

Summary

The Mediator Role of Relationship Satisfaction on The Relation between Time Perspective and Responses to Romantic Relationship Dissatisfaction

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Time perspective theory (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) suggests that past experiences and probable future evaluations are located at the center of the present lives of individuals. According to this theory, individual and social experiences participate in unconscious processes by being categorized in temporal classifications (*past, present and future*) meaningfully and consistently, and these classifications may have an effect on present emotions, thoughts and behaviors of individuals. On the other hand, even though it is most ideal when all temporal aspects affect the individuals in a well-balanced manner, authors pointed out that generally one of these temporal aspects is more dominant than the others and approached time perspective in this context. According to this, individuals are prone to only one of the *past/positive, past/negative, present/hedonistic, present/fatalistic and future time perspectives* (Zimbardo, 2002).

It is seen that individuals with a tendency towards *past/negative time perspective* recall negative past events better. This may result mainly from unpleasant experiences, traumatic events, and negative reconstruction of some events or from existence of all these conditions together. Those with high tendency towards *past/positive time perspective* are more liable to be affected from positive events in their past (e.g., attaching importance to nostalgic values, yearning for past) (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Individuals with *present/hedonistic time perspective* live their life based on “pleasure”. For these individuals who avoid distress and painful events and who focus on pleasing events, “living the moment” is prioritized over investment for the future (Zimbardo, Keough, & Boyd, 1997). Individuals with *present/fatalistic time perspective* believe that they do not have much control over their future and their lives (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). The fact that they have a higher tendency to believe in luck and destiny causes them to relate the results of their own actions rather with external factors.

Shaping present behaviors by planning future in accordance with hopes, beliefs, expectations and desires is the most basic characteristic of individuals with *future time perspective*. These individuals see the present moment as a step towards their future goals.

In the related literature, studies were found which point out that differences in time perspective have an effect on interpersonal relationships (e.g., Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Holman & Zimbardo, 2009). There are also studies (Johnston, 2004; 2008; Robert, 2004) which emphasize the correlation between the personality traits and the responses to relationship problems. Therefore, time perspective, which is thought to be highly related to the personality traits, is expected to predict the responses to relationship problems. On the other hand, relationship satisfaction is known to have an important role on the responses to relationship problems (Ludwig, 1999; Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). Thus, in this study it is aimed to analyze the intermediary effect of relationship satisfaction on the correlation between time perspective and responses to relationship problems.

This study uses the model of responses to relationship dissatisfaction by Rusbult et al. (1982) as a basis. In said model, the responses to relationship problems are separated in four categories as exit, voice, loyalty and neglect (Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). *Exit* is defined as ending the relationship or acting in a manner to harm the relationship in the face of problems experienced; *voice* is defined as making an effort to solve the problems causing relationship dissatisfaction; *loyalty* is defined as optimistically waiting for the problems to disappear without attempting to apply a solution; and *neglect* is defined as acting in a manner to worsen the situation in addition to not doing anything towards solution of the problems in the relationship.

One of the factors that has a significant effect on the responses to relationship problems is *relationship*

satisfaction (Ludwig, 1999, Rusbult et al., 1982). Relationship satisfaction, which is one of the key elements of romantic relationships which are expected to last long and give happiness (Le & Agnew, 2003; Rusbult, 1983), is defined as fulfillment of important requirements of individuals by the relationship and happiness of the person from gains of the relationship (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Studies in the literature show that individuals with high relationship satisfaction tend to respond to relationship problems in a constructive manner. In contrast with this, low relationship satisfaction may lead to destructive responses to problems (Ludwig, 1999; Rusbult, 1991).

Although there is an increase in the amount of studies regarding time perspective, it is seen that the number of time perspective studies conducted in Turkey is very limited. Moreover, most of the studies regarding time perspective focus on analyzing the correlation between risky behaviors and personality traits (e.g., Rabinovich, Morton, & Postmes, 2010; Zimbardo et al., 1997). On the other hand, there are study findings which suggest that the responses to relationship problems are affected from personality traits of the individuals (Çirakoğlu & Tezer, 2009; Hill, 1998). With reference to the above mentioned matter, the object of this study is to analyze the intermediary role of relationship satisfaction on the correlation between time perspective and responses to relationship problems. Moreover, the correlation between time perspective and the responses to relationship satisfaction and dissatisfaction was analyzed.

Method

Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 509 people who had a romantic relationship (264 females, 245 males). The mean age of participants was 30.82 ($SD = 8.07$). Age, gender and educational level of participants are presented in Table 1.

Measurements

Demographic Form. Participants were asked questions about their demographic characteristics (sex, age, education level, income level and the city they live in) and, duration of their relationship.

Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI). ZTPI was developed by Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) to measure to individual's past, present and future time perspective. It was adapted into Turkish by Erginbilgiç (in preparation). The Cronbach's alphas coefficient for the subscales ranged between .60 and .81.

Relationship Stability Scale. The original form of this scale was developed by Rusbult, Martz and Agnew (1998) to measure relationship commitment. It

was adapted into Turkish by Büyükşahin, Hasta, and Hovardaoğlu (2005). Cronbach's alphas coefficient for the subscales ranged between .84 and .90.

My Responses to Relationship Problems Scale (MRRPS). The original form of this scale was originally developed by Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991) and revised by Kilpatrick, Bissonnette, and Rusbult (2002) to measure individuals' response to dissatisfactions in romantic relationships. It was adapted into Turkish by Çirakoğlu (2006). Cronbach's alphas coefficient for the subscales ranged between .57 and .73.

Procedure

Scales were given to individuals who had a romantic relationship. Participants were informed about the study. Participation was voluntary and answers were kept anonymously. The completion of the questionnaire took 15-20 minutes.

Results

MANOVA was conducted in order to examine the effects of gender on time perspective, relationship satisfaction and responses to romantic relationship dissatisfaction. MANOVA results showed that there was a significant main effect of gender on certain dependent variables (Wilks' $\lambda = .92$, $F_{1,507} = 4.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .82$). According to MANOVA results, there was a significant difference between men and women in terms of present/fatalistic time perspective ($F_{1,507} = 9.22$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Women ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .71$) showed more tendency to be present/fatalistic time perspective than men ($M = 2.59$, $SD = .78$). The analysis also revealed a significant main effect of gender on neglect ($F_{1,507} = 18.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$), exit ($F_{1,507} = 24.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$), and voice ($F_{1,507} = 4.32$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .01$). Women ($M = 23.18$, $SD = 5.63$) showed more tendency to use neglect response than men ($M = 20.74$, $SD = 7.04$). Similarly, compared with men ($M = 15.40$, $SD = 8.29$), it was observed that women ($M = 18.81$, $SD = 7.39$) had more tendency to prefer exit response when they have problems in their relationships. On the contrary, the results revealed that voice score of men ($M = 26.67$, $SD = 6.81$) higher than women ($M = 25.45$, $SD = 6.50$).

In this study, a path analysis was conducted to examine both the direct effect of time perspective on responses to relationship dissatisfaction and the indirect effect of time perspective on responses to relationship dissatisfaction mediated by relationship satisfaction. The proposed model was tested and insignificant paths was removed. However, duration of relationship was added this model as an independent variable, so it was controlled the effect of it. The results showed that the

hypothesized model fit the data not very well [$\chi^2(18, N = 509) = 57.37, p = .00, GFI = .98, AGFI = .94, NNFI = .80, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .07$] and χ^2/df ratio was not lower than the suggested ratio of 1/3. When the modification index was examined, it was seen that the error variance of the variables (neglect-exit) could be associated. After it was associated the errors between these two variables, two models were compared with chi-square difference test (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). As can be seen from Table 3, the final model fit the data very well [$\chi^2(17, N = 509) = 35.83, p = .01, GFI = .98, AGFI = .96, NNFI = .91, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .05$].

According to results, there were significantly direct links between time perspective categories and some responses to romantic relationship dissatisfaction. Firstly, past/negative time perspective predicted loyalty ($\beta = -.22, p = .05$), voice ($\beta = -.10, p = .05$) and neglect ($\beta = .11, p = .05$). And also, it was observed that present/hedonistic time perspective predicted neglect response of romantic relationship dissatisfaction ($\beta = -.12, p = .05$) directly. On the other hand, relationship satisfaction predicted voice ($\beta = .25, p = .05$), loyalty ($\beta = .20, p = .05$) and exit ($\beta = -.32, p = .05$) responses of romantic relationship dissatisfaction directly.

On the other hand, as can be seen in Figure 1, results revealed that there is a mediator role of relationship satisfaction in the relation between past/negative, present/hedonistic and future time perspective, and exit, voice and loyalty responses. Specially, it was observed that past/negative time perspective predicted voice (indirect effect = $-.04, t = -2.92, p < .05$), exit (indirect effect = $.05, t = 3.05, p < .05$) and loyalty (indirect effect = $-.03, t = -2.70, p < .05$) indirectly. And also, present/hedonistic time perspective predicted voice (indirect effect = $.04, t = 3.42, p < .05$), exit (indirect effect = $-.06, t = -3.63, p < .05$) and loyalty (indirect effect = $.04, t = 3.08, p < .05$) indirectly. Similarly, results revealed that future time perspective predicted voice (indirect effect = $.03, t = 3.35, p < .05$), exit (indirect effect = $-.04, t = -3.54, p < .05$) and loyalty (indirect effect = $-.03, t = 3.03, p < .05$) indirectly.

Discussion

The first hypothesis of the study which suggests that the score of female subjects on present/fatalistic and past/negative time perspective will be higher than that of male subjects is partially substantiated. Analysis results show that women received higher present/fatalistic scores than men. When the responses to relationship problems are inspected in terms of gender, it is found that the second hypothesis is not substantiated. Contrary to the expectations, it is found that women tend to respond destructively to relationship problems, meanwhile

men tend to respond to the same in a more constructive manner. None the less, the literature comprises both studies correlated with these findings (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986a) and studies not substantiating said findings (Harasymchuk, 2001). It can be said that there is no coherence between the studies in the literature.

Model test results initially suggested that individuals with past/negative time perspective have a higher tendency to neglect, which is one of the destructive responses in the face of relationship problems, and a lower tendency towards constructive responses. When the intermediary effects are analyzed, it was seen that past/negative time perspective predicted loyalty and voice positively and exit negatively through relationship satisfaction. The fact that the individuals who do not tend to give exit response in direct relationships have a tendency to end the relationship when the relationship satisfaction is low shows that satisfaction is an important determinant (intermediary) for them. Some previous studies are also consistent with these findings (Ludwig, 1999; Rusbult et al., 1982; Rusbult, 1991).

The study also showed that, contrary to the expectations, tendency towards neglect in the face of relationship problems decreased as present/hedonistic time perspective tendency increased. Moreover, in terms of intermediary effects, it was seen that present/hedonistic time perspective predicted loyalty and voice aspects positively and exit response negatively through relationship satisfaction. According to Wills, Sandy and Yaeger (2001), individuals with present/hedonistic perspective have a tendency towards using negative conflict solution skills. On the other hand, findings of this study showed that individuals with present/hedonistic perspective tend to give positive responses (e.g., loyalty, voice) more and give exit response less as relationship satisfaction increases. In consideration of these data, it can be said that relationship satisfaction is an important determinant for individuals with present/hedonistic perspective because among individuals with present/hedonistic perspective, tendency towards giving constructive responses in the face of relationship problems increase as relationship satisfaction increases.

It is also seen in the study that future time perspective does not affect responses given to relationship dissatisfaction directly. In terms of intermediary effects, it was seen that future time perspective predicted exit response negatively and voice and loyalty responses positively through relationship satisfaction. Individuals with future time perspective have improved problem solving skills (Bonniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Simons, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Lacante, 2004) and these individuals do not lose control easily in the face of problems (Wills et al., 2001). Additionally, according to some studies (Rusbult et al., 1982; Rusbult et al., 1986a), highly relationship satis-

faction increases tendency for constructive responses to problems. These findings seem to substantiate the fact that the individuals with future time perspective tend to give constructive responses as their relationship satisfaction increases. When all these findings are evaluated, it is seen that past/negative, present/hedonistic and future time perspectives have a predictive effect on responses to relationship problems both directly and through relationship satisfaction.

As a result, the findings of the study show that time perspectives of individuals have an effect on their relationship satisfaction. Considering the fact that it is the most ideal to make use of all aspects in a well-balanced manner (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; 2009), it is thought

that altering the time perspective of the individuals will have a positive effect on their relationships. For example, in this study it was seen that individuals with past/negative time perspective have a higher tendency to prefer destructive responses to relationship problems. Moreover, it was seen that these individuals tend to give destructive responses when they have low relationship satisfaction. In this regard, taking into consideration the past negative aspects of individuals in couple therapies may be useful in solving relationship problems. Due to the fact that the number of studies approaching relationship satisfaction within the context of time perspective is limited, it is believed that the findings of this study will have a significant contribution to the literature.