 1982, 1990). The differences between men and women's gender roles are smaller in nontraditional countries than in traditional countries. Chinese men and women were found to hold more traditional expectations of male roles compared to individuals from the United States (Levant, Wu, & Fischer, 1996). Furthermore, countries including the Netherlands, Germany, and Finland were more egalitarian than more traditional countries such as Nigeria, India, and Pakistan (Williams & Best, 1991). These differences may be explained in terms of increasing public rights of females in post-industrial societies (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). In modern societies in which women have political and economic rights, the similarity between the roles in society of males and females increases which results in more gender role equality. In contrast, in traditional societies, males and females inhabit more separate worlds, and females are more involved in the household tasks and private domain, while males are assumed to be the breadwinners and more visible in the public domain.

### 1.5. Turkey and the United Kingdom

A number of significant cultural differences between Turkey and the United Kingdom have been found that may have a bearing on relationship satisfaction (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 2004). According to Triandis (1995), individualism involves giving priority to the needs, beliefs, feelings, values of a person, with individualistic people seeing themselves as independent from others. Hofstede (1994) reports higher individualism in the United Kingdom than in Turkey. Additionally, the United Kingdom scores higher in gender empowerment compared to Turkey; the United Kingdom is characterized by more equality between males and females in political participation, economic participation, and power over economic resources (Human Development Report, 2008). The United Kingdom scores lower in gender gap index (ranked 15th out of 134 countries) compared to Turkey (ranked 126th out of 134 countries), a finding which can be understood in terms of higher gender role equality in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment and political empowerment in the former country (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2010). Turkey is found to be above the mean for harmony (fitting in, and valuing peace) and embeddedness (members are seen as an embedded part of the group, the groups are more important) and below the mean for affective autonomy (members follow their own feelings and motivations). In contrast, the United Kingdom is below the mean for harmony and embeddedness and above the mean for affective autonomy (Schwartz, 1994, 2004). Finally, it is argued that global life satisfaction may also influence, and be influenced by, relationship satisfaction (Froh, Miller, & Snyder, 2007; Myers, 1992, 1999). Turkey scores lower on global life satisfaction compared to the United Kingdom (World Values Survey, 2007).

Regarding attachment dimensions, Turkey and the United Kingdom are likely to differ both in avoidance and anxiety. Schmitt et al. (2004) analyzed adult attachment across 62 countries, including Turkey and the United Kingdom (England and Northern Ireland). The model of the self (degree of anxiety and dependency experienced in close relationships) and other (tendency to seek out or avoid closeness in relationships) were positively correlated in Turkey but were not correlated in England. Moreover, while the model of self was positively correlated with self-esteem in both cultures, the model of the other was only positively correlated with self-esteem and agreeableness in Turkey. Sumer and Gungor (1999) compared the four categories of adult attachment (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful) among Turkish university students and the US. They found that while students from both cultures scored highest on secure attachment, American university students were comparatively higher on secure, dismissing, and fearful attachment compared with the Turkish university students, where the latter were higher on preoccupied attachment. We think that these results are also relevant for our study that involved Turkey and the United Kingdom. The US shows important similarities in cultural dimensions with the United Kingdom in the sense that both groups are relatively high in individualism (Hofstede, 1994), and affective autonomy (Schwartz, 1994) and relatively low in harmony, embeddedness (Schwartz, 1994) and gender gap (Hausmann et al., 2010).

From the perspective of autonomy and relatedness, the Turkish culture has repeatedly been described as a "culture of relatedness" (Kagitcibasi, 1996) and the British culture as a "culture of autonomy" where the family is nuclear rather than extended and ties within the family and wider ties of kinship are weak (Razi, 1993). Gender roles also vary between Turkey and the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has been found to have a high level of gender egalitarianism which emphasizes the equality of men and women whereas Turkey has been found to have higher levels of inequality between men and women (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004; Williams & Best, 1990). Kagitcibasi and Sunar (1992) also suggest that the gender stereotypes in Turkey are more traditional than in Western societies (Ozkan & Lajunen, 2005). As a consequence, Turkish women tend to agree with the stereotype that men ought to be assertive in romantic relationships, while Turkish men are more likely than men in Western societies to accept stereotypes about both men's dominance and women's compliance of in romantic relationships (Sakalli & Curun, 2001).

### 1.6. Hypotheses

We tested the following hypothesis about mediators of the association between culture and relationship satisfaction:

**Hypothesis 1.** (a) Avoidance of intimacy and experiencing anxiety negatively mediate the association between culture and relationship satisfaction.

(b) Masculinity negatively mediates the association between culture and relationship satisfaction.

- Hypothesis 2.** (a) Autonomy–relatedness positively mediates the association between culture and relationship satisfaction.  
 (b) Femininity positively mediates the association between culture and relationship satisfaction.

In addition, we tested the following hypotheses about country differences in mean scores:

- Hypothesis 3.** (a) British participants will have higher degrees of relationship satisfaction than Turkish participants.  
 (b) British participants will have higher degrees of autonomy than Turkish participants.  
 (c) Gender role differences will be smaller for British participants than Turkish participants.

- Hypothesis 4.** (a) Turkish participants will score higher on avoidance and anxiety than British participants.  
 (b) Turkish participants will score higher on relatedness than British participants.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

Participants in the study were 320 individuals from Turkey ( $N = 170$ ) and Britain ( $N = 150$ ), who voluntarily took part in the study. All participants were currently involved in a romantic relationship. The Turkish sample consisted of 61 males and 109 females, the British sample of 56 males and 94 females. The age of the Turkish participants ranged from 18 to 44 years ( $M = 25.44$ ,  $SD = 5.08$ ) and for the British participants, age ranged from 20 to 51 years ( $M = 31.88$ ,  $SD = 6.99$ ). For the Turkish sample, the length of participants' current relationship ranged from 1 month to 288 months ( $M = 25.04$ ,  $SD = 30.44$ ). For the British sample, the length of participants' current relationship ranged from 3 months to 240 months ( $M = 61.54$ ,  $SD = 64.15$ ).

The Turkish sample was drawn from the city of Istanbul while the British sample involved citizens from London. In order to control for the confounding effect of background variables, participants were chosen from similar backgrounds in both cultural groups, with respondents mostly urbanized and highly educated. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the demographic variables separately for each culture (see Table 1). It can be seen from this table that participants were mainly university graduates (93.0% and 90.6% for the Turkish and British sample, respectively) who were unmarried (85.9% and 64.7% for the Turkish and British sample, respectively). The Turkish samples were mostly living with their parents (64.7%), whereas the British sample were living with their partners-spouses (39.3%) or alone (23.3%). Frequencies and percentages were calculated for ethnic backgrounds separately for each culture and are presented in Table 2. As can be seen from the table, ethnic backgrounds differed within each country and analyses revealed that those differences were significant for the target variables (adult attachment, gender roles, autonomy–relatedness, and relationship satisfaction) for the ethnic groups within the United Kingdom, which resulted in inclusion of only white British participants ( $N = 136$ ) in the further analyses in the study.

### 2.2. Materials

#### 2.2.1. Sociodemographic questionnaire

Demographic questions included questions about participants' sex, age, nationality, ethnic background, marital status, and education. Participants were also asked to indicate the length of the romantic relationship.

**Table 1**  
Sample descriptives per country.

Background	Turkish		British	
	N	%	N	%
Sex				
Male	61	35.9	51	35.9
Female	109	64.1	85	64.1
Marital status				
Single	146	85.9	97	64.7
Married	17	10.0	39	26.0
Divorced and separated	7	4.1	11	7.3
Live with				
Parents	110	64.7	7	4.7
Partner-Spouse	21	12.4	59	39.3
Alone	19	11.2	35	23.3
Friends	16	9.4	34	22.7
Other	4	2.4	10	6.7
Education				
Undergraduate	121	71.2	65	43.3
Postgraduate	37	21.8	71	47.3
Other	12	7.1	14	9.3

**Table 2**  
Ethnic backgrounds per country.

	Turkish		British	
	N	%	N	%
Turkish	160	94.1		
Armenian	5	2.9		
Kurdish	3	1.8		
Other	2	1.2		
White British			136	90.7
Asian British			12	8.0
Black British			2	1.3

### 2.2.2. Romantic relationship satisfaction

The Relationship Satisfaction Subscale (RSS) of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) was used in order to measure relationship satisfaction. The Investment Model Scale includes four subscales measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. In line with the goal of our study, only the Relationship Satisfaction Subscale was used which consisted of two parts. In the first part, which consisted of five statements (e.g., “My partner fulfils my needs for intimacy”), respondents were asked to rate how well each statement defines their current relationship on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *Don't agree at all* (1) to *Agree completely* (4). The second part was composed of five statements (e.g., “I feel satisfied with our relationship”); participants were asked to rate how well each sentence defines their current relationship on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from *Don't agree at all* (1) to *Agree completely* (9). The scale was translated into Turkish by Buyuksahin, Hasta, and Hovardaoglu (2005).

### 2.2.3. Adult attachment

The Experiences in Close Relationships (ECR) scale was developed by Brennan et al. (1998; Turkish translation by Sumer & Gungor, 1999) in order to assess adult attachment dimensions. This self-report scale includes 36 items for the dimensions of attachment anxiety and avoidance. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each item was descriptive of their feelings in close relationships on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Eighteen of the items measure attachment anxiety (e.g., “I worry about being abandoned”), and 18 items measure attachment avoidance (e.g., “I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close”). Brennan et al. (1998) found that the two scales constitute two separate factors in a factor analysis.

### 2.2.4. Autonomous-related self-construal

The Autonomy-Relatedness Scale (ARS) was developed by Kagitcibasi (2007) in order to measure different types of self-construals. The ARS is a self-report measure with three 9-item subscales: autonomy, relatedness, and autonomy-relatedness. Participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The Autonomy subscale includes statements such as “People who are close to me have little influence on my decisions” and “I feel independent of the people who are close to me”. The Relatedness subscale includes statements such as “I need the support of persons to whom I feel very close to” and “Those who are close to me are my top priority”. Finally, the autonomy-relatedness subscale includes statements such as “It is important to have both close relationships and also to be autonomous” and “A person can feel both independent and connected to those who are close to him/her”.

### 2.2.5. Gender roles

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was developed by Bem (1974) to measure gender roles. The original BSRI is a self-report scale that includes 60 items for the dimensions of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. The scale has 20 items for masculinity, 20 items for femininity, and 20 neutral items. The BSRI was adapted for Turkish culture and translated into Turkish by Kavuncu (1987). A short version of the BSRI based on the common items between the original and Turkish adaptation was used. The short version includes 11 items of the masculinity scale and 15 items of the femininity scale. The masculinity scale involves items with presumed male characteristics (e.g., aggressive, ambitious, and dominant). The femininity scale includes items with presumed female characteristics (e.g., warm, loyal, and shy). Respondents were asked to rate how well each of the 26 personality characteristics describes themselves by using a 7-point scale ranging from *almost always false* (1) to *almost always true* (7).

## 2.3. Procedure

In order to collect the British data, a website was set up and participants completed the questionnaires online (at <http://www.thesistools.com/>). Fifty-one respondents completed and submitted the questionnaire. Additionally, paper questionnaires were given to participants approached in various settings (such as libraries and restaurants). Ninety-nine respondents submitted the paper questionnaire. In both data collection methods, snowball sampling was used. We compared responses between data collections on background variables (e.g., gender, education, marital status) and the target

**Table 3**  
Reliability analysis for each cultural group.

Scale	Turkey	Britain
Relationship satisfaction	.85	.87
Attachment		
Anxiety	.86	.88
Avoidance	.84	.91
Autonomy-relatedness		
Autonomy	.78	.86
Relatedness	.74	.87
Autonomy-relatedness	.83	.79
Gender roles		
Femininity	.70	.83
Masculinity	.77	.78

variables (e.g., adult attachment dimensions, relationship satisfaction); there were no significant differences on these variable scores between data administrations. Therefore, data obtained with the two measurement methods were collated. In order to collect the Turkish data, back-translated paper questionnaires were given to participants and they were recruited through snowball sampling.

For each subscale the participants' scores were calculated by adding up their scores for each item, while reversing the item scores where required. Higher scores pointed to higher levels of the target construct for all tests; for example, the higher the participants scored on anxious attachment, the more they had an anxious attachment orientation.

### 3. Results

Results of the present study are presented in two parts. Part one examines the psychometric properties of the measures, including their structural equivalence (the extent to which the scales measure the same psychological constructs in the two countries) and their reliabilities. Part two tests the hypotheses.

#### 3.1. Psychometric properties

##### 3.1.1. Structural equivalence

In order to analyze whether equivalent constructs were measured by the instruments used in the study in Turkey and the United Kingdom, structural equivalence of the measures was tested using exploratory factor analysis (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Firstly, factor analyses were computed which showed that each subscale was unifactorial. Secondly, the values of Tucker's phi, an index of factorial agreement across the two countries, were calculated. Values above .90 are taken to indicate structural equivalence (and hence, identity of the underlying constructs). Results indicated that Tucker's phi values for relationship satisfaction, anxiety, avoidance, autonomy, relatedness, autonomy-relatedness, femininity and masculinity were .99, .96, .97, 1.00, .97, .97, .89, and .95, respectively. Hence, all scales used in the study are found to be structurally equivalent across cultural groups, which demonstrates that they measure the same construct both in Turkey and the United Kingdom.

##### 3.1.2. Reliability analysis

The internal consistency of the scales was tested separately for each subscale and each cultural group. As can be seen from Table 3, all subscales showed sufficiently high internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .70 and higher, which is sufficient by common standards, e.g., Cicchetti, 1994).

#### 3.2. Hypothesis testing

##### 3.2.1. Mediators of the association between culture and relationship satisfaction

In order to test to what extent differences in relationship satisfaction between Turkey and the United Kingdom are mediated by factors from the three theories, we conducted a mediation analysis in which culture was the independent variable, anxiety, avoidance, autonomy, relatedness, autonomy-relatedness, masculinity and femininity were the mediators, and relationship satisfaction was the dependent variable. Age, marital status, length of the relationship, and living status (i.e., living with or without a romantic partner) were included as covariates as they significantly differed between the two groups. By conducting a mediation analysis, we were both able to test the direct effects of the culture and the multiple mediators as well as the indirect effect of culture on relationship satisfaction through the mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Using bootstrap procedures to establish 90% confidence intervals, significant negative indirect effects were found for avoidance (−.098), autonomy-relatedness (−.032), and masculinity (−.038), and a significant positive indirect effect was found for relatedness (.075). It can be concluded that Hypothesis 1a (mediation by avoidance of intimacy and experiencing anxiety) is partially confirmed (only for avoidance), Hypothesis 1b (mediation by masculinity) is confirmed, Hypothesis 2a (mediation by autonomy-relatedness) and Hypothesis 2b (mediation by femininity) are rejected.



**Table 4**  
Mediators of association between culture and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Mediator	Direct effects		Indirect effects			
	Coeff	Coeff	CI		PC	
			Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Anxiety	-.252***	-.025	-.096	.041		
Avoidance	-.219***	-.099*	-.184	-.046		
Autonomy	-.001	.001	-.045	.047		
Relatedness	.176**	.075*	.031	.141		
Autonomy-relatedness	.091	-.032*	-.084	-.006		
Femininity	.132**	.013	-.007	.052		
Masculinity	-.078	-.038*	-.098	-.003		
Anxiety-relatedness					-.216	-.013
Avoidance-autonomy					-.187	-.021
Avoidance-relatedness					-.263	-.101
Autonomy-relatedness					-.161	-.011
Relatedness-autonomy-relatedness					.051	.171
Relatedness-masculinity					.057	.199
Avoidance-femininity					-.201	-.055
Relatedness-femininity					.010	.131
Autonomy-relatedness-femininity					-.107	-.009
Femininity-masculinity					.003	.116

Note: The pairwise contrasts that are not listed in the table were not significant. Coeff: regression coefficients. CI: confidence intervals. PC: pairwise contrasts.

- \*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

In order to examine which mediators were stronger in indirect effects, pairwise contrasts of the indirect effects were computed (bootstrap for indirect effects, confidence intervals, and pairwise contrasts can be seen in Table 4). Results indicated that the indirect effect of avoidance was significantly stronger than relatedness (90% CI:  $-.263$  to  $-.101$ ), relatedness was significantly stronger than autonomy-relatedness (90% CI:  $.051$  to  $.171$ ), and relatedness was significantly stronger than masculinity (90% CI:  $.057$  to  $.199$ ). A final aspect of Table 4 is a comparison of direct and indirect effects. The direct effects tended to be stronger than the indirect effects.

### 3.2.2. Hypotheses about differences in mean scores of cultural groups

In order to test the differences on adult attachment dimensions, autonomy, relatedness and relationship satisfaction between Turkey and the United Kingdom, a 2 (culture: Turkish vs. British)  $\times$  2 (sex: male vs. female) MANCOVA was conducted in which age and length of the relationship were covariates, and anxiety, avoidance, autonomy, relatedness, autonomy-relatedness, and relationship satisfaction were the dependent variables. Age and length of the relationship were used as covariates in the analyses as Turkish and British participants were found to differ on those variables. The multivariate main effect of culture was highly significant, Wilks' lambda =  $.64$ ,  $F(6, 295) = 27.640$ ,  $p < .001$ , (partial)  $\eta^2 = .360$ . Univariate tests revealed that participants from Turkey and the United Kingdom significantly differed on all variables except anxiety; means, standard deviations, and effect sizes for each variable split by cultural group can be found in Table 5. More specifically, a significant effect of culture on relationship satisfaction was obtained,  $F(1, 300) = 64.351$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .177$ ; it can be seen in Table 5 that British participants reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction than Turkish participants (supporting Hypothesis 3a). Moreover, the effect of culture on avoidance was significant ( $F(1, 300) = 7.939$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .026$ ); consistent with the expectations, Turkish participants scored higher on avoidance (discomfort with closeness and dependency). Yet,

**Table 5**  
Means and standard deviations per subscale and country and effect sizes.

Scale	Turkish		British		Effect size
	M	SD	M	SD	
Relationship satisfaction	4.62	.89	5.38	.62	.177***
Attachment					
Anxiety	3.65	.91	3.48	.93	.006
Avoidance	2.91	.83	2.49	.91	.026**
Autonomy-relatedness					
Autonomy	3.73	.95	4.39	.90	.101***
Relatedness	5.13	.89	4.41	.74	.095***
Autonomy-relatedness	5.49	1.04	5.77	.71	.043***

Note: \*  $p < .05$ .  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ .  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

there was a non-significant effect of culture on anxiety,  $F(1, 300) = 1.851, p > .05, \eta^2 = .006$ ; the Turkish mean was higher than the British mean (as expected), but the difference was not significant. Therefore, **Hypothesis 4a** was confirmed only for avoidance. There was a significant effect of culture on autonomy,  $F(1, 300) = 33.714, p < .001, \eta^2 = .101$ ; British participants had higher scores on autonomy than Turkish participants, which confirms **Hypothesis 3b**. Furthermore, there was an expected significant effect of culture on relatedness,  $F(1, 300) = 31.437, p < .001, \eta^2 = .095$ ; Turkish participants scored higher on relatedness compared to British participants (supporting **Hypothesis 4b**).

**Hypothesis 3c** predicted that gender role differences will be smaller for British adults than Turkish adults. We tested this in a two step procedure. Firstly, differences between the masculinity and femininity scores were computed for each participant. Secondly, a one-way ANCOVA was conducted in which culture was the independent variable, age and length of the relationship were covariates, and the difference between the masculinity and femininity score was the dependent variable. Results showed that the effect of culture was nonsignificant,  $F(1, 302) = 1.227, p > .05, \eta^2 = .004$ ; the difference between masculinity and femininity for Turkish adults ( $M = .51, SD = 1.34$ ) was not significantly larger than the difference between masculinity and femininity for British adults ( $M = .47, SD = 1.23$ ). Thus, **Hypothesis 3c** is rejected.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study examined three different theoretical frameworks – adult attachment dimensions, autonomous-related self-construals, and gender roles – in order to identify key determinants of relationship satisfaction among British and Turkish adults. Anxiety, avoidance, relatedness and femininity had significant direct effects on relationship satisfaction. Additionally, avoidance, relatedness, autonomy-relatedness, and masculinity mediated the relationship between culture and relationship satisfaction. The strongest mediator was adult attachment, more specifically avoidant attachment. Finally, analyses showed significant differences between Turkey and Britain in avoidance, autonomy, relatedness, and relationship satisfaction. The current results are particularly noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, they support the direct effect of adult attachment dimensions, autonomous, related self-construal (notably relatedness) and gender roles (notably femininity) as well as the mediating role of adult attachment dimensions (notably avoidance), autonomous, related self-construal (notably relatedness and autonomy-relatedness), and gender roles (notably masculinity) in explaining differences in relationship satisfaction among Turkish and British adults. Secondly, salient cross-cultural differences in the adult attachment dimensions, self-construal, and relationship satisfaction were obtained. In order to examine the shared and culture-specific effects of the variables, we focus below on each construct separately.

##### 4.1. Relationship satisfaction

In the current study, the direct effects of adult attachment dimensions on relationship satisfaction, and the indirect effect of avoidance, were the strongest across two groups. The size of these effects may be due to the differential proximity of the instruments to assess close relationships. Items measuring adult attachment dimensions were more proximal and more direct in the sense that statements particularly targeted intimate relationships (e.g., comfortable being close to romantic partners), whereas items measuring autonomy/relatedness focused on relations in general (e.g., preferring to keep a certain distance in close relationships) and items measuring gender roles were least specific with regard to romantic relations (e.g., acting as a leader). Items more directly involving romantic relationships may be more powerful mediators. In addition, we were also interested in the explanation of the cross-cultural differences in relationship satisfaction. Turkish participants were less satisfied in their romantic relationships than British participants. This difference could be partially explained by combining the effects of adult attachment dimensions and autonomous-related self-construal. British participants reported more comfort with closeness, and they were higher on autonomy-relatedness, both of which are believed to yield more satisfying relationships.

##### 4.2. Adult attachment dimensions

The current study used a two-dimensional structure of adult attachment to identify the relationship between attachment, relational satisfaction, and culture. Avoidance and anxiety dimensions negatively predicted relationship satisfaction; furthermore, the avoidance dimension of attachment (partially) mediated the differences in relationship satisfaction across two cultures. Consistent with previous findings (Jones & Cunningham, 1996), we found in both cultures that the more participants were avoidant in their relationships, the more they were dissatisfied. Yet, contrary to our expectation, we did not find a significant difference in mean anxiety between the two countries. The observed difference was in the expected direction, but failed to reach significance; so, the cross-cultural difference in anxiety may be much smaller than in avoidance). In addition, the lack of significance might be due to the changing structure of the Turkish culture: It has been suggested that even though Turkish participants scored higher on interdependent self-construal, there is no cultural difference in independent self-construal between Turkish and Canadian participants (Uskul, Hynie, & Lalonde, 2004). The nonsignificance of anxiety may be understood in terms of increasing independence in the Turkish culture, while Turkish participants' higher avoidance of closeness can be better understood by the cultural display rules of emotions, which discourage Turkish partners from becoming too close for fear of negative emotions. Of course, there are likely to be within-country differences in

these nations: in particular, age and rural/urban location may particularly important in the Turkish context (Kagitcibasi, 2007). Young, urbanized, and more educated Turkish individuals have been found to be more individualistic than older, less educated, and less urbanized Turkish individuals (Goregenli, 1997; Imamoglu & Karakitapoglu-Aygun, 2004). In the present study, the Turkish sample was composed of highly educated, young and urbanized adults, which may explain the nonsignificant anxiety scores as well as the high avoidance scores of the Turkish participants.

#### 4.3. *Autonomous-related self-construal*

Results of the present study indicated that relatedness (both as a direct and an indirect effect) matters more than autonomy for relationship satisfaction in both groups. Our results therefore suggest that in both groups the interpersonal distance dimension of Kagitcibasi's model is more vital for relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships compared to the agency dimension. We found that the combination of the two dimensions, autonomy relatedness, did not have a large (statistical) influence on relationship satisfaction. There was an almost significant positive direct effect and a smaller, yet significant indirect negative effect. It is probably fair to conclude that the net influence of autonomy-relatedness is limited and not in line with our expectation of a positive association. Additionally, as suggested above, higher autonomy scores of the British participants and higher relatedness score of the Turkish participants may reflect different family models, which in turn encourage different values across cultures. Turkish society displays many characteristics of collectivism (Goregenli, 1997), which may explain the high relatedness scores of Turkish participants. Nevertheless, the family model of independence favors the independence of the child and separation as a necessity for healthy child development as opposed to the family model of interdependence or the family model of psychological interdependence, which includes control as well as autonomy (Smith, Bond, & Kagitcibasi, 2006). The family model of independence is mostly believed to be a characteristic of Western societies, which may explain the high autonomy scores of British participants.

#### 4.4. *Gender roles*

Consistent with our expectations and previous research (e.g., Vonk & Van Nobelen, 1993), more feminine and less masculine individuals were more satisfied in their relationship across the two cultural groups. It can be argued that equal relationships between the couples lead to sharing the roles and decisions about the house and the children, which leads to greater happiness and relationship quality as well as satisfaction in both cultural groups (Gottman, 1999; Gray-Little, Baucom, & Hamby, 1996; Steil, 1997; Whisman & Jacobson, 1990).

The nonsignificance of differences between femininity and masculinity across the two cultures might be due to the relatively high levels of education of the samples in both countries and to the context of cultural change in Turkey. Urbanization, increasing work and educational opportunities as well as new values have significantly affected the structure of gender roles in Turkey (Sunar, 2002). Our sample was relatively highly educated and urbanized, which may help explain the nonsignificance of gender roles in explaining cross-cultural differences in relationship satisfaction.

#### 4.5. *Implications of the study*

This is the first study to combine the impact of adult attachment dimensions, gender roles and self-construal on close relationships across two very different countries – Britain and Turkey. As a consequence, our analysis has significant implications for self-other relations and the study of cross-cultural variations along these important variables. Cross-cultural differences in relationship satisfaction are mediated by related constructs, such as avoidance, relatedness, and masculinity. The mediation effects were almost invariably in the direction one would expect. For example, avoidance has a negative effect on relationship satisfaction and British respondents scored lower on avoidance and higher on relationship satisfaction. It seems therefore reasonable that part of the direct link between culture and relationship satisfaction can be accounted for by avoidance. This pattern according to which mediation “reduces” (“explains”) part of the direct link between culture and satisfaction was found for most variables; after mediating variables were taken into account, the direct link between culture and satisfaction tended to be closer to zero. The findings of the study also have practical implications. As demonstrated by the results of the present study, it is recommended that couple therapists need to be more sensitive to the values, beliefs, and norms that are held by couples in close relationships across different cultures. In other words, there is a need for enhancing the cultural awareness of couple therapists (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000). It is crucial to focus on the determinants and mediators of relationship satisfaction: differences in relationship satisfaction of couples from different cultures may be understood by the differences in their level of avoidance, autonomy, and/or relatedness and masculinity. Moreover, counselors who are working in multicultural societies such as the United Kingdom need to be aware of the cross-cultural differences in level of endorsement these determinants (Ibrahim, 1985; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). In summary, the current study has contributed to the less examined field of relationship satisfaction in cross-cultural psychology. The findings might be used as a basis for future research in romantic relationships. Furthermore, it is believed that the findings of the study may serve as additional information for couple counselors while developing culture-specific therapeutic strategies and considerations.

#### 4.6. Limitations of the study

The current study aimed to explain and test cross-cultural differences in relationship satisfaction. Even though the current study produced a number of interesting findings, it is important to consider its limitations. One of the methodological limitations in this study was the use of self-report questionnaires in order to identify adult attachment dimensions, gender roles, self-construal and relationship satisfaction. Even though self-report questionnaires are often used in this type of psychological research, it would be interesting to combine different methods in order to triangulate the results (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). In addition to using quantitative methods (scales), qualitative methods including interviews and focus groups may provide broader understanding of the differences across cultures. Furthermore, in both groups the majority of the participants were highly educated. The high education level of the participants might have influenced their responses and led to difficulties in making generalizations. The data were collected from two cities; cultural differences may be better understood by also comparing rural and urban populations within a culture as well as across cultures. Previous research showed that there is within-culture heterogeneity in Turkey: rural, older and less educated sectors of the country highly differ from urban, younger and more educated parts of the country (Imamoğlu & Yasak, 1997).

#### 4.7. Suggestions for future research

Future research can extend the findings of the current study by focusing on differences within countries, such as regional differences (Van de Vijver & Leung, 2000). Future work could also consider commitment alongside relationship satisfaction; such work should consider other possible determinants of commitment, such as quality of alternatives and investment size (Rusbult et al., 1998), as well as the cultural constraints that may prevent relationship breakdown in some cultures (Goodwin, 2008). Finally, in the current study, even though the participants were involved in a romantic relationship, responses were only obtained from one partner. Future work could look at both partners' perceptions, and the relationship between these perceptual differences and the cultural-level data collected in this study.

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