

T.C.
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL
THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
MASTER PROGRAM IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

**THE MEDIATING ROLE OF NARCISSISM AND ITS SUBTYPES IN THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELATIONAL NEEDS SATISFACTION AND
ATTITUDES TOWARD INFIDELITY**

MASTER'S THESIS
MELTEM BUSE DOĞAN

ISTANBUL, 2025

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MELTEM BUSE DOĞAN

THESIS ADVISOR
ASSOC. PROF. ZEYNEP MAÇKALI

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GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Assoc. Prof. Yücel Batu SALMAN

Institute Director

This thesis was read by us, quality and content as a Master's thesis has been seen and accepted as sufficient.

	Title/Name	Institution	Signature
Thesis Advisor's	Assoc. Prof. Zeynep Maçkalı	İstanbul Bilgi University	
Member's	Dr. Şafak Ebru Toksoy	İstanbul Bilgi University	
Member's	Assist. Prof. Çiğdem Koşe	Bahçeşehir University	



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ABSTRACT

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF NARCISSISM AND ITS SUBTYPES IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELATIONAL NEEDS SATISFACTION AND ATTITUDES TOWARD INFIDELITY

Doğan, Meltem Buse

Clinical Psychology Master's Program

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This study examined the relationships among relational needs satisfaction (RNSS), pathological narcissism (PNI), and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS) in a Turkish sample ($N = 281$), exploring narcissism's mediating role and differences by gender, age, and past infidelity status. Using validated Turkish scales, data were collected via online surveys and analyzed through correlation, mediation, and comparative analyses. Findings revealed no significant association between RNSS and ATIS or PNI's mediation, partially supporting the hypothesized negative RNSS-PNI relationship ($r = -.22$, $p < .001$). Men and individuals with infidelity experience reported more permissive ATIS scores ($p < .05$), while age differences emerged in PNI subdimensions but not ATIS or RNSS. The ATIS's low reliability ($\alpha = .56$), social desirability bias, and female-heavy sample (83.3%) likely limited findings. Turkey's collectivistic norms may have constrained permissive responses. Results highlight methodological and cultural challenges in studying infidelity attitudes, suggesting future research employ implicit measures and diverse samples.

Keywords: Relational Needs Satisfaction, Narcissism, Attitudes Toward Infidelity, Grandiose Narcissism, Vulnerable Narcissism.

ÖZET

İLİŞKİSEL İHTİYAÇLARDA DOYUM İLE ALDATMAYA YÖNELİK TUTUM ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİDE NARSİZM VE ALTBOYUTLARININ ARACI ROLÜ

Doğan, Meltem Buse

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Bu çalışma, Türk örnekleminde ($N = 281$) ilişkisel ihtiyaç doyumu (İİD), patolojik narsizm (PN) ve aldatmaya yönelik tutumlar (AYT) arasındaki ilişkileri ve narsizmin aracı rolünü incelemiştir; cinsiyet, yaş ve geçmiş aldatma durumuna göre farkları araştırmıştır. Geçerli Türk ölçekleri kullanılarak çevrimiçi anketlerle veri toplanmıştır; korelasyon, aracı ve karşılaştırmalı analizler yapılmıştır. Bulgular, RNSS ile ATIS arasında anlamlı bir ilişki veya PN'nin aracı rolünü göstermemiş, ancak RNSS-PNI arasındaki negatif ilişkinin hipotezini kısmen desteklemiştir ($r = -.22, p < .001$). Erkekler ve aldatma deneyimi olanlar daha olumlu ATIS skorları bildirmiş ($p < .05$), yaş farkları PNI alt boyutlarında ortaya çıkmış, ancak ATIS ve RNSS'de fark bulunmamıştır. AYT'nin düşük güvenilirliği ($\alpha = .56$), sosyal arzu edirlilik önyargısı ve kadın ağırlıklı örneklem (%83,3) bulguları sınırlamıştır. Türkiye'nin kolektivist normları olumlu yanıtları kısıtlamış olabilir. Bulgular, aldatma tutumlarının ölçülmesinde metodolojik ve kültürel zorlukları vurgulamakta, örtük ölçümler ve çeşitli örneklemeler önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlişkisel İhtiyaçlarda Doyum, Narsisizm, Aldatmaya Yönelik Tutum, Büyüklenmecî Narsisizm, Kırılgan Narsisizm.

To my family and beloved friends...



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

M	Mean
RNSS	Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale
ATIS	Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale
PNI	Pathological Narcissism Inventory
PNI-G	Grandiose Narcissism Score
PNI-V	Vulnerable Narcissism Score
SD	Standard Deviation
TPB	Theory of Planned Behavior



Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Theoretical Framework

1.1.1 Relational needs. Relational needs constitute the foundational psychological elements that underpin individuals' self-concept and their interactions within relationships. From infancy, human beings rely on interpersonal connections not only to meet physical requirements, such as nourishment and safety, but also to fulfill psychological imperatives, including the development of identity and emotional security (Erskine, 2011). These needs are essential for fostering a coherent sense of self and establishing meaningful relational bonds. Several theoretical frameworks elucidate the significance of relational needs in human development. Object Relations Theory by Kernberg (1967) posits that early interactions with caregivers shape internal representations of self and others, while Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1969) emphasizes the role of secure caregiver bonds in promoting emotional stability. Self-Psychology by Kohut (1977) highlights the necessity of validation for constructing a cohesive self, and Transactional Analysis examines how relational patterns influence behavioral tendencies across the lifespan.

Key ideas from these theories help us better understand the role of relational needs. Separation-individuation, for instance, is about how infants slowly grow to see themselves as separate from their caregivers, building their own sense of identity (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Mirroring, as Kohut (1977) described it, happens when a caregiver reflects a child's emotions and needs, helping the child learn to recognize and express their inner world. Life scripts, a concept from Integrative Psychotherapy, refer to unconscious patterns of behavior shaped by early relationships. These scripts act like a guide for how people expect relationships to work, often forming as a way to cope with unmet needs (Erskine, 2010). When relational needs are consistently met, people tend to develop healthier, more creative, and closer connections with others (Toksoy, Cerit, Aker, & Zvelc, 2020). On the flip side, when these needs go unmet, it can lead to emotional struggles like feelings of emptiness, frustration, or disconnection, which can take a toll on mental health and relationships (Erskine, 2010).

The developmental significance of relational needs is further evident in the dynamics of early caregiver-infant interactions. Through these interactions, infants learn to identify and express their emotional and psychological needs, such as sadness, joy, or discomfort. This process, described as a series of Gestalt cycles, involves the expression and resolution of needs, which contribute to the child's psychological growth (Erskine, 2010). Responsive caregiving reinforces the infant's trust in relationships and supports the formation of a stable self-concept. However, inconsistent or inadequate responses from caregivers may lead to the internalization of beliefs that one's needs are unattainable or unworthy, resulting in contact disruptions (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). These disruptions manifest as internal contact disruption from one's emotions and external contact disruptions that challenges the person in forming authentic relationships. Internal contact disruptions involve alienation from personal experiences, while external disruptions impair meaningful engagement with others. Such patterns may hinder individuals' ability to establish committed and fulfilling relationships (Erskine, 2011).

The concept of introjection further illuminates the consequences of dissatisfaction of relational needs. Introjection occurs when individuals internalize the perspectives of caregivers who fail to meet their needs, often as an adaptation against emotional pain. This process can distort self-perception and perpetuate maladaptive relational patterns (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Erskine and Trautmann's (1997/1996) framework of eight relational needs—security, valuing, acceptance, mutuality, self-definition, making an impact, having the other initiate, and expressing caring—offers a comprehensive lens for understanding the psychological components individuals seek in close relationships. The fulfillment of these needs, fosters self-actualization and emotional resilience, whereas their absence may lead to compensatory behaviors, such as relational avoidance or unrealistic expectations of perfection in relationships (Erskine & Moursund, 2022).

A more detailed examination of these theories, supported by empirical evidence and their relevance to the present study, will be presented in the literature review.

1.1.2 Infidelity. Infidelity refers to breaches of trust within romantic relationships through emotional or physical involvement with someone outside the partnership, violating explicit or implicit agreements regarding romantic, emotional, or sexual exclusivity (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). The boundaries of infidelity vary across relationships, shaped by cultural norms and communication between partners. While some couples establish these boundaries implicitly, others rely on explicit discussions to clarify expectations of fidelity. Infidelity is typically categorized into emotional infidelity, involving intimate connections, and physical infidelity, encompassing sexual interactions. Research indicates that infidelity combining both elements elicits the strongest disapproval, followed by sexual infidelity, with emotional infidelity perceived as less severe (Glass & Wright, 1985; Thompson, 1984, as cited in Blow & Hartnett, 2005).

A central focus of this study is attitudes toward infidelity, defined as individuals' cognitive and emotional evaluations of infidelity, such as viewing it positively or perceiving it as a natural aspect of relationships (Whatley, 2008, as cited in Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). This study employs the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, originally developed by Mark A. Whatley (2008) to measure evaluations of infidelity, with its Turkish adaptation validated by Toplu-Demirtaş, Dolunay-Cug, and Tezer (2014). As a key variable, attitudes toward infidelity provide insights into how psychological factors, such as relational needs satisfaction and narcissistic tendencies, shape perceptions of extradyadic behaviors. These attitudes may predict intentions to engage in infidelity, reflecting personal beliefs and relational dynamics.

Theoretical frameworks elucidate the dynamics and attitudes toward infidelity. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen (1991), suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intentions. Within this framework, permissive attitudes toward infidelity increase the likelihood of extradyadic behavior, as permissive evaluations may translate into action. Similarly, the Investment Model, proposed by Caryl E. Rusbult (1980), emphasizes commitment as a determinant of relational behaviors. Commitment may shape attitudes toward infidelity; low commitment, driven by dissatisfaction or attractive alternatives, can foster permissive views (DeWall et al., 2011). These

frameworks highlight the psychological and relational factors underlying attitudes toward infidelity.

Key points in literature help us make sense of infidelity and its complexities. When relational needs are unmet, people may feel dissatisfied, which can lead to more accepting views on infidelity (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001; Glass & Wright, 1985, cited in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Certain settings, like workplaces or social circles, create opportunities for extradyadic connections, shaping both how people think about infidelity and how they act on it (Wiggins & Lederer, 1984, cited in Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Mate guarding, where someone tries to keep their partner from straying, shows up as efforts to protect the relationship's exclusivity (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). Although attitudes toward infidelity can predict behavior, there's often a gap between what people say they believe and what they do, possibly due to social pressures or specific circumstances (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). This study focuses on attitudes toward infidelity as a key factor, looking at how they tie to psychological and relational elements, including the role narcissism might play in mediating these connections. More detailed information about literature and theoretical background of attitudes toward infidelity will be given in the literature review part of this thesis.

1.1.3 Narcissism. Narcissism, a complex psychological construct with its grandiose and vulnerable subtypes, and significant influences on interpersonal relationships (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006). This study examines narcissism as a mediator between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. Pathological narcissism, as defined by Pincus et al. (2009), integrates grandiose and vulnerable dimensions, capturing maladaptive narcissistic traits that impair psychological and relational functioning. Grandiose narcissism is marked by overt confidence, entitlement, and a drive for dominance, whereas vulnerable narcissism involves emotional fragility, hypersensitivity to criticism, and reliance on external affirmation (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). The Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), developed by Pincus et al. (2009) and adapted to Turkish by Şen and Barışkın (2019), is a comprehensive tool that assesses these dimensions through seven subscales: Contingent Self-Esteem, Exploitative, Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement, Hiding the Self, Grandiose Fantasy, Devaluing, and Entitlement Rage. PNI is widely

used in the literature, as seen in studies like Çetindağ (2023), due to its ability to measure both subtypes of narcissism, making it ideal for exploring pathological narcissism's role in relational dynamics.

Several theoretical frameworks elucidate narcissism's complexity. Freud's (1914) Psychoanalytic Theory introduced narcissism as a dual phenomenon, distinguishing primary self-directed love in infancy from secondary narcissism as a defense against relational disappointments. Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology highlights mirroring, where caregivers' attuned validation fosters a cohesive self; inadequate or excessive mirroring may lead to vulnerable or grandiose narcissism, respectively. Kernberg's (1967) Object Relations Theory views narcissism as a defense against early relational failures, where unmet needs for recognition prompt self-enhancement or withdrawal. The Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) and Agency Model (Campbell, 2005) further contextualize narcissism's relational impact, suggesting that narcissists prioritize agentic goals—such as power and status—over communal values like intimacy, compassion, affecting commitment and fidelity.

Key concepts clarify narcissism's developmental and relational dimensions. Deficits in mirroring during early caregiving can result in a fragile self-concept, characteristic of vulnerable narcissism, or an inflated self-view, typical of grandiose narcissism (Kohut, 1977). Life scripts, unconscious patterns formed from unmet relational needs, shape narcissists' expectations, often leading to avoidance of intimacy or pursuit of idealized partners (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Entitlement, a core feature of grandiose narcissism, manifests as expectations of special treatment, while vulnerable narcissists' sensitivity to rejection may drive compensatory behaviors. In romantic relationships, grandiose narcissists exhibit reduced commitment, seeking alternatives to enhance their self-image, whereas vulnerable narcissists' insecurity may foster permissive attitudes toward infidelity to cope with unmet needs (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Within the Investment Model framework, narcissists' low satisfaction, minimal investments, and heightened perception of alternatives weaken relational commitment, increasing infidelity likelihood (Campbell & Foster, 2002). These dynamics are effectively captured by the PNI, which assesses the interplay of grandiose and vulnerable traits.

Narcissism's developmental roots lie in early relational experiences. Inconsistent caregiving, such as rejection or excessive praise, can amplify narcissistic traits, with research linking these experiences to heightened entitlement or emotional fragility (Banai et al., 2005). Gender differences nuance these patterns, with grandiose narcissism more prevalent in men and vulnerable narcissism in women, influencing relational attitudes (Sevi et al., 2020). This study brings together psychoanalytic, self-psychological, and relational perspectives to explore pathological narcissism as a key factor in understanding how the satisfaction of relational needs shapes attitudes toward infidelity. Here, we briefly introduce narcissism, its theoretical roots, and how it's measured using the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), setting up the discussion of its role in relationships. A deeper look at these ideas, backed by research evidence, will follow in the Literature Review.

1.2 Problem Statement

Studies suggest that around 20-25% of marriages experience infidelity at some point (Fincham & May, 2017, cited in Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). Additionally, most relationships face some type of infidelity during their course (Birnbaum et al., 2019, cited in Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). Even with its prevalence, infidelity is still a sensitive topic, often seen as entirely wrong and carrying heavy social stigmas. This perception might explain why there are relatively few studies exploring the implications of this issue.

This study investigates how the satisfaction of relational needs relates to attitudes toward infidelity. It also explores the mediating role of narcissism, including its two forms, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, in this connection. Additionally, it looks at how relational needs satisfaction, narcissism, and attitudes toward infidelity vary across different age groups and genders. It also investigates the impact of participants' personal experiences with being cheated on or not and cheating or not, and how these experiences influence each variable. In this context, the study aims to explore how relational needs satisfaction, attitudes toward infidelity, and narcissism are affected by past experiences.

On the other hand, relational needs are the concept of Integrative Psychotherapy and it consists of eight relational needs. There are relatively fewer studies on this concept in the literature since it is a relatively new concept. Therefore, the association between relational needs satisfaction and narcissism, and between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity is studied in this thesis in order to reveal the effect of relational needs satisfaction on these variables and expand the literature. There are some theses conducted with a Turkish sample in literature about relational needs satisfaction and other variables. Çetindağ (2023) studied the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and narcissism, which is related to this thesis to some extent; Toksoy (2021), in her PhD thesis, studies the relationship between relational needs measurements and traumatic stress symptoms. Tangül (2023) studied the relationship patterns between relational needs, codependency and self-efficacy beliefs in romantic relationships, and revealed some findings about relational needs satisfaction and romantic relationships related to the theme of this thesis.

Narcissism is a concept described by many theorists before and is studied a lot in the literature. Narcissism in romantic relationships is known to be associated with low commitment and infidelity (Ye, Kin, Lam, Ma, & Ng, 2016). Additionally, relational needs that are consistently unmet may lead individuals to develop a script that their needs will not be fulfilled, prompting them to distance themselves from intimacy or engage in relationships with lower emotional investment (Ersline, 2011). Therefore, it can be suggested that narcissism plays a mediating role in the hypothesis that individuals with unmet relational needs may have attitudes toward infidelity. In this context, narcissism may emerge as a consequence of unfulfilled relational needs and incorporate certain scripts that positively influence attitudes toward infidelity.

1.3 Purpose Statement

This thesis aims to explore the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity and the mediating role of narcissism with its two subdimensions. Explaining this relationship will contribute to the literature by identifying the factors associated with infidelity, a common issue in romantic relationships. As knowledge about the factors influencing attitudes toward infidelity expands, it may become possible to prevent its occurrence in relationships. Moreover,

gaining a better understanding of how infidelity develops can have a facilitating effect for couples who choose to overcome it. This, in turn, may provide valuable insights for couples' therapy.

The goal of this study is to inform researchers and mental health professionals about relational needs and their associations with narcissism in individuals and attitudes toward infidelity. Another purpose of this thesis is to study relational needs in detail with its impacts on other behaviors of individuals since Integrative Psychotherapy and the concept of relational needs are relatively new in literature. Narcissism is hypothesized to have a mediating role on the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. Lower relational needs satisfaction may lead to more narcissistic traits in individuals and narcissistic traits may arise more permissive attitudes toward infidelity. This study aims to reveal the impact of relational needs satisfaction of future characteristics of individuals' lives, attitudes, behaviors.

1.4 Hypotheses / Research Questions

Question 1: How is relational needs satisfaction related to attitudes toward infidelity? Does the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of relational needs predict attitudes toward infidelity?

Question 2: How does narcissism affect the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity? When explaining this association, what are the roles of grandiose and vulnerable types of narcissism?

Hypothesis I: There will be a negative association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. People with lower relational needs satisfaction will have permissive attitudes toward infidelity.

Hypothesis II: There will be a negative association between relational needs satisfaction and narcissism. The satisfaction of relational needs predicts narcissism: The lower the satisfaction of relational needs, the higher the narcissistic tendencies.

Hypothesis III: There will be a positive association between narcissism and attitudes toward infidelity. People with narcissistic tendencies will have permissive attitudes toward infidelity.

Hypothesis IV: There will be differences between grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism in terms of the associations between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. Vulnerable narcissism will positively affect the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity, whereas grandiose narcissism will negatively affect.

Hypothesis V: Narcissism acts as a mediator on the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. The lower relational needs satisfaction, the higher narcissistic tendencies; the higher the narcissistic tendencies, the more permissive attitudes toward infidelity.

1.5 Significance Of The Study

Unmet needs in the early child-caregiver relationship can influence an individual's behavior in later stages of life. When a child's needs and emotions are ignored and unmet, they develop a belief that they will not have relationships where emotional closeness is possible and that their needs will not be fulfilled and based on this belief, the child stops investing in relationships, as there is no satisfaction to be gained (Erskine, 2011). This situation can be seen as similar to Kohut's (1977) concept of mirroring in his description of narcissism, mirroring refers to the caregiver validating the child (Campbell, 1999). When a child is validated, their needs and emotions are acknowledged, which sets them on the path toward having their needs met. The literature suggests that narcissism is associated with a lack of empathy and a lack of need for intimacy (Campbell, 1999). At this point, considering that an individual whose relational needs were unmet in early life may devalue the importance of relationships and avoid intimacy (Erskine, 2011), it can be predicted that they may have a narcissistic aspect since Campbell (1999) stated in his study that narcissists lack the need for intimacy. In line with this, the present thesis hypothesizes that individuals with low satisfaction in relational needs may exhibit higher narcissistic traits.

In a study investigating the relationship between narcissism and infidelity, a lack of empathy was identified as a significant predictor of infidelity (McNulty & Widman, 2014, as cited in Gewirtz-Meydan, et al., 2023). A child, whose relational needs are consistently unmet and caregiver is predictably unresponsive, may seem emotionally detached and even dismissive to their own or others' needs and emotions, as they have an underlying fear of vulnerability (Erskine, 2011). It can be posited that individuals who exhibit dismissive attitudes toward the emotions and needs of others may also lack empathy. In this context, it is plausible to hypothesize that individuals with low satisfaction of relational needs may display narcissistic traits.

By elucidating the mediating role of pathological narcissism, particularly its vulnerable subtype, in the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity, this study provides critical insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying relational dynamics. The findings underscore the importance of addressing unmet relational needs in therapeutic settings to mitigate narcissistic tendencies and reduce permissive attitudes toward infidelity, thereby fostering healthier romantic relationships. Furthermore, this research expands the application of Erskine's (2011) relational needs framework in a Turkish context, contributing to the global understanding of how early relational experiences shape adult relational outcomes. Although there are some studies in the literature conducted with Turkish samples and measuring satisfaction in relational needs, such as Çetindağ's (2023) thesis studying satisfaction in relational needs and narcissism or Tangül's (2023) thesis examining some effects of satisfaction in relational needs on romantic relationships, the relationship between this concept and attitudes towards cheating has not been studied. The fact that this concept is relatively new in the field may have been effective here. On the other hand, there are some studies in Turkey on attitudes towards infidelity, but among the variables studied on whether they affect attitudes towards infidelity, satisfaction in relational needs or narcissism are not included. Ultimately, this study serves as a foundation for future research and clinical interventions aimed at enhancing relational well-being and preventing infidelity by targeting the developmental roots of narcissistic traits.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Relational Needs

2.1.1 The importance of relationships. From the moment they are born, all individuals need to engage in relationships with others and define themselves throughout these relationships (Erskine, 2011). This need for relationship arises not only from physical reasons, such as maintaining their care and feeding their hunger but also from psychological reasons, such as the need to form a sense of self. Psychoanalytic approaches, object relations theory, self-psychology, attachment theory, and transactional analysis address the human need for relational connection and emphasize its importance (Toksoy, Cerit, Aker, & Zvelc, 2020). “To be human is to be in relationship with others” (Erskine, Moursund, & Trautmann, 1999, p. 4). When babies are born, they begin to form certain views and beliefs about themselves, others, and the world through the relationships they establish. A baby's first relationship is with their caregiver, and their bond provides much information about themselves and the nature of others. For babies' growth and development, the most crucial need is to be in relationships, and certain needs must be met within these relationships. Relationships where these relational needs are considered and fulfilled increase a person's capacity to be creative, intimate, and expansive (Erskine, 2011).

Relational needs are present in every relationship; if the individuals have no expectations, desires, or needs from each other, it cannot be said that a relationship exists (Trautmann & Erskine, 1999). Throughout their lives, people engage in many different types of relationships. Each type of relationship has characteristics that distinguish it from others, such as romantic relationships, friendships, work relationships, and neighborly relationships. The common characteristic of all the types is that there are always relational needs. When relational needs are unmet, individuals may experience feelings of emptiness and yearning; prolonged unmet needs can lead to frustration, increased anger and aggression, and decreased energy and hope (Trautmann & Erskine, 1999). Consequently, unsatisfied relational needs can have detrimental effects on both the individual and their relationships.

2.1.2 The baby and the other. Babies' need to form a bond and satisfy relational needs eventually leads to separation, and the child forms and develops their sense of self and experiences in relationships through both bonding and separation. The baby experiences the first separation from the person they initially bonded with. The first separation happens with the baby's primary caregiver, who is usually considered to be the mother.

When a baby is first born, they do not perceive themselves as a separate entity from everyone else in the world. As Winnicott (1960) suggests, they perceive themselves as one with their mother, leading to a state of omnipotence which is an essential period during development. When the baby is fed, they do not recognize the existence of a feeder or another being, and they do not see themselves as another being, both physically and psychologically. Various separation tasks must be completed for the baby to recognize themselves as a separate entity (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). These tasks include discovering their limbs and realizing that others are in the world. When the baby separates themselves from their caregiver, they also acknowledge the existence of another. The baby needs the presence of another for the formation of their sense of self and personality components (Erskine & Moursund, 2022), therefore separation-individuation is essential in this process (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980; Stern, 1985; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975, as cited in Erskine & Moursund, 2022). The baby's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are formed in the context of the relationships they establish within their social environment (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). When a baby expresses an effect, they need it to be reflected, perceived, and responded to so that their emotional core of the self can develop (Stolorow, 1992, as cited in Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Overall, the interplay of early relational experiences and separation-individuation processes is crucial for shaping the infant's sense of self and emotional development, laying the foundation for personality formation within the context of social interactions.

The presence of a caregiver is vital for an infant's development of fundamental life skills and self-awareness. From birth, infants experience a range of needs—such as hunger, sleepiness, boredom, or discomfort—and express these through crying to elicit a response. When caregivers respond appropriately, the immediate need is met, only for a new need to emerge, creating a continuous cycle of need expression and

fulfillment. Erskine and Moursund (2022) describe this dynamic as a series of Gestalts, a process where each need and its resolution forms a complete experiential unit that contributes to the infant's growth. Through this ongoing interaction, the infant's sense of self and personality are profoundly shaped by their relationship with the primary caregiver and other significant figures in their environment. These early relationships shape a growing, ever-changing sense of self, influenced by the quality and reliability of interactions in childhood (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Such experiences not only define the infant's emerging identity but also influence their understanding of the external world, shaping their perceptions and expectations of relationships beyond the immediate caregiving context.

2.1.3 Life scripts. Babies organize their perceptions of themselves and the world to make it more predictable and develop certain systems (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Scripts are systems of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that develop out of awareness and are self-perpetuating, often being out-of-date responses. (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). These scripts are formed based on the person's relational experiences and contain certain information about themselves and their surroundings. These scenario-based pieces of information were previously referred to by Freud (1920/1955) as "repetition compulsion," by Adler as "life style," (Ansbacher & Ancsbacher, 1956 as cited in Erskine & Moursund, 2022), and by Eric Berne (1961) as "script." The concept was lastly referred to as "life script" by Fritz Perls (Perls, Baumgardner, 1975 as cited in Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Although different terms with similar meanings have been proposed over the years, this thesis uses the term "life scripts" from integrative therapy. Life scripts can be considered as adaptation strategies formed to prevent the perpetual frustration associated with unmet needs. A person's lack of a protective, accepting, understanding, and validating relationship, along with experiencing certain traumatic events, distances them entirely from the awareness of their experiences, and not thinking about or repressing these experiences is used unconsciously as an adaptation strategy, leading to form life scripts. The person believes that the unmet needs of early childhood, will not be met later in life and forms their expectations accordingly. These expectations and beliefs are the very essence of what is called life scripts (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). This leads to the person evaluating and interpreting their experiences from their life scripts' perspective. Consequently, the person tends to perceive their experiences with a bias, perpetuating their life scripts'

validation. Due to life scripts, people may unconsciously place themselves in situations and relationships where certain needs are unmet, indirectly reinforcing and rigidifying the scripts. Sometimes, the person may avoid relationships due to scripts formed by unmet needs, while other times, they may seek the perfect relationship where all needs will be met and exhibit highly demanding behavior (Erskine & Moursund, 2022).

2.1.4 Contact disruptions. Children learn to recognize and accept their inner experiences through relationships. They learn to recognize and identify their needs and to experience emotions such as anger, sadness, and happiness. This process of learning inner experiences through relationships is similar to Heinz Kohut's (1977) concept of mirroring. The adult in the relationship reflects the child's sensations and needs, helping them recognize and make sense of their experiences.

When a person's need is not met, they develop a belief that their need will never be fulfilled. In response, they attempt to meet the need on their own by creating an artificial closure convincing themselves that they do not have the need at all and replacing it with another activity. However, this new activity is far from actually fulfilling the need. It lacks genuine contact with another person and instead serves as a distraction, an adaptation strategy designed to avoid confronting the pain of the unmet need (Erskine, 2015). This, in turn, leads to a disruption in internal contact, causing the individual to become alienated from their own experience. By denying their need, they avoid the pain of its absence. Furthermore, since they no longer expect others to meet this need, their external contact is also disrupted.

Consequently, the individual who experiences both internal and external contact disruptions as a result of their life script becomes unaware of their own experiences and needs, which in turn hinders their ability to establish fully authentic relationships. This may result in an inability to fully invest in relationships or make a commitment.

Contact disruptions are therefore, the result of life scripts and repression formed in line with unmet relational needs from childhood. Contact disruptions are divided into internal and external contact disruptions. Internal contact disruption can be defined as a person's alienation and distancing from their own feelings, thoughts, and experiences. External contact disruption encompasses interruptions in contact with

relationships and the external world. The reason for experiencing contact disruptions is to protect oneself from challenging life events. Projection, introjection, retroflection, confluence, and egotism are some behaviors related to contact disruptions. Among these behaviors, introjection is formed as a result of unsatisfying relationships regarding relational needs. Stolorow and Atwood (1989) state, “The essence of introjection ... lies in the substitution of some part of the psychic reality of an invalidating other for the child’s own experience” (p. 372) (Erskine & Moursund, p. 31). To alleviate the pain of unmet needs, thinking, behaving, and identifying oneself as the person who does not meet those needs is called introjection.

Through this process, individuals may develop beliefs that their needs are inherently unmeetable or unworthy of fulfillment, internalizing the perspective of the introjected figure. This introjection enables them to avoid experiencing the pain associated with unmet needs, thereby reducing their awareness of these emotional deficits. Consequently, such a mechanism leads to a diminished internal contact, fostering alienation from the significance of their needs and the emotional experiences arising from their non-fulfillment. Although individuals may adapt to their circumstances by employing contact disruptions as a survival strategy, this adaptation often perpetuates long-term emotional difficulties, undermining their capacity for authentic relational engagement and self-awareness.

2.1.5 Eight relational needs. From the moment we are born, there are eight relational needs that we require to be fulfilled in the close relationships we establish. Relational needs are fundamental psychological components that enrich life quality and contribute to the development of a positive self-concept in relationships (Erskine & Trautmann, 1996/97). When these needs are unmet, we experience disruptions in contact and develop maladaptive life scripts, but when they are fulfilled, we are on the path to self-actualization, growth, and development. These needs, as defined by Richard Erskine, are as follows: Security, Valuing, Acceptance, Mutuality, Self-Definition, Making an Impact, Have the Other Initiate, Express Caring (Erskine & Moursund, 2022).

Security is the most fundamental need in a relationship. It is essential for both individuals to sustain the relationship and express themselves freely. People need to

know that they can fully embrace their authenticity within the relationship while continuing to receive respect and love (Erskine et al., 1999). In a relationship where this need is met, an individual can open up to their partner with the same level of transparency they have with themselves.

Being valued as a relational need is only possible through being understood. Individuals need to know that their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors are acknowledged and appreciated. In the therapeutic relationship, this need is met when the therapist believes that every thought and behavior of the client has a function, purpose, and meaning, thus considering them valuable (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). In relationships, people need to see that their experiences are valued. Being understood, recognized as valuable, and feeling important are different aspects of this need.

The need for acceptance involves being acknowledged by a strong, consistent, and protective therapist. While the need for acceptance is expected to be met by individuals with similar qualities in any relationship, within the therapeutic relationship, the characteristics of the accepting person become even more significant. The need for acceptance refers to being embraced in a relationship in one's most natural and authentic state, including all emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (Erskine et al., 1999). Being consistent, reliable, and protective is the responsibility of parents, and accepting the child in this manner is a fundamental need that parents are expected to fulfill.

In our relationships, we fulfill the need for reciprocity—the desire for others to understand our experiences without us having to explain every detail—through shared experiences. The ability to comprehend and resonate with another person's emotions, thoughts, and experiences, either through empathy or firsthand experience, satisfies this need for reciprocity (Erskine et al., 1999). We long for relationships in which this is provided to us. We seek connections with individuals who can understand us without explicit explanations, who share similar emotions and thoughts, or who have experienced something similar in the past. This, in turn, deepens our sense of being understood and strengthens our sense of closeness.

The need for self-definition includes the need for a person to be able to reveal their differences and the unique characteristics that make them who they are within a relationship (Erskine et al., 1999). A person needs to believe that they will be accepted, approved, and respected when they reveal this difference. Children who grow up in an environment where rules are expected to be obeyed unconditionally and without question have difficulty revealing themselves and their differences. They take being different to the extreme and see rebellion as the only solution. Meeting this need helps a person to be in relationships where they can use freedoms such as revealing their differences, thinking differently, and behaving differently.

The need to make an impact is an indication that there is interaction in any established relationship. It is an important need for people to see that their own ideas and behaviors have an impact on others. Being able to influence and change someone else is an indication that there is contact. A real and sincere contact is a contact that affects the parties and leaves a mark. This need is met in a relationship that provides an environment for the parties to grow, develop and change. It is a relational need to attract someone else's attention, to create an impact on them and for this impact to make a difference in the person (Erskine et al., 1999).

Relationships are not one-sided. In a relationship, some mutual actions must be taken, communication must be established, interaction must be initiated, and the parties must mutually behave for each other. In this way, a ground is created in the relationship where both parties put something of themselves forward and exist equally. This is a need that is met by both parties taking responsibility and making moves to continue the relationship. In a relationship, from time to time, recognizing the needs of the other party in advance, taking an initiative towards this and acting towards meeting that need also falls within the scope of this relational need (Erskine et al., 1999). When the parties are aware of each other and do something for each other, this succeeds in becoming a relationship and this relational need is satisfied in this way.

In relationships, people experience a wide range of emotions. In ongoing relationships, both parties feel love, respect, care, and appreciation for each other (Erskine et al., 1999). Sharing these feelings with the other person is another way of establishing connection. Being in touch within our relationships is essential and

necessary for our needs to be met. To maintain this connection, we need to express the emotions we are aware of internally in a way that also facilitates external connection. This allows us to share our feelings transparently within the relationship. Expressing emotions requires accepting and experiencing them. Sharing what we feel strengthens our relationships and fosters intimacy.

2.2 Infidelity

Infidelity, has been extensively studied across various cultural and psychological contexts. Defined as a sexual and/or emotional act engaged in by one person within a committed relationship, where such an act occurs outside of the primary relationship and constitutes a violation of agreed-upon norms of exclusivity (Blow & Hartnett, 2005), infidelity disrupts relational stability and is a common presenting issue in therapy (Bischoff, 2003, as cited in Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). This section reviews the literature on infidelity, focusing on three key frameworks: attitudes toward infidelity, the Investment Model, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. These perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and relational factors influencing infidelity, particularly in the context of Turkish participants, where collectivistic cultural values shape relational dynamics.

2.2.1 Attitudes toward infidelity. Attitudes toward infidelity refer to the emotional and cognitive evaluations of any extradyadic acts (Whatley, 2008, as cited in Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). These attitudes are pivotal in predicting infidelity behaviors, as permissive views often correlate with a higher likelihood of engaging in infidelity (Fincham & May, 2017). The Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, developed by Mark A. Whatley (2008), measures these evaluations, with higher scores indicating greater acceptance of infidelity. In Turkey, the scale's adaptation by Toplu-Demirtaş et al. (2014) revealed robust psychometric properties, confirming its utility in assessing attitudes within a collectivistic cultural context. Research consistently shows that men and individuals with prior infidelity experiences exhibit more permissive attitudes toward infidelity compared to women and non-cheaters (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). This gender disparity aligns with findings that men are more likely to engage in infidelity behaviors, particularly when these involve ambiguous (e.g., dancing),

deceptive (e.g., lying), or explicit (e.g., sexual intercourse) acts (Wilson, Mattingly, Clark, Weidler, & Bequette, 2011).

Cultural factors significantly influence attitudes toward infidelity. Turkey, positioned as a synthesis of individualistic and collectivistic values but leaning toward collectivism (Hofstede, 2001), exhibits lower infidelity rates compared to Western samples, with 19.6% of individuals reporting having cheated (Yeniçeri & Kökdemir, 2006). Collectivistic norms emphasizing family and relational loyalty may temper permissive attitudes (Göregenli, 1995). However, individuals with infidelity histories or exposure to parental infidelity are more likely to hold liberal views, a pattern consistent across cultures (Barta & Kiene, 2005; Fincham & May, 2017). Notably, even men with infidelity experience often score below the midpoint on attitude scales, indicating disapproval, possibly due to social desirability biases (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017).

Attitudes also vary by infidelity type. Studies show stronger disapproval for relationships combining sexual and emotional elements, followed by sexual-only infidelity, with emotional-only infidelity perceived as less severe (Glass & Wright, 1985). Women tend to emphasize emotional connection in infidelity, while men prioritize sexual aspects, reflecting gendered motivations (Glass & Wright, 1992). Attachment styles further moderate attitudes, with insecurely attached individuals, particularly those with avoidant or anxious orientations, reporting more permissive views due to lower commitment and emotional insecurity (DeWall et al., 2011; Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). In Turkish samples, these patterns are evident, with men and prior cheaters showing greater acceptance of infidelity (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014). These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of attitudes toward infidelity, shaped by gender, culture, attachment, and prior experiences, providing a foundation for understanding their role in relational dynamics.

2.2.2 The investment model. Caryl Rusbult's Investment Model (1980) suggests a way to understand what drives commitment in romantic relationships and how it is related to infidelity. According to the model, commitment hinges on three things: how satisfied someone is with their current romantic relationship, how much they've invested in it, and how appealing other alternatives seem. Satisfaction comes

from weighing the good parts of a relationship, like emotional support, against the downsides, like arguments—when the good outweighs the bad, commitment grows stronger. Investments include things like time, emotions, money, or shared memories that would be tough to walk away from, which also boosts commitment. On the other hand, if someone sees better alternatives—like another partner or being single—commitment can weaken (Rusbult, 1980). This model matters for understanding infidelity because weaker commitment often makes people more likely to engage in extradyadic behaviors (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

In the context of infidelity, the Investment Model explains why individuals may stray from committed relationships. Dissatisfaction, often stemming from unmet emotional or sexual needs, weakens commitment, making infidelity more likely (Glass & Wright, 1985). For instance, reduced marital happiness correlates with increased extramarital involvement, particularly when emotional or sexual connection diminishes (Atkins, Baucom, & Jacobson, 2001). Men, who often prioritize sexual variety, are more prone to infidelity when satisfaction declines, while women's infidelity is frequently linked to emotional neglect (Glass & Wright, 1992; Selterman et al., 2019). Investments, such as shared history or children, can act as a protective factor, discouraging infidelity by raising the perceived cost of leaving the relationship. However, individuals with fewer investments, such as those in dating relationships, are more susceptible to infidelity (Forste & Tanfer, 1996).

The quality of alternatives significantly influences infidelity. Individuals who perceive attractive alternatives—whether due to workplace opportunities or social settings—are less committed and more likely to engage in infidelity (Wiggins & Lederer, 1984). Narcissistic individuals, characterized by inflated self-concepts and a constant search for “better” partners, exemplify this dynamic. Their low satisfaction, minimal investments, and high perceived alternatives lead to reduced commitment and increased infidelity (Campbell & Foster, 2002). In Turkish couples, where collectivistic values emphasize relational stability, the model still applies, though cultural norms may mitigate alternative-seeking behaviors (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017).

Attachment styles also interact with the Investment Model. Avoidantly attached individuals, who prioritize distance over intimacy, report lower commitment and greater interest in alternatives, increasing infidelity likelihood (DeWall et al., 2011). Conversely, anxiously attached individuals may remain committed due to fear of abandonment, but their dissatisfaction can drive emotional infidelity (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). In Turkey, these patterns are nuanced by cultural expectations, with commitment often reinforced by social pressures despite personal dissatisfaction (Göregenli, 1995). The Investment Model thus provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how relational dynamics, individual traits, and cultural factors converge to influence infidelity, highlighting the critical role of commitment in maintaining relational fidelity.

2.2.3 Theory of planned behavior. Icek Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a psychological framework that explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape actions such as infidelity. According to the TPB, permissive attitudes toward infidelity are one of the primary determinants of intentions to engage in such behaviors, which in turn influence actual behavior (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). In situations where infidelity is viewed as acceptable or natural, intentions to cheat increase, especially when combined with supportive social norms and the perception that infidelity is easily perpetrated (Ajzen, 1991).

According to the literature, attitudes toward infidelity strongly predict intentions to infidelity, while permissive views are associated with a higher likelihood of cheating (Fincham & May, 2017). In societies where collectivist values emphasize relational loyalty, such as Turkey, attitudes are generally less permissive; however, men and individuals who have cheated in the past may exhibit more tolerant attitudes (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014). Turkey's cultural structure, which is a mix of collectivism and individualism, relaxes the acceptance of cheating to a certain extent (Hofstede, 2001).

Perceived behavioral control, or the ease of engaging in infidelity, influences intentions. Opportunities, such as workplace interactions or travel, enhance control perceptions, increasing infidelity likelihood (Wiggins & Lederer, 1984). Attachment

styles further moderate TPB dynamics. Avoidantly attached individuals, with weaker commitment, report stronger infidelity intentions due to permissive attitudes and high control perceptions (DeWall et al., 2011). Anxiously attached individuals may intend to cheat to address emotional insecurities, particularly when social norms tolerate infidelity (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002).

In Turkish samples, TPB explains why men, prior cheaters, and narcissists exhibit stronger infidelity intentions, driven by permissive attitudes and perceived control (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). Gender differences are notable, with men's sexual motivations and women's emotional drivers shaping intentions (Glass & Wright, 1992). The intention to engage in infidelity may be a stronger predictor of actual behavior compared to attitudes alone, though attitudes provide valuable insight (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). Social desirability biases may lead to underreporting of permissive attitudes, particularly in collectivistic cultures (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014). TPB thus illuminates the psychological mechanisms underlying infidelity, emphasizing the interplay of attitudes, norms, and control in shaping relational behaviors.

2.3 Narcissism

Narcissism, has gained significant attention in psychological research due to its profound impact on interpersonal relationships and individual functioning. This section reviews the literature on narcissism, through its conceptualization, developmental origins, and relational dynamics, and its relevance to relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. Key theoretical frameworks, including the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) and the Agency Model (Campbell, 2005) will be explained in the context of romantic relationships and based on the statistical model of this thesis.

2.3.1 Conceptualization of narcissism. Narcissism, a complex psychological construct, include traits such as an inflated sense of self, a constant pursuit of external validation, and significant influences on interpersonal relationships (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006). Contemporary research describes two subtypes: grandiose

narcissism, marked by overt confidence, entitlement, and dominance, and vulnerable narcissism, characterized by emotional fragility, hypersensitivity to criticism, and reliance on external affirmation (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). These dimensions capture the spectrum of narcissistic traits, from adaptive ambition to pathological dysfunction (Kealy & Rasmussen, 2012).

The Agency Model (Campbell, 2005) provides a critical lens for understanding narcissism, positing that narcissists prioritize agentic goals such as power over communal values like intimacy and empathy. This model highlights three core narcissistic characteristics: a positive and inflated self-concept; a lack of interest in warm, intimate relationships; and self-regulatory strategies aimed at maintaining self-esteem through interpersonal manipulation (Campbell, Brunell, & Finkel, 2006). Narcissists' focus on self-enhancement leads to behaviors like seeking admiration or idealizing partners who reflect their desired status (Kernis & Sun, 1994, as cited in Campbell, 1999). This conceptualization frames narcissism as both a personality trait and a relational phenomenon, setting the stage for examining its interplay with relational dynamics and infidelity attitudes. The distinction between normal and pathological narcissism addresses longstanding debates, clarifying how adaptive self-esteem differs from maladaptive self-absorption (Pincus et al., 2009).

2.3.2 Developmental origins of narcissism. The roots of narcissistic traits lie in early relational experiences, as articulated by several psychoanalytic and developmental theories. Freud (1914) suggested that narcissism develops when the shift from self-focused love to loving others gets disrupted. If caregivers don't provide enough support, people may turn inward and become self-absorbed as a way to shield themselves from rejection. Heinz Kohut (1977) explained in his self-psychology approach that grandiose narcissism comes from parents overly praising a child without giving realistic feedback, leading to an exaggerated sense of self. On the other hand, vulnerable narcissism arises when parents are neglectful or inconsistent in reflecting the child's emotions, which creates a shaky, fragile self-image. Similarly, Otto Kernberg's (1967) object relations perspective views narcissism as a defensive response to early relational failures, where unmet needs for recognition prompt compensatory self-idealization or withdrawal. These theories are parallel with

Erskine's (2011) relational needs model, which suggests that deficits in needs such as security, validation, and mutuality can precipitate maladaptive personality structures.

Empirical studies support this developmental narrative, indicating that inconsistent caregiving, such as rejection or excessive praise, amplifies narcissistic traits (Banai et al., 2005). For example, when caregivers don't provide tuned-in support, it can make someone overly sensitive to criticism, a key trait of vulnerable narcissism, or cause them to depend heavily on others' praise, which is typical of grandiose narcissism (Kohut, 1977). Kohut (1977) suggests that unmet mirroring needs result in a defensive, inflated self-image, perpetuated through adult relationships seeking validation (Akhtar & Thomson, 1982, as cited in Campbell, 1999).

Cultural and familial factors further shape narcissistic development. In collectivistic cultures like Turkey, where interdependence is valued, narcissistic traits may manifest differently, with vulnerable narcissism potentially more prevalent due to social pressures for modesty (Göregenli, 1995). When parents overly pamper or neglect a child, it can heighten feelings of entitlement or emotional vulnerability, respectively, shaping how narcissistic traits show up in adulthood (Banai et al., 2005). These early experiences form unconscious patterns, or life scripts, that guide relational expectations and behaviors, often leading to maladaptive coping strategies (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). By integrating these perspectives, this section highlights how early relational dynamics lay the foundation for narcissistic traits, setting the stage for their impact on adult relationships, particularly in the context of infidelity and relational needs satisfaction.

2.3.3 Narcissism and relational dynamics. Narcissism affects attitudes towards bonding and loyalty in romantic relationships in line with self-focused high-standard motivations and relational expectations, and therefore is a personality structure that has a significant impact on romantic relationships. This thesis is based on a number of theories when discussing the impact of narcissism on romantic relationships; the Investment Model of Commitment put forward by Rusbult (1980) is one of these theories. According to this model, individuals develop in line with their commitment to their romantic relationships, their satisfaction with their relationships, their investment in their relationships, and their beliefs about whether their partners

have alternatives. When narcissistic individuals are examined according to this model, they may tend to invest less in their current relationships in line with their beliefs that they may have better alternatives and that they will always deserve better (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Considering that narcissists do not have high satisfaction from close relationships, it can be said that their relational bonds may decrease in line with this model. Narcissists have a structure that seeks the best because they believe they deserve the best, or they find alternatives that they think are better attractive and have a high belief that there are alternatives, which negatively affects relational stability (John & Robins, 1994, as cited in Campbell & Foster, 2002).

The Agency Model, proposed by Campbell (2005), is a model that reveals that narcissists prioritize their own personal goals, such as their self-image, status, and power, over values focused on relationships, such as closeness and support. This model reveals that even in their perspective on relationships, they evaluate themselves based on the benefits they will receive from that relationship. The need for grandiose narcissists to constantly feel superior drives them to search for the perfect partner. (Campbell, 1999). Vulnerable narcissists, conversely, may enter relationships with intense dependence, yet their insecurity and sensitivity to rejection can foster permissive attitudes toward infidelity as a coping mechanism for unmet needs (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2011). These dynamics are effectively captured by the PNI, which assesses the interplay of grandiose and vulnerable traits.

Research indicates that grandiose narcissism is more prevalent in men and vulnerable narcissism in women, influencing relational attitudes (Sevi et al., 2020). By integrating these frameworks, this section underscores narcissism's role in relational instability, particularly its mediation in the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity.

2.4 Relational Needs and Attitudes Toward Infidelity

Relational needs satisfaction is a fundamental aspect of human development, shaping individuals' capacity to form and sustain meaningful connections. Within the framework of Integrative Psychotherapy, Erskine (2011) delineates eight essential relational needs— Security, Valuing, Acceptance, Mutuality, Self-Definition, Making

an Impact, Have the Other Initiate, Express Caring —that underpin the development of a healthy self-concept and relational adaptability. When these needs are fulfilled, individuals are more likely to exhibit trust and resilience in relationships (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Conversely, unmet needs, particularly during early development, can lead to rigid behavioral patterns, such as life scripts, that persist into adulthood and influence relational dynamics, including attitudes toward infidelity (Erskine, 1998). This subsection examines how the degree of relational needs satisfaction impacts attitudes toward infidelity, integrating Erskine’s model with insights from Attachment Theory, the Investment Model of Commitment, and empirical findings from Turkish and international contexts, with a particular emphasis on the role of relational distress and cultural factors.

Attitudes toward infidelity reflect individuals’ commitment to relational exclusivity and their underlying relational values (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Considering the cultural values in the Turkish population, where collectivism is seen to be more prevalent than individualism, it is possible to predict that infidelity is an unacceptable moral wrong, yet relational dissatisfaction can foster more lenient attitudes, suggesting a link to unmet relational needs (Fincham & May, 2017; Toksoy et al., 2020).

The association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity is supported by theories revealing how early relational experiences influence adult romantic outcomes. Bowlby’s (1969) Attachment Theory posits that the relationship between the primary caregiver and the infant establish Internal Working Models of trust and security, which creates some schemas and expectations about future experiences. Insecure attachment, often resulting from inconsistent satisfaction of needs, is linked to more permissive attitudes toward infidelity, as individuals may seek external validation when needs like acceptance or mutuality are unmet (DeWall et al., 2011). On the other hand, avoidantly attached individuals, who prefer emotional distance, exhibit weaker commitment and greater interest in romantic alternatives, increasing their openness to infidelity (DeWall et al., 2011). Similarly, anxiously attached individuals, driven by fears of abandonment, may view infidelity as a means to secure affirmation (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). These patterns align with Erskine’s

framework, where deficits in relational needs satisfaction disrupt relational stability, potentially fostering attitudes that justify extradyadic involvement.

Toksoy (2021), provides further evidence of this dynamic, demonstrating a negative correlation between relational needs satisfaction and traumatic stress symptoms in a Turkish sample. Lower satisfaction of relational needs is associated with higher psychological distress, which can intensify relational dissatisfaction and make individuals more likely to adopt permissive attitudes toward infidelity as a way to cope (Glass & Wright, 1985). This result suggests that people who are less satisfied with their relational needs may experience strain in their relationships and are therefore more likely to view infidelity as a way of coping with their unmet needs.

The Investment Model of Commitment (Rusbult, 1980) complements this perspective and gives a theoretical background for hypothesizing that high relational needs satisfaction may enhance satisfaction and investment, strengthening commitment and reducing permissive attitudes toward infidelity (Campbell & Foster, 2002). Conversely, unmet needs, such as a lack of validation or mutuality, diminish satisfaction, weakening commitment and making infidelity appear more acceptable (Glass & Wright, 1985). İşçioğlu (2022) found that relational needs satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being among Turkish couples, suggesting that fulfilled needs bolster relational stability. Although this study does not directly address infidelity, it implies that higher relational needs satisfaction could mitigate attitudes that justify extradyadic behaviors by fostering greater relational commitment.

Gender differences exist in this model. Toksoy (2021) reported that women in her Turkish sample exhibited higher relational needs satisfaction than men. This aligns with Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017), who found that Turkish men, compared to women, hold more permissive attitudes toward infidelity, particularly among those with a history of cheating. Women's higher need satisfaction may reduce their vulnerability to infidelity by contributing to stronger relational commitment, whereas men's lower satisfaction may be consistent with cultural tolerances for sexual infidelity (Glass & Wright, 1992).

In Integrative Psychotherapy, life scripts offer a developmental lens for understanding infidelity attitudes (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Toksoy (2021) emphasizes that ongoing trauma, including persistent neglect or unfulfilled relational needs, hinders individuals' capacity to establish and maintain relationships, strengthening maladaptive life scripts that expect relational failure. For example, an individual with a script rooted in unfulfilled validation needs may seek affirmation through extradyadic relationships, perceiving infidelity as a means to address relational deficits. This aligns with broader findings that relational dissatisfaction, often tied to early experiences, fosters openness to infidelity (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). The interaction between perceived past relational experiences and relational needs suggests that adults' recollections of early relational frustrations may contribute to permissive infidelity attitudes, particularly when cultural or personal stressors heighten relational challenges.

Cultural context significantly moderates the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and infidelity attitudes. In Turkey, collectivistic values prioritize family cohesion and loyalty, fostering widespread disapproval of infidelity (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). Tangül (2023) observed that reduced satisfaction of relational needs among young Turkish adults is associated with greater relationship codependency, potentially increasing susceptibility to infidelity when needs such as mutuality or initiative remain unfulfilled. This suggests that while cultural norms act as a protective factor, unmet relational needs can still drive permissive attitudes, particularly among younger generations navigating modern relational dynamics. The tension between cultural expectations and need satisfaction underscores the complexity of infidelity attitudes in Turkey's hybrid collectivistic-individualistic context (Hofstede, 2001).

Despite these insights, direct empirical links between Erskine's relational needs framework and infidelity attitudes remain limited. While İşçioğlu (2022) and Tangül (2023) highlight the role of relational needs satisfaction in relational and psychological outcomes, they do not explicitly address infidelity. Toksoy (2021) provide a robust foundation for measuring need fulfillment but does not reveal a detailed exploitation for infidelity-related outcomes. Broader studies, however, suggest

that relational dissatisfaction, often rooted in unmet needs, fosters permissive attitudes toward infidelity (Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Glass & Wright, 1985).

In conclusion, while cultural disapproval of infidelity is expected to moderate attitudes toward infidelity in Turkey, unmet relational needs continue to pose a risk for relational instability. Research findings from Toksoy et al. (2020), İşçioğlu (2022), and Tangül (2023) with established theories underlines the need for further research to elucidate these complex dynamics, particularly in bridging Erskine's model with infidelity outcomes.

2.5 Relational Needs and Narcissism

Relational needs satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing psychological growth and interpersonal dynamics. When these needs are sufficiently fulfilled, individuals cultivate resilience and the ability to form healthy connections. However, when these needs go unmet, especially during early development, they can lead to maladaptive personality traits, such as narcissism (Erskine & Moursund, 2022). Narcissism, defined by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, reduced empathy, and a focus on self-promotion, has been associated with relational challenges that may arise from early deficits in the fulfillment of psychological needs (Campbell, 1999).

Narcissism has a layered structure with grandiose and vulnerable dimensions. While there are similar reasons for the emergence of both dimensions, different sources can also be effective. At this point, it is meaningful that Kohut (1977) and Kernberg (1975) put forward the necessity of meeting needs for mirroring and idealization. Failure to meet these needs in the relationship between the caregiver and the child in early life causes interruptions and damages the person's self-perception (Kohut, 1977). On the other hand, the theoretical explanation put forward by Erskine (2011) is parallel to this; individuals whose relational needs are not met have difficulty in self-actualizing, maintaining their authenticity and maintaining internal and external contacts. In this direction, it is expected that children who are not accepted, mirrored or validated will cut off contact in order to meet these needs or their self-perceptions will be similar to those of narcissistic individuals while looking for relationships where

they will meet these needs. This also reveals the developmental stages of both the grandiose and vulnerable sub-dimensions.

Empirical research and theoretical perspectives continue to shed light on the link between Relational Needs Satisfaction and narcissistic traits. Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment offers a theoretical basis for understanding how the degree of relational fulfillment may impact narcissistic tendencies. The model suggests that commitment arises from relational satisfaction, the amount of investment made, and how favorable the available alternatives are perceived to be. When relational needs are adequately met, individuals tend to experience greater satisfaction and make deeper investments in their relationships, which in turn promotes communal behaviors and reduces narcissistic tendencies centered on self-interest (Campbell & Foster, 2002). In contrast, unmet relational needs diminish relational satisfaction, reducing commitment and amplifying narcissistic tendencies, such as pursuing alternative partners (Campbell, 1999). İşçioğlu (2022) determined that relational needs satisfaction serves as a mediator between marital satisfaction and psychological well-being in Turkish couples, indicating that met needs enhance relational ties. This implies that higher need satisfaction could mitigate narcissistic traits by promoting mutual connection over self-enhancement. Additionally, Çetindağ (2023) discovered that guilt and shame act as moderating factors in the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and narcissism, with shame exerting a stronger influence on vulnerable narcissism. This finding underscores the emotional mechanisms through which unmet relational needs amplify narcissistic vulnerabilities.

Campbell's (2005) Agency Model offers additional insight into this dynamic, suggesting that individuals high in narcissism tend to favor agentic motives—such as the pursuit of power, status, and achievement—over communal concerns like emotional closeness, mutual support, and relational harmony. This self-focused orientation may be linked to deficiencies in relational experiences; unmet needs lead narcissistic individuals to meet their need for validation through admiration or idealized interactions (Campbell, 1999).

Empirical research linking Erskine's Relational Needs Model to narcissism remains limited. While İşçioğlu (2022) and Tangül (2023) demonstrate the impact of

relational needs satisfaction on relational and psychological outcomes, they do not explicitly address narcissism. Toksoy (2021) provide a foundation for measuring relational needs satisfaction but focus on traumatic stress rather than personality traits. Broader studies, however, suggest that relational deficits, such as a lack of emotional closeness, contribute to narcissistic vulnerabilities by fostering compensatory self-enhancement (Banai et al., 2005). Future research should leverage tools like the RNSS to explore how relational needs satisfaction influences narcissistic traits, particularly in diverse cultural contexts. Such studies could clarify whether fulfilling relational needs acts as a protective factor against narcissism, informing therapeutic interventions aimed at fostering healthier relational dynamics.

In conclusion, the satisfaction of relational needs, as conceptualized by Erskine, plays a critical role in the emergence of narcissistic traits, mediated by early relational experiences, commitment dynamics, and cultural influences. Lower satisfaction, often rooted in cumulative trauma or inconsistent caregiving, may foster narcissistic defenses, such as entitlement or hypersensitivity, as individuals seek to compensate for unmet needs. In the Turkish context, cultural norms may moderate the expression of narcissistic traits; however, unmet relational needs continue to pose a risk for the emergence of narcissistic vulnerabilities. Synthesizing findings from Toksoy (2021), İşçioğlu (2022), Çetindağ (2023), and Tangül (2023) underscores the necessity for further research to integrate Erskine's relational framework with narcissism-related outcomes, offering valuable directions for clinical interventions targeting relational difficulties.

2.6 Narcissism and Attitudes Toward Infidelity

Narcissism has become extremely popular in recent research studies in the field of psychology, especially because it affects the quality of close relationships and other people in the relationship in many ways. The subheadings of grandiose and vulnerable are two situations in which narcissism is expressed differently. Grandiose narcissism is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance, a sense of entitlement, and a drive for dominance, often leading individuals to prioritize personal benefit over relationship harmony (Campbell & Foster, 2002). In contrast, vulnerable narcissism is defined by emotional instability, heightened sensitivity to criticism, and a reliance on

external validation, frequently resulting in defensive or retaliatory behaviors when relational needs are unmet (Wink, 1991). Narcissistic individuals, whose perceptions of others are as distorted as their perceptions of themselves, may have different perspectives on close relationships, such as intimacy and loyalty, than non-narcissistic individuals, with research suggesting that narcissistic characteristics may lead individuals to adopt more permissive attitudes toward infidelity.

There are many findings in the literature regarding the relationship between narcissism and attitudes towards infidelity. Although most of these findings are from foreign sources, the findings support the hypothesis of this thesis. Campbell and Foster (2002) argue that grandiose narcissists, driven by a need for admiration and a sense of entitlement, may view infidelity as an acceptable means to enhance their status or explore alternative sources of validation. This perspective aligns with the findings of Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017), who observed in a Turkish sample that individuals with higher narcissistic traits displayed more permissive attitudes toward extradyadic involvement, often rationalizing these behaviors as a reflection of their perceived superiority. These attitudes are amplified by a diminished sense of relational investment, as grandiose narcissists often show lower levels of empathy and commitment, which usually serve as deterrents to infidelity. Consequently, their permissive attitude may stem from a self-centered perspective that prioritizes personal desires over relational obligations.

Vulnerable narcissism has a different association with attitudes toward infidelity compared to grandiose narcissism. Vulnerable narcissists have an intense fear of rejection and are insecure that they may become dependent on their relationships or use infidelity as a way of coping to prove to themselves that they can cope with this fear (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023) propose that vulnerable narcissists may be permissive in their attitudes toward infidelity not because of entitlement but because of relational deficiencies such as validation and emotional intimacy. Research suggests that their heightened sensitivity to criticism and low self-esteem may provoke anger or a desire to engage in infidelity as a way of retaliating against partners who make them feel unappreciated (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2011). Unlike grandiose narcissists, the attitudes of vulnerable narcissists

may arise from an attempt to restore a fragile self-concept rather than to assert control, highlighting the distinct motivational bases of the two subtypes.

Empirical research further emphasizes the intricate connection between narcissism and attitudes toward infidelity, with gender and cultural factors introducing additional complexity to the relationship. Sevi et al. (2020) discovered that grandiose narcissism in men was linked to a higher acceptance of infidelity, possibly reflecting societal norms that are more permissive of male extradyadic behavior. In contrast, vulnerable narcissism exhibited a stronger association with infidelity attitudes in women, potentially due to increased emotional reactivity to relational stress (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). These gender differences imply that cultural norms may influence how narcissistic traits shape attitudes toward infidelity. Blow and Hartnett (2005) also highlight that relational dissatisfaction is a significant predictor of permissive attitudes, regardless of narcissism subtype. While the literature establishes a clear association between narcissism and infidelity attitudes, the mechanisms driving this link, such as the role of early relational experiences or specific personality vulnerabilities, remain areas ripe for further exploration.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional, correlational approach to explore the interplay between relational needs satisfaction, attitudes toward infidelity, and pathological narcissism, with narcissism as a mediator. An online survey, hosted on the Qualtrics platform, collected data from Turkish-speaking participants using validated Turkish-adapted instruments: the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale (RNSS; Toksoy et al., 2020), the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS; Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014), the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI; Şen & Barışkın, 2019), and a Demographic Information Form. Ethical approval was obtained from the Bahçeşehir University Research Ethics Committee (Approval No: E-85646034-604.01-93121), ensuring compliance with research standards.

The study examined associations between variables through correlation analyses and assessed group differences based on demographic factors. Mediation analyses, evaluating the role of pathological narcissism, utilized the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) with bootstrap resampling to enhance result reliability. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. This design facilitated a robust investigation of the psychological and relational dynamics among the study variables, providing a foundation for further analysis in subsequent sections.

3.2 Settings and Participants

Data collection was conducted online through the Qualtrics platform, with the survey link distributed via the researcher's Instagram account and WhatsApp groups, targeting Turkish-speaking adults. Participants accessed the survey voluntarily, providing informed consent before completing the scales. The study was approved by the Bahçeşehir University Research Ethics Committee (Approval No: E-85646034-604.01-93121), ensuring ethical compliance.

A total of 281 participants (83.3% female, $n = 234$; 16.7% male, $n = 47$) completed the survey, recruited through non-probability convenience sampling. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 60 years ($M = 34.91$, $SD = 9.88$), with 81.5% ($n = 229$) under 45 years. The majority held a bachelor's degree (62.3%, $n = 175$), followed by master's (18.9%, $n = 53$), doctoral (7.8%, $n = 22$), high school (9.6%, $n = 27$), and primary/middle school (1.4%, $n = 4$) education. Most reported moderate economic status (62.6%, $n = 176$), with 17.4% ($n = 49$) high, 16.0% ($n = 45$) low, 3.6% ($n = 10$) very low, and 0.4% ($n = 1$) very high income. Relationship statuses included married (34.5%, $n = 97$), single (24.9%, $n = 70$), in a relationship (24.2%, $n = 68$), and divorced (16.4%, $n = 46$). Relationship durations ranged from 2 to 348 months ($M = 45.91$, $SD = 39.80$). This diverse sample provided a robust basis for examining the study's variables.

3.3 Procedures

3.3.1 Data collection instruments. The instruments used in this thesis are Demographic Information Form, Relational Satisfaction Scale (RNSS), Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS), and Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI).

3.3.1.1 Demographic Information Form. The Demographic Information Form included questions assessing participants' age, gender, educational level, economic status, relationship status, relationship duration, and history of infidelity, either as the perpetrator or the victim.

3.3.1.2 Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale (RNSS). This scale, based on the eight relational needs developed by Richard Erskine and his colleagues (1998) designed to measure the fulfillment of these needs, was originally developed by Zvec et al. (2020). The Turkish adaptation, including validity and reliability analyses, was conducted by Toksoy et al. (2020) and was used in this study.

The scale comprises 20 items assessing five subdimensions, and its Turkish version has been validated while preserving this original structure. The five subscales are: Authenticity, Support and Protection, Having an Impact, Shared Experience, and Initiative from the Other. Participants were required to rate each item on a scale from

1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), considering their interpersonal relationships. Subscale scores were calculated by summing the responses for each respective subdimension and dividing the total by the number of items in that subdimension. The total relational needs score, representing the overall satisfaction of relational needs, was computed by summing all item responses and dividing by the total number of items. A higher score on the scale signifies a higher level of satisfaction with relational needs.

The test-retest reliability of the scale was determined to be 0.82. The reliability coefficients for the subdimensions were calculated as follows: 0.75 for "Authenticity," 0.80 for "Support and Protection," 0.75 for "Shared Experience," 0.70 for "Having an Impact," and 0.71 for "Initiative from the Other." The internal consistency of the overall scale was 0.83, with subscale reliability scores of 0.63 for "Authenticity," 0.79 for "Support and Protection," 0.73 for "Shared Experience," 0.78 for "Having an Impact," and 0.51 for "Initiative from the Other." Confirmatory factor analysis supported the five-factor structure, with fit indices indicating an adequate model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.05$, RMSEA = 0.048, CFI = 0.924, TLI = 0.912, IFI = 0.925, AIC = 468.610). These results provide strong evidence that the scale is a valid and reliable instrument for assessing relational needs satisfaction within the Turkish population. The reliability analysis conducted for this scale revealed .88 for the Cronbach's alpha.

3.3.1.3 Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS). The Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, originally developed by Whitley (2008), to measure individuals' perspectives on infidelity, comprises 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Higher scores reflect a more accepting attitude toward infidelity, whereas lower scores indicate a more negative stance. A score of 48 on the scale is considered a midpoint, indicating neither a positive nor a negative attitude toward infidelity. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was conducted by Toplu-Demirtaş et al. using the translation-back translation method. Initial validity, reliability, and factor analyses suggested a two-factor structure; however, a subsequent exploratory factor analysis revealed that this distinction was due to the scoring method, which categorized items as either positive or negative. As a result, the scale is regarded as unidimensional. Items 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12 are positively keyed, while items 1, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 11 are negatively keyed.

The scale demonstrated an acceptable level of reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80.

Validity analyses were conducted using two separate datasets. In the second dataset (N = 250), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the factor structure identified through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale could be replicated in an independent sample. The fit indices obtained from the CFA, which aimed to validate the two-factor structure, indicated a moderate model fit ($\chi^2 = 99.64$, $df = 53$, $\chi^2/df = 1.88$, GFI = .94, CFI = .94, AGFI = .91, RMSEA = .06). The two-factor model was confirmed, with all parameter estimates being statistically significant, ranging from .27 to .79 for the first factor and from .30 to .88 for the second factor. These findings provide strong evidence that the Turkish version of the scale is a valid and reliable instrument. The reliability analysis conducted for this scale revealed .56 for the Cronbach's alpha.

3.3.1.4 Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI). The Pathological Narcissism Inventory, developed by Pincus et al. (2009), is a 52-item scale using a 6-point Likert format designed to assess the pathological features of narcissism, specifically measuring the dimensions of vulnerability and grandiosity. The scale consists of two higher-order dimensions and seven subdimensions. The higher-order dimensions are vulnerability and grandiosity. The subdimensions under the vulnerability dimension include Contingent Self-Esteem, Hiding the Self, and Devaluing. The subdimensions under the grandiosity dimension are Exploitativeness, Self-Sacrificing Self-Enhancement, Grandiose Fantasy, and Entitlement Rage. The variance explained by the seven-factor model is 53.76%, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .95 for the total score, ranging between .78 and .93 for the subdimensions.

In the adaptation study for the Turkish version, Şen and Barışkın (2019) conducted an exploratory factor analysis and found that the seventh factor contained only two items, corresponding to items 2 and 13 in the original scale. Since their factor loadings were below .30, it was decided to remove these items from the scale. After their removal, the explained variance in the six-factor structure increased from 47% to 49.08%, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be .93. Additionally, in the

confirmatory factor analysis, item 38 was also removed due to a factor loading below .30, resulting in a total of 49 remaining items in the scale. Consequently, while the total score of the scale is calculated using all items, factor analyses are conducted by excluding items 2, 13, and 38, adopting the six-factor structure. Accordingly, in the Turkish version, the scale formally retains 52 items; however, these three items are not included in factor analyses. With the 49-item version, the variance explained was found to be 50.24%, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient remained at .93, and Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a χ^2 value of 10,216.604 with 112 degrees of freedom. The reliability analysis conducted for this scale revealed .89 for the Cronbach's alpha.

3.3.2 Data collection procedures. Approval for initiating the data collection process was obtained from the Bahçeşehir University Research Ethics Committee. Data were collected online through a survey administered via the Qualtrics platform. The survey link was shared through social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp, allowing participants to complete the survey by accessing the link. To be included in the study, participants were required to provide informed consent before proceeding. Following consent, they completed the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale, the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory in sequence. The survey link remained active for 1.5 months, and data collection took place between December 2024 and January 2025.

3.3.3 Data analysis procedures. All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Within the scope of descriptive statistics, continuous variables were presented in the format of median, mean $\pm$ standard deviation ($M \pm SD$), while categorical variables were reported as frequency (n) and percentage (%).

The assumption of normality for the total and subscale scores of the scales used in the study was evaluated based on the criterion that the values obtained by dividing the skewness and kurtosis coefficients by their standard errors fall within the ± 3.29 range, indicating a normal distribution (Mayers, 2013). Additionally, the normality of the dataset was visually confirmed by examining histograms, scatter plots, and Q-Q plots.

To determine the relationships between the total and subscale scores of the scales, Pearson correlation analysis was performed. To assess significant differences between the total and subscale scores of the scales and participants' demographic and other variables, the Independent Samples t-test was used for variables with two groups, while One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) was applied for variables with three or more groups. If a significant difference was found among groups in the One-Way ANOVA test, the Bonferroni post-hoc test was conducted to identify which groups significantly differed from each other. In all analyses, a significance level of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

According to the contemporary approach, for the mediation effect to be valid, it is not necessary for the total effect (c) to be significant. Additionally, the effect of the independent variable (X) on the mediator variable (M) (a), or the effect of the mediator variable (M) on the dependent variable (Y) (b), does not need to be significant by itself. Instead, the mediation effect (ab) should be tested using the Bootstrap method (Hayes, 2018).

Accordingly, PROCESS v4.3 macro, compatible with SPSS 25.0, was used in the study (Hayes, 2013). This software, developed by Andrew F. Hayes, tests mediation and moderation effects through path analysis based on linear regression. The primary reason for choosing this method is that it allows for more reliable and valid results through the Bootstrap method.

To evaluate the mediation model, 5,000 bootstrap resamples were performed using the Bootstrap method. For the mediation effect to be significant, the Bootstrap confidence interval (CI) must not contain zero (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004).

As a result of the analyses, the mediating role of pathological narcissism total score and its core subdimensions in the relationship between relational need satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity was tested, and the findings obtained are presented in the form of diagrams.

3.4 Limitations. In this study, participants were asked to answer questions that might be challenging to respond to honestly via a self-report format. Since the data were collected through self-administered questionnaires, it is impossible to determine the accuracy of participants' responses. Even though they signed an informed consent form that guaranteed anonymity, participants may have been unwilling to disclose sensitive matters such as infidelity—whether as the perpetrator or the victim—due to concerns about privacy or emotional discomfort.

Similarly, while answering the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, participants could have been influenced by societal norms or moral expectations, leading them to provide answers that align with social desirability. The narcissism scale may also present challenges, as it assumes a certain degree of self-awareness and insight that not all individuals may have, which could impact the reliability of their responses.

In light of these factors, it is reasonable to recognize that the data collection method introduces certain limitations in the study.

Chapter 4

Findings

In this section, the results of the statistical analyses conducted on the data obtained in the study are presented. The findings are organized under three main headings in accordance with the objectives of the study. Firstly, the frequency distributions of the participants' demographic characteristics and other variables were examined and summarized in table format. Second, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the participants' total scale scores and subdimension scores. Subsequently, the results of comparative analyses were presented to assess whether the total scale and subdimension scores differed according to demographic variables. Third, analyses related to mediation models were conducted to examine the relationships between total scale and subdimension scores. The obtained findings were evaluated and interpreted based on their statistical significance levels. The findings were systematically presented and supported with tables and graphs.

4.1 Tests of Normality

The assumption of normality for the total and subscale scores of the scales used in the study was assessed based on the criterion that the values obtained by dividing the skewness and kurtosis coefficients by their standard errors fell within the ± 3.29 range, indicating a normal distribution (Mayers, 2013). Furthermore, the assumption of normality was visually confirmed through the inspection of histograms, scatter plots, and Q-Q plots.

Table 1
Skewness And Kurtosis Values Of The Scales

	Skewness	Kurtosis
RNSS	-.63	.21
ATIS	-.27	2.2
PNI-T	-.19	-.31
PNI-G	.02	.38
PNI-V	-.10	.32

Note: RNSS = Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale; ATIS = Attitudes Toward Intimacy Scale PNI-T = Pathological Narcissism Inventory Total Score; PNI-G = Grandiose Narcissism; PNI-V = Vulnerable Narcissism

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

The frequency distributions of the participants' demographic characteristics and other variables were examined and summarized in tabular format.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution Of Participants' Demographic And Various Variables

Variables	<i>n or Median (Min-Max)</i>	<i>% or M±SD</i>
Age (years)	34,0 (18,0-60,0)	34,91±9,88
Age group		
Below 45 years	229	81,5
45 years and above	52	18,5
Gender		
Female	234	83,3
Male	47	16,7
Educational level		
Primary school / Middle school	4	1,4
High school	27	9,6
Bachelor's degree	175	62,3
Master's degree	53	18,9
Doctoral degree (PhD)	22	7,8
Economic status		
Very low	10	3,6
Low	45	16,0
Moderate	176	62,6
High	49	17,4
Very High	1	,4
Relationship status		
Single	70	24,9
In a relationship	68	24,2
Married	97	34,5
Divorced	46	16,4
Relationship duration (months)	39,0 (2,0-348,0)	45,91±39,80
Past Relationship Infidelity Status;		
Cheated		
No	211	75,1
Yes	70	24,9
Cheated On		
No	146	52,0
Yes	135	48,0
Not Cheated		
No	135	48,0
Yes	146	52,0
Not Cheated On		
No	185	65,8
Yes	96	34,2

Table 2 (*Continued*)

Notes. n=number; %=Percentage; Min=Minimum; Max=Maximum; M=Mean; SD=Standard Deviation

In Table 2, the ages of the individuals participating in the study range from 18 to 60 years, with a median age of 34.0 years. The mean age of the participants is 34.91 ± 9.88 years, and the majority of the sample (81.5%) consists of individuals under the age of 45.

Of the participants, 83.3% ($n = 234$) are female, and 16.7% ($n = 47$) are male.

In terms of educational background, the majority of the participants are university graduates (62.3%, $n = 175$), followed by those with a master's degree (18.9%, $n = 53$), a doctoral degree (7.8%, $n = 22$), a high school diploma (9.6%, $n = 27$), and a primary/middle school education (1.4%, $n = 4$).

Regarding economic status, the majority of the participants assess their income level as moderate (62.6%, $n = 176$). Furthermore, 16.0% ($n = 46$) report having a low income, 17.4% ($n = 47$) report a high income, and only 3.6% ($n = 10$) indicate a very low income. The proportion of participants with a very high income is relatively low, at only 0.4% ($n = 1$).

In terms of relationship status, 34.5% ($n = 97$) of the participants are married, 24.9% ($n = 70$) are single, 24.2% ($n = 68$) are in a romantic relationship, and 16.4% ($n = 46$) are divorced. The duration of romantic relationships ranges from 2 to 348 months, with a median duration of 39 months and a mean duration of 45.91 ± 39.80 months.

When examining the participants' fidelity experiences in previous romantic relationships, 24.9% ($n = 70$) reported having cheated on their partner at least once, 48.0% ($n = 135$) indicated that they had been cheated on by their partner, 52.0% ($n = 146$) stated that they had never cheated on their partner, and 34.2% ($n = 96$) reported that they had never been cheated on by their partner.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Of Total And Subscale Scores

Variables	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale Total	281	1,50	4,60	3,44	,56
Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale Total	281	12,00	63,00	22,46	9,28
Pathological Narcissism Inventory Total	281	103,00	256,00	183,91	30,82
PNI-Grandiose	281	20,00	72,00	42,73	7,98
PNI-Vulnerable	281	42,00	204,00	127,09	32,95

Note. *n*=number; Min=Minimum; Max=Maximum; *M*=Mean; *SD*=Standard Deviation

In this section, descriptive statistics regarding the total and subdimension scores of the scales used in the study are presented.

Based on the data obtained from the participants, the minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) values of the scales were calculated (*see* Table 3).

The total scores of the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale ranged from 1.50 to 4.60 ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.56$).

The total scores of the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale ranged from 12.00 to 63.00 ($M = 22.46$, $SD = 9.28$).

The total scores of the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) ranged from 103.00 to 256.00 ($M = 183.91$, $SD = 30.82$).

When the PNI subdimensions were examined separately, the PNI-Grandiose subdimension scores ranged from 20.00 to 72.00 ($M = 42.73$, $SD = 7.98$), and the PNI-Vulnerable subdimension scores ranged from 42.00 to 204.00 ($M = 127.09$, $SD = 32.95$).

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Of Test Variables

	RNSS-T	RNSS-A	RNSS-S	RNSS-H	RNSS-S	RNSS-I	ATIS	PNI-T	PNI-G	PNI-V	AGE
RNSS-T	1										
RNSS-A	.70**	1									
RNSS-S	.79**	.39**	1								
RNSS-H	.59**	.30**	.29**	1							
RNSS-S	.80**	.44**	.50**	.39**	1						
RNSS-I	.81**	.45**	.65**	.33**	.60**	1					
ATIS -T	-0.05	-.16**	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.01	1				
PNI-T	-.22**	-.35**	-.12*	-.12*	-0.08	-.16**	0.06	1			
PNI-G	.13*	.15*	0.05	.24**	0.06	0.04	0.07	-.40**	1		
PNI-V	-.23**	-.35**	-.12*	-.16**	-0.08	-.15*	0.07	.98**	-.58**	1	
AGE	-.14*	-0.09	-.17**	-0.05	-0.08	-.12*	0.07	-.15**	.19**	-.17**	1
RD	0.10	0.01	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.09	-0.02	-0.05	-0.02	.24**

Note: * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$. RNSS-T= Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale; RNSS-A= Authenticity; RNSS-S= Support And Protection; RNSS-H= Having An Impact; RNSS-S= Shared Experience; RNSS-I= Initiative From The Other; PNI-T = Pathological Narcissism Inventory Total Score; PNI-G = Grandiose Narcissism; PNI-V = Vulnerable Narcissism; RNSS = Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale; ATIS = Attitudes Toward Intimacy Scale; RD = Relationship Duration.

In this section, the results of the Pearson correlation analysis regarding the relationships between the total and subdimension scores of the scales used in the study and the demographic variables are presented (*see* Table 4).

A negative and significant relationship was found between the total score of the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale (RNSS) and the total score of the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) ($r = -.22, p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that individuals with higher relational needs satisfaction may have lower levels of pathological narcissism.

A negative and significant relationship was found between RNSS - Authenticity subdimension and ATIS ($r = -.16, p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that individuals with higher scores in authenticity may have less permissive attitudes toward infidelity. It is important to note that, although, this relationship is significant, it is weak. A weak but significant and negative relationship was found between age

and RNSS – Support and Protection ($r = -.17, p < 0.001$). This result indicates that individuals with higher Support and Protection score are younger.

The Grandiose Narcissism (PNI – Grandiose) subdimension has a positive and significant relationship with RNSS – Having an Impact subdimension ($r = .24, p < 0.001$). This suggests that individuals with high satisfaction in having an impact need may higher tendencies toward grandiose narcissism. The RNSS – Authenticity subdimension has a negative and significant relationship with PNI – Total ($r = -.35, p < 0.001$). Individuals with lower levels of satisfaction in authenticity needs may have higher tendencies toward pathological narcissism. RNSS – Authenticity has a negative and significant relationship with PNI – Vulnerable ($r = -.35, p < 0.001$). This finding reveals that individuals with lower levels of satisfaction in authenticity needs may have higher tendencies toward vulnerable narcissism.

A negative and significant relationship was found between RNSS – Having an Impact subdimension and PNI – Vulnerable subdimension ($r = -.16, p < 0.001$). This shows that, individuals with high levels of satisfaction in relational need of having an impact may have lower tendencies toward vulnerable narcissism. RNSS – Initiative from the Other subdimension has a negative and significant relationship with PNI – Total score ($r = -.16, p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that individuals with high levels of satisfaction in relational need of initiative from the other may have lower tendencies toward pathological narcissism.

The Grandiose Narcissism (PNI - Grandiose) subdimension has a positive and significant relationship with age ($r = .19, p = 0.001$). This finding suggests that as age increases, tendencies toward grandiose narcissism may also increase.

The Vulnerable Narcissism (PNI-Vulnerable) subdimension has a negative and significant relationship with relational needs satisfaction total score ($r = -.23, p < 0.001$). This result indicates that individuals with higher relational needs satisfaction may have lower tendencies toward vulnerable narcissism.

The age variable shows a negative and significant relationship with the total score of the PNI ($r = -.16, p = 0.009$) and with vulnerable narcissism ($r = -.17, p =$

0.004). This finding suggests that as age increases, tendencies toward pathological and vulnerable narcissism tend to decrease.

Table 5

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Age Groups

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	Below 45 years	229	3.46	0.55	0,90	0,37
	45 years and above	52	3.37	0.61		
ATIS Total	Below 45 years	229	22.27	9.00	-0,68	0,49
	45 years and above	52	23.25	10.47		
PNI Total	Below 45 years	229	185.55	31.05	1,87	0,06
	45 years and above	52	176.69	29.01		
PNI-Grandiose	Below 45 years	229	42.24	7.91	-2,17	0,03
	45 years and above	52	44.88	8.00		
PNI-Vulnerable	Below 45 years	229	129.00	32.88	2,05	0,04
	45 years and above	52	118.67	32.24		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

The analysis results regarding whether there are statistically significant differences in scale scores between age groups are presented in Table 5. The rationale for analyzing age groups as under 45 and 45 and older is based on the World Health Organization's age classification (Ahmad et al., 2001). For the total scores of the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale (RNSS), no significant difference was found between the under 45 ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.55$) and 45 and older ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.61$) groups ($t = 0.900$, $p = 0.371$). This finding suggests that the level of relational needs satisfaction does not significantly differ between age groups.

Regarding the total scores of the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS), no significant difference was found between the under 45 ($M = 22.27$, $SD = 9.00$) and 45 and older ($M = 23.25$, $SD = 10.47$) groups ($t = -0.68$, $p = .49$). This result suggests that age does not have a significant effect on attitudes toward infidelity.

When examining the total scores of the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), although the mean score of participants under 45 years ($M = 185.55$, $SD = 31.05$) was higher than that of participants 45 and older ($M = 176.69$, $SD = 29.01$), the difference was not statistically significant ($t = 1.879$, $p = 0.061$). When the PNI subdimensions were examined separately: For the PNI-Grandiose subdimension, the mean score of participants under 45 ($M = 42.24$, $SD = 7.91$) was significantly lower than the mean score of participants 45 and older ($M = 44.88$, $SD = 8.00$) ($t = -2.175$, $p = 0.030$). This finding suggests that grandiose narcissism levels may increase as individuals age. For the PNI-Vulnerable subdimension, the mean score of participants under 45 ($M = 129.00$, $SD = 32.88$) was significantly higher than the mean score of participants 45 and older ($M = 118.67$, $SD = 32.24$) ($t = 2.053$, $p = 0.041$). This result indicates that younger individuals may have higher tendencies toward vulnerable narcissism.

Table 6

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Gender

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	Female	234	3.44	0.55	-0,05	0,95
	Male	47	3.45	0.59		
ATIS Total	Female	234	21.95	9.25	-2.05	0.04
	Male	47	24.97	9.12		
PNI Total	Female	234	184.00	31.75	0,11	0,91
	Male	47	183.45	26.02		
PNI-Grandiose	Female	234	43.03	7.86	1,40	0,16
	Male	47	41.23	8.50		
PNI-Vulnerable	Female	234	127.12	33.68	0,03	0,97
	Male	47	126.96	29.37		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

As seen in Table 6, no statistically significant difference was found between female and male participants in terms of RNSS Total ($t = -0.055, p = 0.956$), PNI Total ($t = 0.113, p = 0.910$), PNI-Grandiose ($t = 1.407, p = 0.161$), and PNI-Vulnerable ($t = 0.031, p = 0.975$) variables. However, there is a significant difference between genders regarding ATIS Total scores. Male participants' ATIS mean scores are significantly higher ($M = 24.97, SD = 9.12$), compared to female participants' mean scores ($M = 21.95, SD = 9.25$), which indicates that gender difference is significant ($t = -2.05, p = .04$).

Table 7

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Past Romantic Relationship Infidelity Status (Cheated)

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	No	211	3.46	0.56	0,90	0,36
	Yes	70	3.39	0.56		
ATIS Total	No	211	20.29	7.23	-7,39	<,001
	Yes	70	28.97	11.54		
PNI Total	No	211	181.74	30.20	-2,06	0,04
	Yes	70	190.46	31.96		
PNI-Grandiose	No	211	42.79	7.90	0,23	0,81
	Yes	70	42.53	8.28		
PNI-Vulnerable	No	211	124.78	32.52	-2,05	0,04
	Yes	70	134.07	33.48		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 7, no statistically significant difference was found between participants without infidelity experience ($M = 3.46, SD = 0.56$) and participants with infidelity experience ($M = 3.39, SD = 0.56$) in terms of RNSS total scores ($t = 0.905, p = 0.366$).

In contrast, significant difference was found between participants who did not cheat ($M = 20.29$, $SD = 7.23$) and those who cheated before ($M = 28.97$, $SD = 11.54$) in terms of ATIS total scores ($t = -7.39$, $p = <.001$).

Additionally, a significant difference was found in the total PNI scores between participants without infidelity experience ($M = 181.74$, $SD = 30.20$) and those with infidelity experience ($M = 190.46$, $SD = 31.96$) ($t = -2.063$, $p = 0.040$).

For the PNI-Grandiose scores, no significant difference was found between participants without infidelity experience ($M = 42.79$, $SD = 7.90$) and those with infidelity experience ($M = 42.53$, $SD = 8.28$) ($t = 0.238$, $p = 0.812$).

In contrast, a significant difference was found for the PNI-Vulnerable scores between participants without infidelity experience ($M = 124.78$, $SD = 32.52$) and those with infidelity experience ($M = 134.07$, $SD = 33.48$) ($t = -2.057$, $p = 0.041$).

Table 8

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Past Romantic Relationship Infidelity (Cheated On)

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	No	146	3.45	0.58	0,33	0,73
	Yes	135	3.43	0.54		
ATIS Total	No	146	22.67	8.91	-0,39	0,69
	Yes	135	22.22	9.69		
PNI Total	No	146	183.6	30.06	-0,17	0,86
	Yes	135	184.24	31.74		
PNI-Grandiose	No	146	41.57	7.63	-2,55	0,01
	Yes	135	43.98	8.18		
PNI-Vulnerable	No	146	127.86	31.92	0,40	0,68
	Yes	135	126.26	34.13		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 8, no statistically significant difference was found between participants without being cheated on ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.58$) and those with experience of being cheated on ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.54$) in terms of RNSS total scores ($t = 0.335$, $p = 0.738$).

Similarly, no significant difference was found between participants without being cheated on ($M = 22.67$, $SD = 8.91$) and those with experience of being cheated on ($M = 22.22$, $SD = 9.69$) in terms of ATIS total scores ($t = -0.39$, $p = 0.69$).

No significant difference was found in the total PNI scores between participants without being cheated on ($M = 183.60$, $SD = 30.06$) and those with experience of being cheated on ($M = 184.24$, $SD = 31.74$) ($t = -0.174$, $p = 0.862$). For the PNI-Grandiose scores, a significant difference was found between participants without being cheated on ($M = 41.57$, $SD = 7.63$) and those with experience of being cheated on ($M = 43.98$, $SD = 8.18$) ($t = -2.553$, $p = 0.011$). Finally, no significant difference was found in the PNI-Vulnerable scores between participants without being cheated on ($M = 127.86$, $SD = 31.92$) and those with experience of being cheated on ($M = 126.26$, $SD = 34.13$) ($t = 0.407$, $p = 0.684$).

Table 9

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Past Romantic Relationship Infidelity (Not Cheated)

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	No	135	3.38	0.58	-1,76	0,07
	Yes	146	3.50	0.53		
ATIS Total	No	135	23.78	10.52	2.32	0,02
	Yes	146	21.23	7.80		
PNI Total	No	135	186.71	32.47	1,46	0,14
	Yes	146	181.32	29.09		
PNI-Grandiose	No	135	43.29	8.23	1,13	0,25
	Yes	146	42.21	7.74		
PNI-Vulnerable	No	135	129.39	34.47	1,12	0,26
	Yes	146	124.97	31.45		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 9, there was no statistically significant difference between participants with and without experience of infidelity in terms of RNSS total scores ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.58$ vs. $M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.53$, $t = -1.769$, $p = 0.078$). Regarding the total scores of ATIS, a significant difference was found between participants who did not select the “not cheated” option which may mean that they cheated ($M = 23.78$, $SD = 10.52$) and those who selected the “not cheated” option ($M = 21.23$, $SD = 7.80$) ($t = 2.32$, $p = 0.02$). This suggests that participants who states that they did not cheat have less permissive attitudes toward infidelity. This aligns with the findings of Table 7, participants who had previously cheated on someone have more permissive attitudes toward infidelity. Regarding PNI total scores, no significant difference was found between participants with and without infidelity experience ($M = 186.71$, $SD = 32.47$ vs. $M = 181.32$, $SD = 29.09$, $t = 1.467$, $p = 0.143$). When examining PNI-Grandiose scores, no significant difference was found between the two groups ($M = 43.29$, $SD = 8.23$ vs. $M = 42.21$, $SD = 7.74$, $t = 1.138$, $p = 0.257$). Finally, there was no significant difference between participants with and without infidelity experience in terms of PNI-Vulnerable scores ($M = 129.39$, $SD = 34.47$ vs. $M = 124.97$, $SD = 31.45$, $t = 1.126$, $p = 0.261$).

Table 10

Comparison Of Participants' Total And Subscale Mean Scores By Past Romantic Relationship Infidelity (Not Cheated On)

Variables		n	M	Sd	t	p
RNSS Total	No	185	3.43	0.54	-0.32	0,74
	Yes	96	3.46	0.60		
ATIS Total	No	185	23.08	9.85	1.57	0,12
	Yes	96	21.25	7.98		
PNI Total	No	185	183.11	31.5	-0.60	0,54
	Yes	96	185.46	29.58		
PNI-Grandiose	No	185	43.19	8.22	1.35	0,17
	Yes	96	41.83	7.46		
PNI-Vulnerable	No	185	125.86	33.82	-0.87	0,38
	Yes	96	129.47	31.25		

Note: t = Independent samples t-test; $p < 0.05$.

As shown in Table 10, there was no statistically significant difference in RNSS total scores between participants with and without experience of being cheated on ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.54$ vs. $M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.60$, $t = -0.327$, $p = 0.744$).

Similarly, there was no significant difference in ATIS total scores between participants with and without experience of being cheated on ($M = 23.08$, $SD = 9.85$ vs. $M = 21.25$, $SD = 7.98$, $t = 1.57$, $p = 0.116$).

Regarding PNI total scores, no significant difference was found between participants with and without experience of being cheated on ($M = 183.11$, $SD = 31.5$ vs. $M = 185.46$, $SD = 29.58$, $t = -0.606$, $p = 0.545$).

When examining PNI-Grandiose scores, no significant difference was found between the two groups ($M = 43.19$, $SD = 8.22$ vs. $M = 41.83$, $SD = 7.46$, $t = 1.353$, $p = 0.177$).

Finally, there was no significant difference between participants with and without experience of being cheated on in terms of PNI-Vulnerable scores ($M = 125.86$, $SD = 33.82$ vs. $M = 129.47$, $SD = 31.25$, $t = -0.870$, $p = 0.385$).

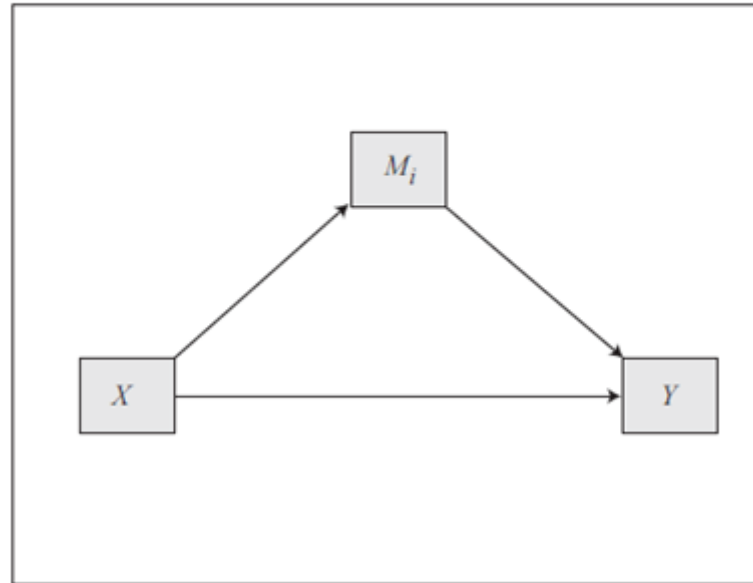
4.3 Mediating Role of Pathological Narcissism in the Relationship Between Relational Need Satisfaction and Attitudes Toward Infidelity

This section presents the analyses conducted to test the mediating role of the total score of pathological narcissism and its core subdimensions (grandiose and vulnerable narcissism) in the relationship between relational need satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity. In this context, a contemporary mediation analysis approach has been adopted to assess the mediation effect.

The conceptual research model tested in the study is shown in Figure 1.

Model 4

Conceptual Diagram



Statistical Diagram

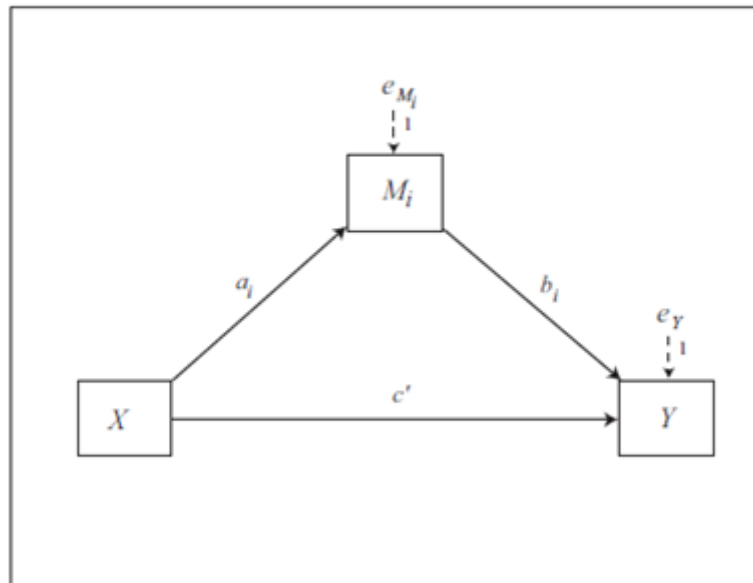


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study.

In the study, research questions were formulated based on Model 4. A summary of the analyses regarding the mediating role of pathological narcissism total score and its core subdimensions (grandiose and vulnerable narcissism) in the relationship between relational need satisfaction total score and attitudes toward infidelity total score is presented in Table 11. This table reveals that pathological narcissism does not have a mediating role in the association between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity.

Table 11

Summary Of Findings On The Mediating Role Of Pathological Narcissism And Its Core Dimensions In The Relationship Between Relational Needs Satisfaction And Attitudes Toward Infidelity

(Independent Variable)	Mediating Variable	(Dependent Variable)	(Mediating Role) Conclusion
RNSS Total	PNI Total	ATIS Total	-
RNSS Total	PNI-Grandiose	ATIS Total	-
RNSS Total	PNI-Vulnerable	ATIS Total	-

4.3.1 The mediating role of PNI-Total score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score. The conceptual model regarding the mediating role of the PNI total score in the relationship between RNSS total scores and ATIS total scores, along with the beta coefficients and the 95% confidence interval (CI) values for the indirect effect, is presented in Figure 2.

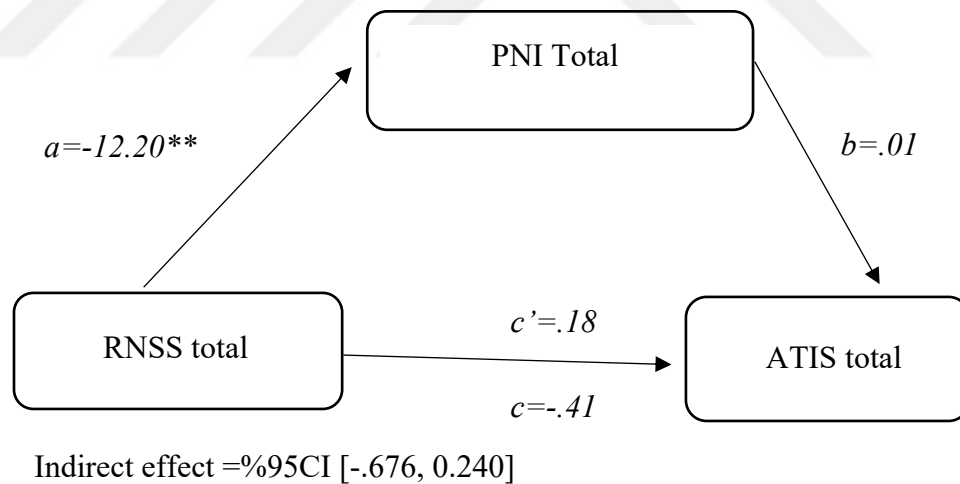


Figure 2. Analysis results of the mediating role of PNI total score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score.

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Unstandardized beta values are presented in the figure.

As shown in Figure 2 and in Table 12 presents the results of the mediation analysis examining the mediating role of the PNI total score in the relationship

between the RNSS total score and the ATIS total score. In the first step, the RNSS total score was found to have a negative and significant effect on the PNI total score ($b = -12.20$, $SE = 3.22$, $p < .01$), indicating that as relational needs satisfaction increases, pathological narcissism decreases. The model accounted for a significant proportion of the variance ($R^2 = .22$, $F(1, 279) = 14.35$, $p < .001$).

In the second step, when both the RNSS and PNI total scores were included in the model, the direct effect of RNSS on ATIS (c' path) was not significant ($b = -0.63$, $SE = 1.01$, $p > .05$). Similarly, the effect of the PNI total score on ATIS was also nonsignificant ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p > .05$). The explained variance in this step was low and not statistically significant ($R^2 = .004$, $F(2, 787) = 0.664$, $p = .515$).

These results suggest that the PNI total score does not significantly mediate the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity.

Tablo 12

The Mediating Role Of PNI Total Score In The Relationship Between RNSS Total Score And ATIS Total Score

Predictor Variables	Outcome Variables					
	M (PNI Total)			Y (ATIS Total)		
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
X (RNSS Total)	<i>a</i>	-12.20*	3.22	<i>c'</i>	-.63	1.01
M (PNI Total)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	.04	.01
constant	$\hat{I}_M$	225.91***	11.23	$\hat{I}_Y$	21.92***	5.42
		$R^2 = .22$			$R^2 = .004$	
		$F_{(1;279)} = 14.35; p < .001$			$F_{(2;787)} = 0.664; p = .515$	

Note: $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; S.E. = Standard Error. Unstandardized coefficients (b) between variables are presented. RNSS = Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale, PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory, ATIS = Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale

4.3.2 The mediating role of PNI – Grandiose score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score. The conceptual model regarding the

mediating role of the PNI-Grandiose score in the relationship between the RNSS total score and the ATIS total score, along with the beta coefficients and the 95% confidence interval (CI) values of the indirect effect, is presented in Figure 3.

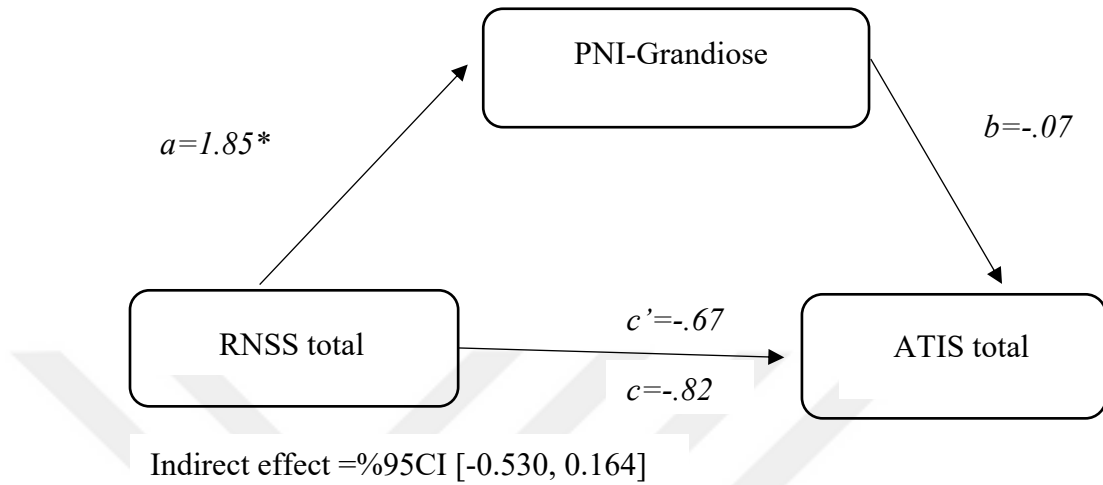


Figure 3. Analysis results of the mediating role of PNI-Grandiose score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score.

Note: $*p<.05$, $**p<.01$, $*p<.001$; Unstandardized beta values are presented in the figure.

As shown in Figure 3 and Table 13, the RNSS total score (independent variable) has a significant effect on the PNI-Grandiose score (mediating variable) ($b = 1.85$, $S.E. = 0.84$, $p < 0.05$). This finding indicates that the RNSS total score has a positive and significant effect on the PNI-Grandiose score, indicating that individuals with higher levels of relational needs satisfaction tend to report higher levels of grandiose narcissism. The model accounted for a small but significant portion of variance ($R^2 = .01$, $F(1, 279) = 4.77$, $p = .029$).

In the second step, when both the RNSS total score and PNI-Grandiose score were included in the model, the direct effect of the RNSS total score on the ATIS total score remained negative but was not statistically significant ($b = -0.67$, $SE = 1.00$, $p > .05$). Additionally, the PNI-Grandiose score did not significantly predict ATIS total

scores ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.07$, $p > .05$). The overall model did not explain a significant portion of variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = .006$, $F(2, 787) = 0.945$, $p = .389$).

These findings suggest that although the RNSS total score is associated with the PNI-Grandiose score, the PNI-Grandiose subdimension does not mediate the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity.

Tablo 13

The Mediating Role Of PNI-Grandiose Score In The Relationship Between RNSS Total Score And ATIS Total Score

Predictor Variables	Outcome Variables				
	M (PNI-Grandiose)			Y (ATIS Total)	
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>		
X (RNSS Total)	<i>a</i>	1.85*	.84	<i>c'</i>	-
M (PNI-Grandiose)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.07
constant	<i>I_M</i>	36.34***	2.95	<i>I_Y</i>	28.08***
		$R^2 = .01$			$R^2 = .006$
		$F_{(1;279)} = 4.77$; $p = .029$			$F_{(2;787)} = 0.945$; $p = .389$

Note: $p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$; *S.E.* = Standard Error. Unstandardized coefficients (*b*) between variables are presented. RNSS = Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale, PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory, ATIS = Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale

4.3.3 The mediating role of PNI - vulnerable score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score. The conceptual model of the mediating role of the PNI-Vulnerable score in the relationship between the RNSS total score and the ATIS total score, along with the beta coefficients and 95% confidence interval (CI) values of the indirect effect, are presented in Figure 4.

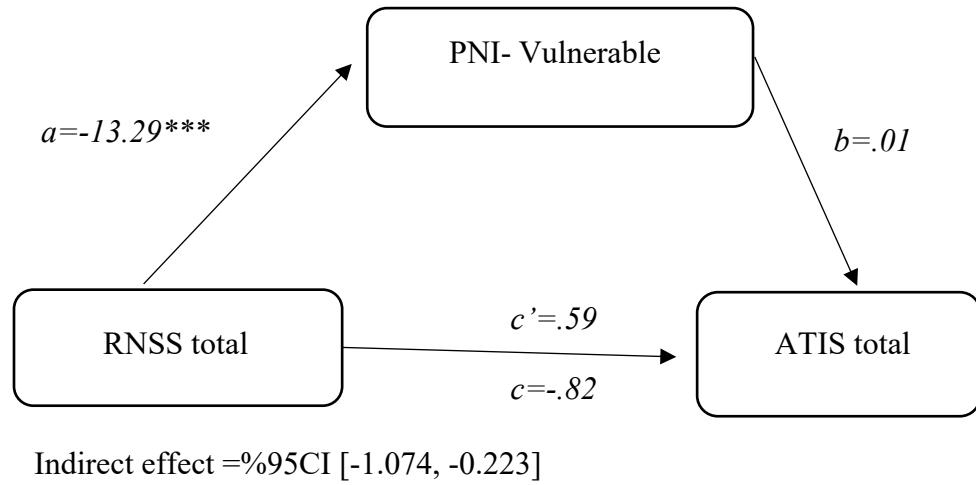


Figure 4. Analysis results of the mediating role of PNI- Vulnerable score in the relationship between RNSS total score and ATIS total score.

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Unstandardized beta values are presented in the figure.

As shown in Figure 4 and Table 14, Table 14 presents the results of the mediation analysis examining the mediating role of the PNI-Vulnerable score in the relationship between the RNSS total score and the ATIS total score. In the first step, the RNSS total score was found to have a negative and significant effect on the PNI-Vulnerable score ($b = -13.29$, $SE = 3.44$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with higher levels of relational needs satisfaction tend to report lower levels of vulnerable narcissism. The model explained a small but statistically significant portion of the variance ($R^2 = .022$, $F(1, 279) = 14.929$, $p < .001$).

In the second step, when both the RNSS total score and PNI-Vulnerable score were entered into the model, the direct effect of RNSS on ATIS (c' path) remained negative but was not statistically significant ($b = -0.59$, $SE = 1.02$, $p > .05$). Similarly, the effect of the PNI-Vulnerable score on ATIS was also nonsignificant ($b = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p > .05$). This second model explained very little variance and was not statistically significant ($R^2 = .005$, $F(2, 278) = 0.823$, $p = .440$).

These results suggest that the PNI-Vulnerable subscale does not play a significant mediating role in the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward infidelity.

Tablo 14

The Mediating Role Of PNI - Vulnerable Score In The Relationship Between RNSS Total Score And ATIS Total Score

Predictor Variables	Outcome Variables					
	M (PNI- Vulnerable)			Y (ATIS Total)		
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>		<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
X (RNSS Total)	<i>a</i>	-13.29	3.44	<i>c'</i>	-.59	1.02
M (PNI- Vulnerable)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	.01	.01
constant	<i>I_M</i>	172.84***	11.99	<i>I_Y</i>	22.34***	4.57
		$R^2=.022$			$R^2=.005$	
		$F_{(1;279)}=14.929; p<.001$			$F_{(2;278)}=0.823; p=.440$	

Note: $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$; S.E. = Standard Error. Unstandardized coefficients (*b*) between variables are presented. RNSS = Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale

PNI = Pathological Narcissism Inventory

ATIS = Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Discussion of Findings for Hypotheses

5.1.1 Discussion of hypothesis I. This study predicted that higher relational needs satisfaction (RNSS) would inversely correlate with attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS), suggesting that individuals with lower RNSS would display more permissive attitudes (Hypothesis I). However, correlation analysis showed no significant link between RNSS and ATIS total scores ($r = -.04, p > .05$), indicating that relational needs satisfaction does not directly shape infidelity attitudes in this sample. This finding was not consistent with the theoretical expectation, based on information provided by Erskine (2011) within the framework of Integrative Psychotherapy, that unmet relational needs may create an emotional void and lead to contact disruptions, and that they may develop dysfunctional adaptation strategies to cope with difficult emotions and perhaps exhibit cheating behavior. Similarly, prior research has connected relational dissatisfaction to permissive attitudes toward infidelity (Atkins et al., 2001; Blow & Hartnett, 2005), a pattern not observed here. Several methodological, cultural, and theoretical factors likely contribute to this null result, offering insights into the challenges of studying infidelity attitudes in Turkey.

One key factor behind the lack of a significant RNSS-ATIS relationship may be the psychometric shortcomings of the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS). In this study, ATIS demonstrated low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$), to the higher reliability reported in its Turkish adaptation ($\alpha = .80$; Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014). This low reliability score raises questions about the extent to which the scale is adequate to measure participants' attitudes toward cheating, which may even suggest that this nonsensical result is not a fully reliable result. For example, statements like “Infidelity is natural for people” or “I would have another relationship if my partner wouldn't find out” may cause participants to be more inclined to give socially acceptable responses, in line with social desirability bias. This likely constrained the scale's ability to detect subtle variations in attitudes, weakening any potential correlation with RNSS.

Social desirability bias further explains this null finding. In Turkey, a society blending collectivistic and individualistic values (Göregenli, 1995; Hofstede, 2001), infidelity is widely regarded as a violation of social and moral norms, particularly in romantic relationships. Although participants were provided informed consent about being anonymous, they may have held back from giving permissive responses about infidelity because they feared being judged or because of their own internalized norms which are most likely parallel to that of society. The sample's predominantly female composition (83.3%) likely strengthen this bias, as women in collectivistic cultures often face greater pressure to uphold fidelity norms (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). The low average ATIS score ($M = 22.46$, $SD = 9.28$) reflects participants' general disapproval of infidelity, which may have limited the response variance needed to identify a relationship with RNSS.

The unique structure of the sample is another reason why the analysis may have turned out this way. With a moderate RNSS level ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.56$), the sample likely lacked sufficient participants with extremely low RNSS to exhibit the predicted permissive attitudes. The homogeneity of the sample -mostly female, university-educated (62.3%), and of moderate economic status (62.6%)- may have restricted the range of relational experiences and infidelity attitudes. The sample collected via Instagram and Whatsapp using non-probability convenience sampling may seem like a group that is likely to be active on social media. This may have led to the sample being a group that is accustomed to exhibiting socially acceptable behaviors and appearances on social media, and therefore these scales may have a more socially acceptable response weight. These factors suggest that the RNSS-ATIS relationship might be more evident in a more diverse sample with greater variation in relational satisfaction.

Theoretically, this null finding questions the applicability of Erskine's (2011) Relational Needs Model to infidelity attitudes in Turkey. Erskine and Moursund (2022) suggest that unmet relational needs foster life scripts that alienate individuals from genuine intimacy, potentially leading to behaviors like infidelity to fill emotional voids. The absence of a direct link here implies that other psychological or contextual factors, such as commitment or moral beliefs, may mediate this relationship. Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model offers a related perspective, proposing that relational

dissatisfaction, coupled with low commitment and appealing alternatives, encourages permissive infidelity attitudes. However, relational needs satisfaction differs from relational satisfaction, and existing literature does not directly address relational needs in this context. This study explores a distinct pathway, focusing on RNSS.

Previous research indicates that infidelity attitudes stem from a complex interplay of factors beyond relational dynamics. Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017) identified gender and past infidelity experiences as stronger predictors of permissive attitudes than relational factors, with men and those with cheating histories showing more lenient views. Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023) linked vulnerable narcissism to infidelity attitudes, suggesting personality traits may outweigh relational needs in some contexts. These insights highlight the need to consider multiple predictors when studying infidelity attitudes.

Future studies could overcome these limitations by using more robust tools and varied methods. Implicit measures, like the Implicit Association Test, could bypass social desirability bias to capture unconscious infidelity attitudes. Longitudinal or dyadic designs, examining both partners' relational needs and attitudes, could better clarify the RNSS-ATIS dynamic. A balanced, heterogeneous sample with diverse gender and socioeconomic profiles would improve generalizability.

In conclusion, the lack of a significant RNSS-ATIS relationship underscores the methodological and cultural hurdles of measuring infidelity attitudes in Turkey. While Erskine's (2011) model and prior studies suggest a connection between relational needs and infidelity, factors like ATIS's low reliability and social desirability bias likely obscured this link. These findings emphasize the need for culturally tailored tools and nuanced models to explore relational needs and infidelity attitudes.

5.1.2 Discussion of hypothesis II. Hypothesis II proposed a negative relationship between relational need satisfaction (RNSS) and pathological narcissism (PNI) and predicted that lower relational need satisfaction would correspond to higher narcissistic tendencies. Findings partially supported this hypothesis. Correlation

analyses revealed a significant negative relationship between RNSS and PNI-Total ($r = -.22, p < .001$) and PNI-Vulnerable ($r = -.23, p < .001$), indicating that greater relational need satisfaction was associated with lower levels of overall and vulnerable narcissism. However, RNSS showed a nonsignificant positive relationship with PNI-Grandiose ($r = .13, p > .05$), suggesting that grandiose narcissism may be driven by different dynamics. These results are consistent with theoretical expectations that meeting relational needs would moderate narcissistic tendencies, especially in their vulnerable forms, but the lack of a negative association with grandiose narcissism merits further investigation. Methodological, psychological, and cultural factors in the Turkish context provide insight into these findings by highlighting the nuanced interaction between relational needs and narcissism. The significant negative associations between the RNSS and both the PNI-Total and the PNI-Vulnerable are consistent with theoretical frameworks linking relational satisfaction to psychological well-being. Gökdağ et al. (2025) further corroborate that fulfilling relational needs mitigates psychological distress, suggesting that RNSS may serve as a buffer against maladaptive traits like vulnerable narcissism, aligning with this study's findings. Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology suggests that unmet relational needs, such as validation and reflection, foster narcissistic traits as compensatory mechanisms for a fragile self-concept. The observed negative correlations suggest that meeting relational needs, such as authenticity or support, may act as a protective factor against pathological narcissism, particularly in its vulnerable dimension characterized by emotional fragility and hypersensitivity. This is consistent with Toksoy et al. (2020) who found that RNSS is associated with improved psychological health in Turkish samples and potentially buffers against maladaptive traits such as vulnerable narcissism. The strength of these associations, although modest, highlights the role of relational satisfaction in reducing narcissistic vulnerabilities.

However, the non-significant positive association between RNSS and PNI-Grandiose deviates from the hypothesized negative association. As suggested by Altınok and Kılıç (2020), grandiose narcissism, marked by self-confidence and entitlement, may be less tied to relational needs and more influenced by social status, self-enhancement, or external approval. In a collectivist culture like Turkey, grandiose narcissistic traits may be covertly expressed to conform to norms of modesty and group conformity (Göregenli, 1995), potentially masking their association with RNSS. In

contrast to previous discussions focusing on the mediation or age-related differences in narcissism, the emphasis here is on the distinct developmental origins of grandiose narcissism that may distinguish it from relational need satisfaction.

Methodological factors likely shape these findings. The PNI's reliance on self-report measures presents challenges, particularly because narcissistic individuals with grandiose traits may provide socially desirable responses to enhance their self-image (Kowalski et al., 2018). This may have inflated PNI-Grandiose scores and obscured a possible negative association with the RNSS. While reliable ($\alpha = .88$), the RNSS scale is a relatively new measure in the Turkish context, and its sensitivity to nuanced relational dynamics may vary across participants. The fact that the sample was predominantly female (83.3%) and that participation was conducted via Instagram and WhatsApp groups may have further influenced responses because women may report higher relational need satisfaction due to their gender roles, while the social media-based sampling may have drawn a younger, more connected subgroup that is less representative of a variety of narcissistic expressions. The sample size ($N = 281$), although adequate, may have been constrained by the uneven distribution of narcissistic traits, limiting detection of weaker associations.

Cultural dynamics in Turkey's collectivist society likely moderated these findings. In a context where group harmony and relational loyalty are prioritized (Hofstede, 2001), individuals may underreport narcissistic tendencies, especially grandiose ones, in order to conform to social expectations. This covert expression of narcissism may have weakened the expected negative association with RNSS, as participants prioritized socially acceptable responses. In contrast to previous discussions emphasizing the cultural stigma of infidelity, the focus here is on how collectivist norms shape the perception and reporting of relational needs and narcissistic traits, potentially strengthening the protective role of RNSS against vulnerable narcissism.

In conclusion, the partial support for Hypothesis II highlights the protective role of relational need fulfillment against pathological and vulnerable narcissism, but the lack of a negative association with grandiose narcissism highlights its distinct dynamics. Methodological limitations and Turkey's collectivist norms likely

moderated these findings, highlighting the need for precise measurements and diverse samples to fully explain the interaction between relational needs and narcissistic traits.

5.1.3 Discussion of hypothesis III. Hypothesis III proposed a positive relationship between narcissism, as measured by the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), and attitudes toward buying (ATIS), and that those with higher narcissistic tendencies would exhibit more permissive attitudes toward staying. Contrary to expectations, aspect analyses revealed no significant relationships between ATIS and PNI total scores. These findings suggest that narcissistic traits do not directly predict attitudes toward infidelity. This null result differs from previous studies that have linked narcissism with permissive attitudes toward infidelity (Altınok & Kılıç, 2020; Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023) and raises questions about narcissistic traits and attitudes toward infidelity in Turkish sample. Various algorithms, psychological and cultural factors may explain this result and provide insights into the complexities of measuring narcissism and attitudes toward infidelity.

The lack of a significant association between the PNI and ATIS differs from previous research showing that individuals with narcissistic traits—especially grandiose ones—tend to support more permissive views on infidelity, likely due to their weaker commitment in relationships and focus on self-promotion (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Altınok & Kılıç, 2020). For example, Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023) found that narcissism was positively linked to permissive attitudes among men. However, the impact of narcissism varied depending on gender and the nature of the romantic relationship. Similarly, Brewer et al. (2015) found that narcissism was associated with intentions to engage in behaviors motivated by low empathy and a need for external approval. The lack of significant results in the current study suggests that the connection between narcissism and disengagement attitudes might be less clear in certain cultural or situational contexts, potentially due to measurement limitations or characteristics specific to the sample.

One plausible explanation for the null finding lies in the difficulties of assessing narcissistic traits via self-report measures such as the PNI. Narcissism is particularly associated with self-presentation concerns, which may distort the likelihood that they will continue, often backing down, to align with their socially desirable or idealized

self-perceptions (Smith et al., 2018). For example, narcissists may present themselves convincingly as emotionally attached to the party or relationship, masking their true attitudes toward infidelity (Ronningstam, 2020). This attempt to reinforce their social image of themselves as narcissistic is supported by a study showing a positive correlation between narcissism and social desirability, as they are more likely to endorse statements (Kowalski et al., 2018). This success, such self-reinforcing behaviors, may have led to underreporting of permissive attitudes or exaggerating details of relationships, which may have been expected with ATIS distributions.

The psychometric properties of the ATIS further complicate the interpretation of these findings (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014). With a low internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$), the ATIS may have failed to capture the nuanced attitudes toward infidelity that could align with narcissistic traits. Unlike Hypothesis 1, where ATIS's cultural misalignment was emphasized, the focus here is on its limited ability to detect attitudes linked to narcissistic tendencies, such as entitlement or exploitativeness, which are central to grandiose narcissism. For example, ATIS items like "*Infidelity is natural for people*" may not have resonated with participants' narcissistic self-perceptions, leading to restricted variance in responses. This measurement limitation likely reduced the scale's sensitivity to detect relationships with PNI scores, despite the PNI's adequate reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

The sample's characteristics also likely contributed to the null result. The predominantly female composition (83.3%) may have influenced the expression of narcissistic traits, as women are more likely to exhibit vulnerable rather than grandiose narcissism (Sevi et al., 2020), potentially diluting the expected positive association with ATIS. Additionally, the use of non-probability convenience sampling through Instagram and WhatsApp groups may have attracted a socially connected but potentially conservative subgroup, whose motivations for participating were unclear. This sampling method, while yielding a sample size ($N = 281$) exceeding the G Power analysis requirements, may have introduced selection bias, limiting the diversity of narcissistic traits and infidelity attitudes. Furthermore, participants with past infidelity experiences (24.9%) may have provided defensive or inconsistent responses due to feelings of guilt and shame, as reported by Hall and Fincham (2009), compounded by social desirability biases that prompt individuals to present themselves in a socially

favorable light (Kowalski et al., 2018). Such psychological defenses could have extended to the demographic questions, where participants may have underreported their infidelity history, further obscuring the relationship between narcissism and attitudes toward infidelity.

The cultural context of Turkey, which blends both collectivist and individualist values (Göregenli, 1995; Hofstede, 2001), provides an additional perspective for understanding these results. In collectivist cultures, narcissistic traits—especially grandiose ones—may be expressed in more subtle ways to conform to social norms that prioritize group harmony and loyalty in relationships. Cultural norms may have inhibited the open display of narcissistic traits, like entitlement or exploitativeness, that could encourage more permissive views on infidelity.

From a theoretical perspective, the failure to obtain a significant finding does not align with Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology theory, because this theory, which reveals that narcissistic individuals have fragile self-images and are prone to external approval-seeking behaviors, was used to hypothesize that external approval-seeking behavior could also result in infidelity. One reason for the divergence of these findings from theoretical expectations could be that, in this thesis, the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) score, being a measure of narcissistic tendencies, may not fully capture outcomes directly associated with narcissism. Similarly, the Investment Model framework, which hypothesizes that narcissists will be permissive in their attitudes toward infidelity, with less investment in their relationships, less intimacy, and lower satisfaction—they believe they deserve better—was not supported by these findings. The lack of these associations in this study may suggest that other psychological factors, like moral values or situational limitations, play a role in shaping the connection between narcissism and attitudes toward infidelity. In a collectivist culture like Turkey, these factors may have strongly affected participants' responses, possibly overshadowing the influence of narcissistic traits (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017).

In conclusion, while prior research highlights narcissism as a predictor of permissive infidelity attitudes, this study suggests that self-report measurement challenges, sample-specific factors, and cultural norms may obscure this relationship. These findings contribute to the literature by highlighting the need for culturally

sensitive measures and diverse methodologies to explore the interplay of narcissism and infidelity attitudes.

5.1.4 Discussion of hypothesis IV. Hypothesis IV predicted that grandiose and vulnerable narcissism would differentially influence the relationship between relational needs satisfaction (RNSS) and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS), with vulnerable narcissism positively affecting this association and grandiose narcissism negatively affecting it. Contrary to expectations, correlation analyses showed no significant associations between ATIS and either PNI-Grandiose ($r = -.07, p > .05$) or PNI-Vulnerable ($r = .06, p > .05$), indicating neither dimension significantly moderated the RNSS-ATIS link. This null finding diverges from literature suggesting distinct narcissistic traits shape relational outcomes differently (Gewirtz-Meydan et al., 2023). Several psychological, methodological, and contextual factors unique to this Turkish sample may explain this outcome.

The lack of differential effects may stem from the distinct motivational drivers of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissism, characterized by self-enhancement and entitlement, might theoretically suppress permissive infidelity attitudes to maintain a socially desirable image, yet no negative association emerged. Vulnerable narcissism, marked by emotional fragility, could foster permissive attitudes as a coping mechanism, but no positive link was observed. This absence of expected patterns contrasts with Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023), who found vulnerable narcissism linked to permissive attitudes in males. The female-heavy sample (83.3%) may have muted these effects, as women may express narcissistic traits less overtly due to cultural expectations (Sevi et al., 2020).

Methodologically, the PNI's self-report format may have limited its ability to capture nuanced narcissistic expressions. Participants, particularly those with grandiose traits, may have underreported behaviors conflicting with Turkey's fidelity norms (Hofstede, 2001). The social media-based sampling via Instagram and WhatsApp likely skewed the sample toward younger, socially connected individuals, potentially homogenizing narcissistic trait expression. Theoretically, Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology suggests vulnerable narcissism aligns with relational insecurities, yet these may not translate to infidelity attitudes in a context valuing relational harmony

(Göregenli, 1995). The Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) implies commitment moderates narcissistic influences, a factor not measured here.

Future studies could use implicit measures to capture authentic narcissistic traits and examine PNI subdimensions (e.g., Entitlement Rage) to uncover specific influences. Diverse samples with balanced gender representation would enhance findings. This null result highlights the complexity of narcissistic influences on infidelity attitudes, urging refined models for Turkey's cultural context.

5.1.5 Discussion of hypothesis V. Hypothesis V proposed that pathological narcissism, as measured by the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI), would mediate the relationship between relational needs satisfaction (RNSS) and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS), with lower RNSS leading to higher narcissistic tendencies, which in turn would foster more permissive attitudes toward infidelity. Contrary to expectations, mediation analyses revealed no significant mediating role for PNI, whether total, grandiose, or vulnerable dimensions (Table 11-14). While RNSS exhibited significant negative associations with PNI-Total ($b = -12.20, p < .01$) and PNI-Vulnerable ($b = -13.29, p < .001$), and a positive association with PNI-Grandiose ($b = 1.85, p < .05$), the lack of a significant relationship between PNI and ATIS (e.g., PNI-Total: $b = 0.01, p > .05$) invalidated the mediation effect. This null finding diverges from theoretical expectations and prior research suggesting narcissism as a mediator in relational dynamics (Altınok & Kılıç, 2020). Gökdağ et al. (2025) highlight that relational needs satisfaction mediates the link between childhood experiences and psychological well-being, supporting the observed negative RNSS-PNI relationship, though this did not extend to mediating infidelity attitudes. Several methodological, statistical, and contextual factors may explain why narcissism did not mediate this relationship, offering insights into the challenges of testing mediation models in the Turkish context.

The absence of a mediation effect contrasts with studies linking narcissism to infidelity-related outcomes. For example, Altınok and Kılıç (2020) found that narcissism played a mediating role in the link between attachment styles and intentions toward infidelity, with narcissistic traits intensifying permissive attitudes. Similarly, Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023) found that vulnerable narcissism was linked to more

permissive attitudes toward infidelity, indicating a potential mediating role in specific relational contexts.

The reason for obtaining a null result may be that the Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale, ATIS is a measurement tool with limited sensitivity. With low internal consistency in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$), ATIS likely did not capture enough variation to reveal a relationship with PNI, weakening the "b" path (PNI $\rightarrow$ ATIS) in the mediation model. Unlike previous discussions that highlighted ATIS's cultural misalignment or its inability to capture narcissistic attitudes, the focus here is on its limited variance, as shown by the low mean ATIS score ($M = 22.46$, $SD = 9.28$). This suggests that participants, influenced by social norms, primarily reported negative attitudes toward infidelity, which limited the scale's ability to distinguish between different levels of permissiveness that might align with narcissistic traits. In addition to that, although it is a reliable scale in terms of this sample, The PNI's dependence on self-report measures may also presents difficulties in identifying mediation effects

The mediation model's statistical limitations further explain the null finding. Although the "a" path (RNSS $\rightarrow$ PNI) was significant, the absence of a significant "b" path (PNI $\rightarrow$ ATIS) rendered the mediation effect non-significant. This could be attributed to the sample's homogeneity, as the predominantly female (83.3%) and university-educated (62.3%) composition may have restricted the range of narcissistic traits and infidelity attitudes. Despite a sample size ($n = 281$) exceeding G Power analysis requirements, the use of non-probability convenience sampling through Instagram and WhatsApp groups likely introduced selection bias, attracting a socially connected but potentially conservative subgroup. Additionally, participants with past infidelity experiences (24.9%) may have underreported permissive attitudes or their infidelity history due to guilt or social desirability pressures, as seen in studies of psychological distress and self-presentational concerns (Hall & Fincham, 2009; Kowalski et al., 2018). In contrast, studies like Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023), which found links between narcissism and infidelity attitudes, sampled individuals married for at least three years with at least one child, a more homogeneous group compared to this study's diverse sample including single, partnered, married, and divorced participants without child-rearing criteria. Similarly, Altınok and Kılıç (2020) relied on a sample of exclusively university students, differing from this study's broader age

and socioeconomic range, suggesting that sample heterogeneity may have diluted the expected mediation effect.

Theoretically, the null finding challenges assumptions rooted in Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology, which suggests that unmet relational needs foster narcissistic traits that seek validation through behaviors like infidelity. The Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) posits that low relational satisfaction and commitment, amplified by narcissistic tendencies, increase permissive attitudes toward infidelity. The absence of a mediation effect suggests that these theoretical pathways may not fully apply in a collectivistic context, where external norms exert stronger influence. Additionally, it is important to consider that relational satisfaction and relational needs satisfaction are different concepts.

Future research could enhance the robustness of mediation models by addressing these limitations as mentioned before in the previous discussion parts. In conclusion, the lack of a mediating role for narcissism in the RNSS-ATIS relationship highlights the methodological and contextual challenges of testing complex mediation models in Turkey. While theoretical frameworks suggest narcissism as a potential mediator, limitations in measurement tools, sample characteristics, and cultural norms likely obscured this effect. These findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive measures and robust methodologies to explore the interplay of relational needs, narcissism, and infidelity attitudes.

5.2 Discussion of Group Differences

This section examines the group differences in demographic variables, which have some literature findings that may affect the model presented by this research. These demographic variables are: gender, age, past romantic relationship infidelity status.

5.2.1 Discussion of age differences. This study examined age differences in relational needs satisfaction (RNSS), pathological narcissism (PNI), and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS) by comparing participants under 45 years ($n = 229$, 81.5%) and those 45 years and older ($n = 52$, 18.5%). No significant differences were found

in ATIS ($t = -0.68, p = .49$) or RNSS ($t = 0.90, p = .37$) scores between the two age groups. However, significant differences emerged in PNI subdimensions: participants aged 45 and older reported higher PNI-Grandiose scores ($M = 44.88, SD = 8.00$) compared to those under 45 ($M = 42.24, SD = 7.91; t = -2.17, p = .03$), while younger participants exhibited higher PNI-Vulnerable scores ($M = 129.00, SD = 32.88$) compared to their older counterparts ($M = 118.67, SD = 32.24; t = 2.05, p = .04$). PNI-Total scores showed no significant difference ($t = 1.87, p = .06$). These findings suggest that age influences specific narcissistic traits but not relational needs satisfaction or infidelity attitudes in this sample. Methodological, psychological, and cultural factors provide insight into these patterns, highlighting the complex interplay of age and psychological constructs in the Turkish context.

The lack of age differences in ATIS scores aligns with the notion that attitudes toward infidelity may be more strongly influenced by factors like gender or past infidelity experiences than by age. Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017) found that men and individuals with infidelity histories reported more permissive attitudes, but age was not a significant predictor in their Turkish sample. The absence of a significant difference in this study (under age 45: $M = 22.27, SD = 9.00$; above age 45: $M = 23.25, SD = 10.47$) may reflect the overriding influence of cultural norms in Turkey, where infidelity is broadly stigmatized across age groups. The ATIS's low reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$) likely further reduced its ability to detect age-related variations, as limited response variance may have concealed subtle differences in attitudes. Unlike earlier discussions that highlighted ATIS's cultural misalignment or its sensitivity to narcissism, the focus here is on its lack of sensitivity to age-related life experiences that may influence attitudes toward infidelity.

The notable age differences in PNI subdimensions provide important insights into how narcissistic traits evolve throughout the lifespan. Higher PNI-Grandiose scores in older participants are consistent with research indicating that grandiose narcissism, marked by self-confidence and entitlement, may grow with age due to accumulated social status or life accomplishments (Sevi et al., 2020). This may indicate a developmental shift, where older adults in Turkey, especially in a collectivist culture that values respect for elders (Göregenli, 1995), view themselves as more authoritative or deserving. In contrast, higher PNI-Vulnerable scores in younger

participants suggest increased emotional fragility, possibly related to the uncertainties of early adulthood, such as career instability or relationship changes. These findings align with Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology, which suggests that narcissistic vulnerabilities are more prominent during developmental stages focused on identity formation.

Several methodological factors may have influenced these results. The sample's skewed age distribution, with 81.5% under 45 years, likely decreased the statistical power to detect differences, especially in ATIS and RNSS, where effects might be more subtle. The use of non-probability convenience sampling through Instagram and WhatsApp groups may have further biased the sample toward younger, social media-active participants, leading to underrepresentation of older adults' views. Although this sampling method resulted in a large sample size ($n = 281$), it may have limited the diversity of life experiences represented. Additionally, older participants may have responded more conservatively due to social desirability biases, prioritizing socially acceptable answers over authentic expressions, as seen in studies of self-presentational concerns (Kowalski et al., 2018). Participants with past infidelity experiences (24.9%) may have further complicated responses, with older adults potentially underreporting permissive attitudes due to guilt or societal expectations (Hall & Fincham, 2009). Notably, the absence of age differences in RNSS underscores its consistent importance across the lifespan, as Gökdağ et al. (2025) emphasize that relational needs, shaped by early experiences, remain critical for psychological well-being throughout life, supporting the stability observed in this study.

Cultural dynamics in Turkey likely influenced the findings. In a collectivistic society, social norms emphasizing relational fidelity may homogenize attitudes toward infidelity across age groups, overshadowing age-specific differences. Unlike prior discussions focusing on cultural constraints on narcissism or gender roles, the focus here is on how life stages interact with these norms. Older adults, shaped by longer exposure to collectivistic values, may internalize fidelity norms more deeply, while younger adults, navigating modern influences, may exhibit similar attitudes due to shared cultural expectations. The lack of age differences in RNSS suggests that relational needs, may remain salient across the lifespan, potentially reflecting universal psychological priorities if they are not met by other relationships through lifespan.

Theoretically, the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) suggests that older adults' potentially higher relational commitment could explain the absence of age differences in ATIS, as life stage may stabilize attitudes toward fidelity. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) posits that subjective norms, pervasive across age groups in Turkey, shape infidelity attitudes more than age-related factors (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017). A lifespan development perspective further contextualizes the PNI findings, suggesting that grandiose narcissism peaks in later adulthood due to social reinforcement, while vulnerable narcissism is more prevalent in youth due to developmental insecurities. Kohut's (1977) framework supports this, linking vulnerable narcissism to early adulthood's relational challenges.

In conclusion, the absence of age differences in ATIS and RNSS, contrasted with significant differences in PNI-Grandiose and PNI-Vulnerable, highlights the nuanced role of age in psychological and relational outcomes. While narcissistic traits vary across age groups, attitudes toward infidelity and relational needs appear stable, likely shaped by Turkey's collectivistic norms throughout lifetime. These findings underscore the need for diverse samples and sensitive measures to fully elucidate age-related dynamics in relational and psychological constructs.

5.2.2 Discussion of gender differences. This study explored gender differences in relational needs satisfaction (RNSS), pathological narcissism (PNI), and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS), finding a significant difference only in ATIS scores. Male participants reported more permissive attitudes toward infidelity ($M = 24.97$, $SD = 9.12$) than female participants ($M = 21.95$, $SD = 9.25$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = -2.05$, $p = .04$). In contrast, no significant gender differences were observed in RNSS ($t = -0.055$, $p = .956$), PNI-Total ($t = 0.113$, $p = .910$), PNI-Grandiose ($t = 1.407$, $p = .161$), or PNI-Vulnerable ($t = 0.031$, $p = .975$) scores. These findings indicate that gender affects attitudes toward infidelity, but not relational needs satisfaction or narcissistic traits in this sample. The gender difference observed in ATIS aligns with previous research, but its interpretation is influenced by methodological and cultural factors unique to the Turkish context, providing insights into the interaction of gender, social norms, and attitudes toward infidelity.

These findings, which revealed significant differences in terms of gender, were supported and predicted by many studies in the literature. Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017) found that male undergraduate students in Turkey, had more permissive attitudes towards infidelity than females in many different scenarios including ambiguous, deceptive, and explicit behaviors. Similarly, Sevi et al. (2020) observed that men are more likely to support permissive attitudes which aligns with the current findings. Gewirtz-Meydan et al. (2023) further suggest that men's attitudes may be shaped by narcissistic traits, especially vulnerable narcissism, although this study found no such link. The higher ATIS scores among male participants ($n = 47$) compared to female participants ($n = 234$) in this study support these patterns, emphasizing gender as a key factor in predicting attitudes toward infidelity.

The sample's composition, with a majority of female participants (83.3%), likely influenced the observed gender differences. The small number of male participants ($n = 47$) may have reduced the statistical power to detect subtle differences, especially in RNSS and PNI, where gender effects might be less pronounced.

Finally, the significant gender difference in ATIS scores, with males having more permissive attitudes, is consistent with previous research. The lack of gender differences in the RNSS and PNI suggests that these constructs may be less subject to gender-specific expectations. These findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive measures and diverse samples to fully explain the role of gender in relational and psychological outcomes.

5.2.3 Discussion of past romantic relationship infidelity status. This study investigated the impact of past romantic relationship infidelity status—categorized as cheated, cheated on, not cheated, or not cheated on—on relational needs satisfaction (RNSS), pathological narcissism (PNI), and attitudes toward infidelity (ATIS). Significant differences emerged in ATIS and PNI scores based on infidelity experience, but no differences were found in RNSS. Participants who reported having cheated ($n = 70$, 24.9%) exhibited more permissive attitudes ($M = 28.97$, $SD = 11.54$) compared to those who had not ($M = 20.29$, $SD = 7.23$; $t = -7.39$, $p < .001$), and those who reported not cheating ($M = 21.23$, $SD = 7.80$) showed less permissive attitudes

than others ($M = 23.78$, $SD = 10.52$; $t = 2.32$, $p = .02$). No significant differences were observed for those cheated on ($t = -0.39$, $p = .69$) or not cheated on ($t = 1.57$, $p = .12$). For PNI, individuals who cheated reported higher PNI-Total ($t = -2.06$, $p = .04$) and PNI-Vulnerable ($t = -2.05$, $p = .04$) scores, while those cheated on had higher PNI-Grandiose scores ($t = -2.55$, $p = .01$). RNSS showed no significant differences across any infidelity status (e.g., cheated: $t = 0.90$, $p = .36$). These findings highlight the significant role of infidelity experience in shaping attitudes and narcissistic traits, but not relational needs, in the Turkish context, moderated by methodological and cultural factors.

The pronounced difference in ATIS scores among those with infidelity experience aligns with prior research. Toplu-Demirtaş and Fincham (2017) found that individuals with a history of cheating in Turkish samples reported more permissive attitudes toward infidelity, a pattern mirrored in this study's robust effect ($p < .001$). This suggests that past infidelity experiences reinforce favorable attitudes, potentially as a cognitive justification for prior behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) supports this, positing that past behaviors shape attitudes through reinforcement, with cheating experiences normalizing permissive views (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017).

The lack of differences in RNSS across all infidelity statuses is intriguing, suggesting that relational needs, such as authenticity or support, remain stable regardless of infidelity experience. Gökdağ et al. (2025) found that fulfilling relational needs enhances well-being and reduces distress, supporting the stability of RNSS across infidelity experiences observed in this study. This contrasts with expectations that infidelity might disrupt relational satisfaction, indicating that RNSS may capture broader, stable psychological needs rather than situation-specific outcomes. Unlike prior discussions focusing on RNSS's cultural or gender-based stability, the emphasis here is on its resilience to infidelity-related disruptions, potentially reflecting universal relational priorities.

Methodological limitations likely influenced these findings. The ATIS's low reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$) may have reduced its sensitivity to detect subtle differences in the "cheated on" or "not cheated on" groups, as restricted variance

limited the scale's discriminatory power. The predominantly female sample (83.3%) and non-probability convenience sampling through Instagram and WhatsApp groups may have skewed the representation of infidelity experiences, as women may underreport cheating due to social pressures (Göregenli, 1995). Participants with infidelity experience (24.9%) may have provided defensive responses driven by guilt or shame, as suggested by Hall and Fincham (2009), or social desirability biases prompting socially favorable answers (Kowalski et al., 2018). These defenses may have extended to demographic questions, with some participants underreporting their infidelity history, further complicating the findings. The sample size ($n = 281$), while adequate, may have been constrained by the uneven distribution of infidelity experiences, limiting statistical power for less prevalent groups.

Turkey's collectivistic culture, where infidelity is stigmatized, likely shaped participants' responses. Unlike prior discussions emphasizing cultural constraints on narcissism or gender, the focus here is on how stigma influences the reporting of infidelity experiences. Individuals who cheated may have faced internal or societal judgment, leading to inconsistent or conservative responses, while those cheated on may have reframed their experiences to align with cultural norms of victimhood. This cultural dynamic may have attenuated the differences observed, particularly for RNSS and certain PNI dimensions.

The Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980) provides a theoretical lens, suggesting that infidelity experiences reduce relational commitment, fostering permissive attitudes among those who cheated. Kohut's (1977) Self-Psychology links vulnerable narcissism to the emotional turmoil of cheating, while grandiose narcissism may emerge as a coping mechanism for those cheated on. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) underscores how past infidelity shapes attitudes through behavioral reinforcement, moderated by cultural norms (Toplu-Demirtaş & Fincham, 2017).

In conclusion, the significant differences in ATIS and PNI scores based on infidelity experience highlight the profound impact of past cheating on attitudes and narcissistic traits, while the stability of RNSS suggests resilience in relational needs. Methodological constraints and Turkey's collectivistic norms likely moderated these

findings, emphasizing the need for sensitive measures and diverse samples to fully understand the psychological consequences of infidelity.

5.3 Discussion Of the Subdimensions Of Relational Needs Satisfaction

The Pearson correlation analysis in Chapter 4 highlights relationships between the Relational Needs Satisfaction Scale (RNSS) subdimensions—Authenticity, Support and Protection, Shared Experiences, Having an Impact, and Initiative from the Other—and the Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) and Attitudes Toward Infidelity Scale (ATIS). Authenticity showed strong negative correlations with PNI total scores ($r = -.35, p < .001$) and PNI-Vulnerable scores ($r = -.35, p < .001$), while Initiative from the Other was negatively correlated with PNI total scores ($r = -.16, p < .001$). Having an Impact exhibited a positive correlation with PNI-Grandiose scores ($r = .24, p < .001$) and a negative correlation with PNI-Vulnerable scores ($r = -.16, p < .001$). Authenticity also had a weak negative correlation with ATIS ($r = -.16, p < .001$), and Support and Protection was negatively correlated with age ($r = -.17, p < .001$). These findings, aligned with Erskine's (2011) relational needs framework, illuminate the role of specific relational needs in shaping narcissistic traits and infidelity attitudes within Turkey's collectivistic context.

Authenticity's negative correlations with PNI total and PNI - Vulnerable scores suggest that lower satisfaction in authenticity subdimension is associated with heightened pathological and vulnerable narcissism. This aligns with Kohut's (1977) theory that unmet relational needs foster narcissistic traits to protect a fragile self-concept, particularly emotional fragility in vulnerable narcissism (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Similarly, the negative correlation between Initiative from the Other and PNI total scores indicates that satisfaction in receiving relational initiative from others may reduce pathological narcissistic tendencies, likely by enhancing relational security (Erskine et al., 1999).

The Having an Impact subdimension's positive correlation with PNI-Grandiose scores reflects its alignment with the agentic traits of grandiose narcissism, such as dominance and assertiveness (Campbell, 2005). Conversely, its negative correlation with PNI-Vulnerable scores suggests that feeling impactful in relationships

may buffer against emotional insecurity. These contrasting associations underscore the differential impact of relational needs on narcissistic subtypes (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Authenticity's weak negative correlation with ATIS suggests that higher satisfaction in this subdimension's needs may reduce permissive attitudes toward infidelity, supporting the Investment Model's (Rusbult, 1980) emphasis on relational commitment. However, the ATIS's low reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .56$) and Turkey's collectivistic culture, where infidelity is stigmatized, likely weakened correlations due to social desirability biases, particularly in the predominantly female sample (83.3%) (Toplu-Demirtaş et al., 2014).

Clinically, fostering Authenticity and Initiative from the Other in therapy may mitigate vulnerable narcissistic traits, while adaptive expressions of Having an Impact could be encouraged (Erskine, 2011). Future research should use implicit measures (Greenwald et al., 1998) to assess infidelity attitudes and longitudinal designs to explore temporal dynamics, with more balanced samples to enhance generalizability. In conclusion, RNSS subdimensions, particularly Authenticity and Having an Impact, play a critical role in shaping narcissistic traits, while their limited association with ATIS reflects measurement and cultural challenges. These findings enrich Erskine's (2011) framework and call for refined methodologies.

5.4 Conclusion

This thesis study, which predicted that narcissism would have a mediating role in the relationship between satisfaction in relational needs and attitudes towards cheating, also examined the effects of demographic information such as gender, age and past infidelity experience in romantic relationships on these variables, and the results showed differences in terms of significance.

The attitude towards cheating scale revealed a low reliability score, and this prevented the validity of the analyses from being demonstrated with a very high reliability. It was thought that there may be reasons such as the sample collection

method, demographic characteristics of the sample, and statistical characteristics of the scale adapted from a foreign language.

In addition to the low reliability of the attitude towards cheating scale, it was also found in the analyses that it did not have a significant relationship with the independent variable. It was predicted that this situation could be due to the low reliability of the scale, and it was thought that the participants in the Turkish population, which has a collectivistic and conservative cultural structure, may have hesitated to give a permissive response to a scale, measuring attitudes towards cheating, and this may have been due to social desirability bias.

Infidelity is seen as an immoral behavior in Türkiye, as in many societies, and is considered a reason for divorce due to the fundamental deterioration of the marriage, and is therefore kept secret in social environments. In this geography, where extramarital affairs are defined as "forbidden love", it may be unrealistic to expect participants to openly and honestly provide such private information about their private lives in data collected online via social media.

On the other hand, there are studies that show that it may not be possible for narcissism scales to accurately measure narcissism, again in parallel with social desirability bias. In line with these studies, it is possible to expect a meaningless result between PNI and ATIS. However, a significant result was obtained between RNSS and PNI, PNI gave a high reliability result, and this is a sufficient finding to show that there is no problem in terms of reliability or validity in the PNI measurement. A significant statistical finding was revealed between RNSS and PNI, parallel to what was hypothesized and presented in the literature.

5.5 Recommendations

5.5.1 Theoretical implications. This study examined the relationships between the relational needs model, pathological narcissism, and attitudes toward cheating. Although there is not a sufficient literature review on relational needs satisfaction, a theoretical background that can sufficiently support the statistical model presented by this thesis was formed. There were studies that revealed the relationship

between relational needs satisfaction and pathological narcissism by Çetindağ (2023). However, there were no studies in the literature investigating the attitude variable toward cheating within such a model.

The statistical analysis results revealed that, as in the literature, there is a negative relationship between relational needs satisfaction and pathological narcissism. However, the relationship between relational needs satisfaction and attitudes toward cheating was not found to be significant, and similarly, no significant relationship was found between attitudes toward cheating and narcissism. Since Relational Needs Model is relatively a new model in the field, this thesis' hypotheses were not fully supported by literature review and by the findings. This necessitates more detailed studies when creating the theoretical background. The theoretical background of this thesis supported the hypothesis that the relationship between satisfaction in relational needs and attitudes towards cheating would be permissive if satisfaction in relational needs was low. However, since the result did not support such a hypothesis, it may be necessary to look in more detail when looking at the variables that may affect attitudes towards cheating.

On the other hand, the fact that no significant result was obtained in the relationship between narcissism and attitudes towards cheating was a finding that the theory did not support. At this point, the fact that narcissism and attitudes towards cheating are variables that are difficult to reveal with self-reports may have been effective.

The Turkish adaptation of the attitudes towards cheating scale was found appropriate to use in this thesis because it gave reliable results. However, the scale did not give a very high reliability result in the sample of this thesis, so it is not possible to say anything clear about how valid and reliable the analysis findings are. On the other hand, the low reliability of the attitudes towards cheating scale may lead to a conclusion that more detailed studies may need to be conducted on the Turkish adaptation of this scale in the future. In an analysis made in line with such a reliability result, it may not be valid to reveal that there is a meaningless relationship between these variables.

5.5.2 Clinical implications. Integrative psychotherapy is a relatively new theory in the field; therefore, the literature needs to be expanded in order to reveal its clinical validity. In line with the hypotheses of this thesis, the finding of a significant relationship between the Relational Needs Model and narcissism may be effective in terms of observing that clients with low satisfaction in relational needs may have developed narcissistic traits and preparing a treatment protocol for this. On the other hand, when clients with narcissistic defenses and traits are first encountered, it may be effective to establish a bond with the client with the prediction that their relational needs satisfaction is low. In addition, learning that the attitude towards cheating is more permissive in men may reveal that male clients are more often in the risk group in this sense within the scope of their romantic relationships and in couple therapy processes. And some preventive clinical studies can be conducted for male clients with low relational satisfaction. We know that past life experiences affect today and tomorrow, and the psychotherapy environment is almost a stage for this reality.

This thesis, which reveals that there is a significant relationship between the experiences of participants who have or have not experienced cheating or being cheated on in the past and their attitudes towards cheating, may shed light on how the past experiences of clients can have an impact in a clinical sense for psychotherapists.

5.5.3 Directions for further research. Future research could address these limitations by employing alternative measurement approaches or analysis strategies. Examining PNI's subdimensions (e.g., Entitlement Rage, Exploitativeness) separately may reveal specific narcissistic traits more closely tied to infidelity attitudes. Additional psychometric research could expand the literature about the ATIS considering the low reliability score it has in this sample.

Longitudinal designs present another critical opportunity to examine the temporal dynamics of RNSS, PNI, and ATIS. Tracking changes in relational needs satisfaction and narcissistic traits over time could clarify whether shifts in relational contexts influence infidelity attitudes or vice versa. Dyadic analyses, incorporating both partners' perspectives, would further illuminate how mutual relational needs shape narcissistic tendencies and attitudes toward fidelity, providing a relational lens absent in this cross-sectional study.

A more balanced sample, with equal gender representation and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, would enhance the generalizability of findings. Additionally, dyadic analyses capturing partner dynamics or longitudinal designs tracking changes in narcissistic traits and infidelity attitudes could provide deeper insights. Exploring alternative mediators, such as self-esteem or relational commitment, may clarify the conditions under which narcissism influences attitudes toward infidelity.

In summary, future studies should leverage implicit measures, diverse samples, longitudinal and dyadic designs, subdimensional analyses, and alternative mediators to build on this study's findings. These approaches promise to unravel the intricate relationships between relational needs, narcissism, and infidelity attitudes, advancing both theoretical and practical knowledge in psychological research.

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