

Ready or Not? Markers of Starting Romantic Intimacy at Emerging Adulthood: The Turkish Experience

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Abstract—Emerging adulthood, the new period which is especially prevalent in the developed or industrialized countries during ages 18 to 29, is a new conceptualization proposed by Arnett. Intimacy is a superordinate concept which includes intimate interaction and intimate relationship. This study includes two processes which are scale development and conduction of gender differences about markers of starting romantic intimacy among Turkish emerging adults. In first process, Markers of Starting Romantic Intimacy Scale, with 17 items and 5 factors, was developed using by 220 participants. In the second step, the scale was administered to 318 Turkish male and female emerging adults between ages 22 and 25. Results show that there is no significant difference between gender and total score of the scale. With respect to gender, there are significant differences between gender and in four subscales which are self perception, affective and cognitive intimacy, self knowledge and romantic verbalizations. Moreover, there is no significant relationship between gender and behavioral intimacy subscale.

Keywords—Emerging Adulthood, Turkey, Romantic Intimacy, Relationship, Marker.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE life of human beings does neither exist in virtue of activities which have something their object alone nor people grow. Individuals always need each other even for most basic life events. It means being human necessitates intimacy between at least two people.

Answering the question that what is intimacy is so important in order to understand emerging adults' romantic relationships. Although there are many interesting discussions and perspectives, there are no agreed-upon definitions of intimacy [1, 2, 3, 4]. Intimacy is "an interpersonal process that involves communication of personal feelings and information to another person who responds warmly and sympathetically" [5]. Sexton and Sexton, defined intimacy as "closeness, love, caring, and affection" [6]. According to Perlman and Fehr, intimacy is "the closeness and interdependence of partners, the extent of self disclosure, and the warmth or affection

experienced within the relationships" [7].

While the literature provides no unanimous agreement about what constitutes intimacy, some common themes do exist. There are eight offered prominent aspects of intimacy; *physical intimacy, non-verbal communication, self-disclosure, presence, cognitive intimacy, affective intimacy, commitment, and mutuality*. Physical intimacy is sharing of physical encounters ranging from close physical proximity to sexual contact [2]. Non-verbal communication is a communication by means of actions, gestures, facial mannerisms, close physical proximity or touch [1, 8]. Self-disclosure is the act of revealing private information, such as the personal feelings of one person toward another. Self-disclosure includes the removal of boundary between oneself and an intimate other [physically and psychologically], getting inside the life of another, and/or allowing another to cross one's personal boundary [1]. Presence is the subjective feeling of another person being present in either a physical and/or a non-physical manner. The feeling of presence can be triggered by symbolic actions of the absent one[s] or the feelings can emerge spontaneously without any [objective] external cause. Cognitive intimacy reflects the depth of awareness and knowledge that intimates have of one another [2]. Cognitive intimacy is characterized by feelings of 'knowing' the other. Affective intimacy is the reception and expression of emotion [2]. Affective intimacy involves a feeling characterized by a deep sense of love, caring, compassion and positive attraction for one another. Commitment is the extent to which partners in a relationship perceive their relationship as ongoing for an indefinite period [9]. Commitment includes acts intended to grow or maintain intimacy. Being in a committed relationship generates strong feelings of cohesion and connection [2]. Mutuality is considered the centre of any intimate relationship [10, 9]. Mutuality is the assumption that intimate partners are co-engaged in a common cause. Mutuality originates from a process of exchange, interdependence and reciprocal expectations [2]. Mutuality exists when gifts or symbolic signs of value are exchanged [10]. We believe these eight aspects of intimacy are useful for understanding how intimacy is constituted. However, in respect of Prager's conceptualization of intimacy, it can be seen these eight concepts are characteristics of intimate interaction [4].

According to Prager, intimacy is a superordinate concept

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which includes intimate interaction and intimate relationship. Intimate interaction includes both intimate experience, and intimate behaviour. These conceptions define intimacy as a combination of dyadic behaviour and individual experiences [4]. Intimate experiences include both affective and cognitive components. Cognitive component considers the meanings individuals impart to their experiences in interactions with significant others [11]. Intimate experience requires emotional intensity, otherwise interacting participants will not perceive themselves as having experienced intimacy [4].

Intimate interactions have emphasized intimate behaviour. Initially, this focus was largely on confiding a self-disclosure. Intimate behaviours include both verbal and nonverbal behaviours. Verbal sharing can include self disclosure of personal facts, opinions and beliefs. It can also include emotional expressiveness. Nonverbal sharing can include a shared meaningful glance, an affectionate touch, a shared emotional expression and a shared sexuality [5]. Intimate relationships can be defined in relation with intimate interaction. For instance; the relationship of romantic partners, friends, parents, and children [4]. An intimate relationship consists of a private world of significant others, which needs to be continuously maintained. In intimate relationships significant other is often reminded that "they are indeed significant". People remind one another through gestures, actions and gifts, some of which may be routine and unremarkable [10].

Most conceptions of intimacy address intimate relationships. Prager, stressed three component of intimate relationships; relational conceptions, affective conceptions, and behavioural conceptions. Relational conception is defined a relationship that exists over time and space. For instance; the relationship of romantic partners, friends, parents, and children [4]. Affective conceptions focus on affect or feelings such as warmth, affection, love, and deep feelings of acceptance between partners [12]. This component addresses intimate experiences in the context of relationship. Behavioural conceptions are concerned with interactions in the context of intimate relationships.

Romantic relationship is one of the most important intimate relationships. According to Hatfield, people who have romantic relationships show cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics [12]. Moss and Schwebel argued that romantic relationships have five factors which are commitment, emotional intimacy, cognitive intimacy, physical intimacy, and mutuality [2]. Sternberg announced that love includes three main components as intimacy, passion, and commitment [13, 14]. According to Sternberg, intimacy means close friendship and commitment [15]. Moss and Schwebel suggested that three components in Sternberg's triangular love theory [13] are similar to their five factors in intimacy, especially cognitive and emotional intimacy are similar to notion of Sternberg's intimacy [2].

Intimate relationships demand sacrifice and compromise. Young adults who have developed a strong sense of self during adolescence are ready to fuse their identity with that of

another person. Erik Erikson's sixth stage of psycho-social development, intimacy versus isolation, is the major issues of young adulthood [16]. According to Erikson, if young adults can not make deep personal commitment to others, they may become isolated and self absorbed. Resolution of Erikson's sixth stage in the virtue of love is mutual devotion between partners who have chosen to share their lives, have children, and help their children achieve their own development [16]. Is this valid for nowadays?

After World War-II, in transition to adulthood, there have been dramatic changes in people's life who are between ages 18-29 and also adults' [17, 18]. In United States, Europe, and other developed countries, young people have postponed the timing of marriage, completing education, starting full-time and permanent work and parenthood until late twenties [17, 19, 20, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24]. There are no evidence about these people can classified as adult. Arnett defines this period as emerging adulthood which is characterized as young people explore various possibilities in love, work, and worldviews for identity exploration. The identity exploration process may encourage emerging adults to seek out intimate interactions verbally with romantic partners [17].

Romantic relationships are different means for adolescents and emerging adults, and also the development of romantic intimacy is formed differently. In early adolescence, boys and girls begin to think about and engage more in activities with the other gender [25]. There are five stages of adolescent peer group interaction. These stages are unisexual cliques, male and female cliques, a larger heterosexual peer group, several heterosexual cliques closely associate with one another, and couple relationships. Adolescents' views of a romantic relationships are as opportunities for recreation, sexual experimentation or attainment. Romantic partners are not expected to meet many of the functions present in subsequent adult romantic relationships such as the provision of support or caregiving [26]. Adolescent romantic relationships serve two main developmental purposes. First; adolescents' romantic relationships advance the goal of separation from parents. Second, romantic relationship is a way that adolescents attempt to establish themselves as adults [27]. Moreover, romantic relationships allow adolescent to gain experience in same status interpersonal relations [28]. In addition, there is evidence that romantic partners are likely to engage self-clarifying dialogs with one another in emerging adulthood [29]. Through intimate interactions young people can get direct opinions about their ideas, and plans. Furthermore, young people construct one another's identities through reciprocal interactions in which they express, listen to, clarify, and ultimately formulate their goals, beliefs, values, and attitudes [4]. During the transition to college, old and new friends may support young people's efforts toward identity clarification in different ways. Old friends from adolescence provide young people with a sense of continuity with the past, an important foundation for identity development whereas new ones provide them with the sense of now. As a result, there has been a healthy transition to the

next stage.

In the literature, there is no comprehensive knowledge about starting romantic intimacy, and its markers. Research interest in romantic relationships about young people is fairly recent [30]. Less is known about the nature, characteristic, and formation of starting romantic intimacy. Nevertheless, there are some knowledge about this subject: Starting romantic intimacy is one of the most important factor for love. Starting and improving a relationship necessitates to get knowledge and cut down uncertainty [31, 32]. According to Prager, verbalizing of emotions is very important for intimate experiences. Self disclosed people can easily start a romantic relationship, and people like him or her. In addition to that, behaviour is also important for starting the romantic intimacy and is most important clue of showing love [4]. If the person behaves sensitively, then romantic relationship starts easily [33]. Physical intimacy [31, 34] and social dominance [35] are important factors in starting a romantic intimacy, too. According to literature and reasons presented above to conduct starting romantic intimacy, first process of this study aims to develop a scale. To accomplish this, two main steps, factor analysis and reliability, are conducted.

Turkey is basically a developing country which has different socialization for males and females. Child-rearing approaches and styles for girls and boys are traditionally different from each other in Turkey. Compared to the boys, the girls spend more time at home, take more responsibility at home, are expected to behave obediently to the traditional mother role, are encouraged to become more dependent, and parents may behave overprotectively toward them. Also, in a traditional Turkish family, overcontrol of the girls has been observed [36]. On the other hand, boys are encouraged to be more free, more independent and more aggressive in society and to spend more time outside. Girls are more emotional and have more intense emotions [36]. Especially, if it is also taken into consideration child-rearing styles are important variables determining the marker of starting romantic intimacy. Moreover, there have been more opportunities available to women in Turkey nowadays. For instance; in last three decades, the percentage of well educated women has increased [37]. However traditional cultural values and Islamic values affect even well educated individuals' life style, and daily activities. This results in expectations that men have to start romantic relationships in Turkish culture [38]. For these reasons, in this research, gender differences in starting romantic intimacy are investigated. In short, purposes of this study are to answer the following questions:

1. What are the markers of starting romantic intimacy at emerging adulthood?
2. Are there gender differences among Turkish emerging adults in markers of starting romantic intimacy?

II. METHOD

A. Procedure and Participants

This study aims to investigate how Turkish emerging adults start their romantic intimacy. In other word, what markers are important in starting romantic intimacy at emerging adulthood. For this aim, firstly researchers developed a Likert type scale named "*Marker of Starting Romantic Intimacy Scale*", with 17 items and 5 factors. Secondly, the researchers investigated gender differences in respect to starting romantic intimacy among Turkish emerging adults using that scale.

Contextual factors such as social class and gender can affect the timing of identity exploration and the salience of identity-related issues. Gender related expectations about future adults roles may lead young women and men to place different amounts of emphasis on interpersonal expect of identity [39]. In Turkey, emerging adulthood can be defined between 19–26 ages [40]. Therefore, maybe data were collected between ages 19–26. In addition to practical reasons, due to average age of completing college education is 24 in Turkey, 22–25 age group was chosen. The most important limitation of this study is non-college individuals are not reached for participating.

In scale development study, data were collected from 220 participants who are college students and graduate students between 22–25 ages. Study group had 114 female participants [52,7%] and 106 males [47,3%] and mean age was 23,5. Second step of the study was conducted in order to determine gender differences in starting romantic intimacy among Turkish emerging adults. Data were collected from 318 people ages between 22–25 who are undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate students. Overall, the sample consisted of middle and upper-middle-class participants. There were 164 female participants [51,6%] and 154 male participants [48,4%].

III. RESULTS

Results are presented in two sections which are; scale development and gender differences.

A. Scale Development

Prager's theory, Sternberg's theory, and Moss and Schwebel's theory are reviewed for forming items. First author of the study, marked the points which are thought to be important. In addition to that, the authors interviewed 35 female and 32 male Turkish emerging adults. The following simple open ended questions are administered to emerging adults: "There is someone you interested in. What do you do to start a romantic intimacy? How do you start to a romantic relationship? What necessitate are there to start a romantic relationship?". Taken responses from participants were examined and classified into 55 items. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted with those 55 items. Data analyses are presented in two sections; factor analysis and reliability. The results are explained below.

Factor analysis: Exploratory factor analysis was used. Exploratory factor analysis revealed five subscales which are

Self Perceptions, Behavioural Intimacy, Affective and Cognitive Intimacy, Self Knowledge, and Romantic Verbalization. Exploratory factor analysis results were shown

TABLE I

SUMMARY OF EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS STARTING ROMANTIC INTIMACY SCALE E.A. USING MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD ESTIMATION [N = 220]

Items	Factor Loadings				
	Factor.1 [SP]	Factor 2 [BI]	Factor 3 [ACI]	Factor 4 [SK]	Factor 5 [RV]
1	.822				
2	.792				
3	.762				
4	.576				
5		.765			
6		.709			
7		.645			
8		.624			
9			.809		
10			.743		
11			.689		
12				.810	
13				.789	
14				.580	
15					.802
16					.687
17					.588
Eigenvalues	5.008	1,978	1,399	1,107	1,001
% of variance	29, 457	11, 638	8, 229	6, 511	5, 886
%of cumulative variance	29, 457	41, 095	49, 324	55, 835	61,721

Note: Factor loadings over .50 appear in bold. SP [Self Perceptions], BI [Behavioural Intimacy], ACI [Affective and Cognitive Intimacy] SK [Self Knowledge] and RV [Romantic Verbalization] are shown in Table 1.

In factor analysis, 55 items were subjected to a principal components analysis, followed by varimax rotation. Based on the KMO [.92] criterion, 5 factors were retained based on Eigenvalues > 1. Principal Components Analysis scored that scale was formed in a structure with 5 factors and total explained variance is found as 61,72. Virtually all the initial loadings were greater than .42, with some as high as .64 and all the extraction loadings were greater than .57, with some as high as .82. As a result of factor analysis, 38 items weren't appropriate and they were eliminated from the scale.

The first subscale was called as "Self Perceptions [Items: 1, 2, 3, and 4]" because it includes items related with efficiency of personal characteristics such as sympathy, attractiveness, and smartness. There are four items such as "To start an intimate relationship I can spend time with the person whom I am interested in, To start an intimate relationship I may get phone number of the person whom I'm interested in, and To start an intimate relationship I may smile, e.g." in second subscale. Therefore, the second subscale was called

Behavioural Intimacy [Items: 5, 6, 7, and 8]. The third subscale was called Affective and Cognitive Intimacy because it includes three items regarding perspective taking, thinking about the other, and feeling some emotions. The fourth subscale was called as Self Knowledge because it includes some items such as "I am honest enough to start an intimate relationship, To start an intimate relationship I may respect to the feelings and thoughts". The last and fifth subscale was called as Romantic Verbalization because there are some items in the subscale regarding verbal transfer to the other. Alpha coefficients of all factors, means, and standard deviations were shown in Table 2.

Reliability: Test-retest reliability, Spearman-Brown and reliability coefficients [Cronbach α] were used to examine reliability of the study. The test-retest reliability was

TABLE II

FACTORS ALPHA COEFFICIENTS, MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS [N=220]

Factor	Alpha	M	SD
Self Perceptions	.79	12.14	2.15
Behavioural Intimacy	.73	12.54	2.12
Affective and Cognitive Intimacy	.75	8.99	1.71
Self Knowledge	.68	10.03	1.53
Romantic Verbalization	.54	6.81	1.74
Total	.83	50.56	6.12

conducted ranging three weeks at a state university. The scale was applied to a group of university students who voluntarily agreed to participate. 42 participants were included in the test-retest reliability of the scale. Test-retest reliability coefficients were found for the first factor of scale as 0.76, for the second factor of scale as 0.86, for the third factor of scale as 0.80, for the fourth factor of scale as 0.83, for the fifth factor of scale as 0.78, and for total of the scale as 0.79. Thus, it can be concluded that the scale has test-retest reliability.

As a second method, Cronbach Alpha was calculated for reliability. Reliability coefficient of the scale was found as 0.83. In subscales, Cronbach Alpha coefficients were found for the first factor of scale as 0.79, for the second factor of scale as 0.73, for the third factor of scale as 0.75, for the fourth factor of scale as 0.68, for the fifth factor of scale as 0.55.

Spearman-Brown test coefficients were also calculated for reliability. Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient was found for the first half of scale as 0.83, for the second half of scale as 0.79. As a result, it can be said that the scale has satisfactory reliability.

As shown in Table 3, correlations among factors and total score, and also correlations among factors are both significant [$p < .05$]. After all of these operations, "Markers of Starting Romantic Intimacy Scale" with 17 items was obtained.

B. Gender Differences

T-test was used to determine gender differences. In analysis, mean of each factor and mean of total score were computed.

TABLE III CORRELATIONS OF THE FACTORS

	T	SP	BI	ACI	SK	RV
Scale's Factors						
T	1.0	.692**	.765**	.729**	.680**	.528**
SP		1.0	.324**	.315**	.479**	.152**
BI			1.0	.511**	.388**	.314**
ACI				1.0	.404**	.279**
SK					1.0	.114*
RV						1.0

Note: SP [Self Perceptions], BI [Behavioural Intimacy], ACI [Affective and Cognitive Intimacy], SK [Self Knowledge], RV[Romantic Verbalization], and T [Total]

*p<0.05 **P<0.01 N=220

There is no significant difference between males and females' in total score [p > .05]. In subscales, male participants got higher scores from subscales which are Affective and Cognitive Intimacy [\bar{X} =9.21, p < .05], and Romantic Verbalization [\bar{X} =7.17, p < .01] than female participants. Females got higher scores from Self Perceptions [\bar{X} =12.42, p < .05], and Self Knowledge subscales [\bar{X} =10.25, p < .01] than males. There is no significant difference between males and females' scores of the Behavioural Intimacy. Results were shown below.

IV. DISCUSSION

Markers of Starting Romantic Intimacy at Emerging Adulthood

TABLE IV MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND RESULTS OF INDEPENDENT T-TESTS

Factors	N	M	SD	t-Value	p Level
Self Perceptions					
Female	164	12.42	2.19	3.02	.003**
Male	154	11.70	2.03		
Behaviral Intimacy					
Female	164	12.39	2.04	-761	.447
Male	154	12.57	2.20		
Affective and Cognitive Intimacy					
Female	164	8.79	1.76	-2.11	.036*
Male	154	9.21	1.74		
Self Knowledge					
Female	164	10.25	1.45	2.74	.006**
Male	154	9.77	1.64		
Romantic Verbalization					
Female	164	6.41	1.57	-4.104	.000**
Male	154	7.17	1.72		
Total					
Female	164	50.28	6.41	-,226	.821
Male	154	50.44	6.29		

N=318,

*P< .05,

**P< .01

Prager, Moss and Schwebell, and Sternberg conceptualized intimacy with different perspectives [4, 13, 2]. Although intimacy is important at all periods of human life, it is necessary especially for adolescence and emerging adulthood. For emerging adults, intimacy includes not only sexual encounter but also values, beliefs, happiness, preferences, emotions, secrets, productivity, behaviours, and sharing life. In a nutshell, intimacy is very important factor for both being a human, and identity exploration.

In this research, some factors were found to be important as markers of starting romantic intimacy, such as *self perception, behavioral intimacy, affective and cognitive intimacy, self knowledge, and romantic verbalizations.*

The first marker of starting romantic intimacy can be called as behavioural intimacy [BI]. When reading the items of BI marker [to start an intimate relationship I can spend time with a person whom I am interested in; to start an intimate relationship I may get the phone number from the person whom I'm interested in], these items represent physical intimacy in the literature. In other words, physical intimacy reflects as BI to starting romantic intimacy.

Physical intimacy is a part of intimate relationship. Physical intimacy plays a central role in people's description of their own intimate behaviour [3], and is acknowledged as an essential aspect of intimate relationships [1, 8]. Physical intimacy is not only concerned with bodily contact, but also includes the visceral experience of heightened awareness of ones own body or feelings of new bodily experiences [e.g. butterflies in the stomach, weak at the knees], arising from physical or mediated contact with another [1]. It can accept that all of these definitions about physical intimacy are valid for BI.

The second marker of starting romantic intimacy can be called as affective and cognitive intimacy [ACI]. When reading the items of ACI marker [to start an intimate relationship I can tell what I feel to a person whom I'm interested in; to start an intimate relationship I may take perspective from the person whom I'm interested in] these items represent affective and cognitive intimacy in the literature. In the intimacy literature, these two are differentiated from one another. However, these markers are considered to work together in starting romantic intimacy. The reason is this, people can not differentiate emotion from cognition easily.

According to literature, cognitive intimacy reflects depth of awareness and knowledge of people who are in romantic intimate relationship [2]. This includes knowing one another's principles, values, strengths, weaknesses, hopes, fears, and idiosyncrasies [41]. Also, it has been shown [2] that increasing the amount of cognitively exchanged information between spouses increases the level of intimacy they experienced. Thus, being able to establish and maintain a shared cognitive life is a major requirement for building and sustaining an intimate relationship. Affective intimacy reflects the depth of awareness intimates having one another's emotional world and the emotional exchanges they share. The level of affective closeness in friendships, serious dating relationships or marriage are commonly reported as closely related to the level of intimacy of that relationship [42]. Also,

affective intimacy is often highlighted as a key differentiator between close friendships and relationships involving romantic love [2]. In the light of these explanations, it can be concluded that ACI marker stem from intimate experiences.

The third marker of starting romantic intimacy can be called as romantic verbalization [RV]. When examining the items of RV [to start an intimate relationship I may say meaningful words to a person whom I'm interested in; to start an intimate relationship I may say I am always thinking about you a to person whom I'm interested in], these items represent self-disclosure in the intimacy literature. Self-disclosure is a key characteristic that often differentiates intimate from non-intimate relationships [1, 2, 3]. Self-disclosure does include the removal of boundary between oneself and other one [physically and psychologically], getting inside the life of another, and/or allowing another to cross one's personal boundary [1]. Furthermore, disclosing personal details often lead to an increased level of self-disclosure from an intimate other [32]. Thus, self-disclosure is an effective mechanism for maintaining and changing the level of intimacy in a relationship. Disclosing too little or too much can either escalate or de-escalate a relationship [3]. Briefly, it can be said that emerging adults try to start a romantic intimacy by means of romantic verbalization with a self disclosure.

These markers are consistent with theory of intimacy especially theories of Moss and Schwebell, and Prager. Moss and Schwebell explained intimacy through five factors. These factors are physical intimacy, cognitive intimacy, emotional intimacy, behavioural intimacy and mutuality [2]. Although, mutuality necessitates at least two people, we tried to determine the markers at one's with regard to only one person. Mutuality was not existed among the factors, and the items relating to mutuality haven't been worked.

There are three significant factors, called intimate experience, intimate behaviour and intimate relationship in Prager's conceptualization of intimacy. SK can be considered qualification of personality, and also it can be seen that it is part of intimate relationships. In addition, looking at items of this marker, it can be said that it is exactly not match with intimate relationship. In this context, SK can be added Prager's intimacy conceptualization as a fourth factor. Moreover, SP does not match with Prager's conceptualization. As a result, SP can be offered as a fifth factor to Prager's conceptualization.

Generally, these markers are consistent with the theories of intimacy, but we didn't include sexual intimacy. Because sexual intimacy is not thought to be effective as an factor but for the following level of intimacy. Other reason is in Turkish culture, there are some difficulties in measuring sexual intimacy, because Islamic values and traditional cultural effects still affect people's life. In this culture sexual intimacy is possible only by marriage and the society supports this. And also, Erikson didn't count sexual intimacy in intimacy. Because of all reasons mentioned above, while the items relating to the markers of starting romantic intimacy, phrases including sexuality didn't take place. Consequently, this study carried out depending on the theories, it is said that starting romantic intimacy consist of five basic markers in emerging adulthood stages.

The markers related to emotional and cognitive, behavioral, and verbal intimacy exist in the scale. On the other hand, two markers such as "self perception [SP]" and "self knowledge [SK]" do not belong to intimacy. Seemingly exist in the scale as a extension of identity exploration which is one of the most important features of emerging adulthood. It is very interesting that when the items are considered with these two markers, it is seen that these markers include basic proficiency domain relating to self-focus, and include self knowledge. Meaning it consists a part of the answer of the question "Who am I?". This situation echoes emerging adulthood theory which is not very far away. In fact, according to Arnett [17, 18], identity exploration has three main components; love, work and worldview. These two markers are thought as the reflection of identity exploration to start a romantic intimacy. In other words, these markers express how started experiments relating to love in identity exploration. That is to say, an emerging adult carrying these markers may have experiments relating to love in identity exploration. This situation can be interpreted like emerging adults having these markers can be more succesful than the others in one dimension of identity exploration. Moreover, SK can be defined simply "knowledge of self", however it is related with discovering quality of intimate relationship. There are three factors for intimate relationships; affection, trust and cohesiveness [4]. In the light of with these facts, it can be said that emerging adults are also discovered the important features of intimate relationships.

Gender Differences

As the second step, gender differences in starting romantic intimacy were investigated. Findings can be discussed with different perspectives but these are discussed through cultural context and theoretical aspects of emerging adulthood.

According to the results of this research there are no significant gender differences in starting romantic intimacy. It is also realized that in behavioural intimacy there is no difference between females and males. The study group is thought to be as the reason for these two results. The study group is composed of college and graduate students, so this situation is said to effect the results. It is accepted that females continuing their education have more individual values in relation to the other females. Because of these conditions the results are affected in this research. The more the education level of people decrease, the more collectivistic features are observed [43]. Although, it was expected to be a difference, there is no significant differences, which is due to the reasons mentioned above. In addition, if the forgotten seventy five [44] [the people who graduate from high school but don't continue the education in university] were taken into consideration, it could be possible that results would increase in favour of males at starting romantic intimacy. Another reason of the fact that there is no gender difference in behavioural intimacy is behavioural clues are displayed by both genders. It is certain that one may respond to any behavioural stimuli coming from other gender. It can be thought as a reflection of mutuality, which is Moss and Schwebell's concept [2].

It is interesting that although there is no gender difference on the point of the whole scale and behavioural intimacy. There are differences in favour of males with respect to romantic verbalizations, affective and cognitive intimacy. Romantic verbalization already concludes verbal intimacy. On the other hand, because affective and cognitive intimacy consist of verbalization of emotion and cognition, so there is difference in favour of males again. Though female participants have higher education levels, they are not as good as males in mentioned factors. This difference may stem from Turkish culture. That is to say, in Turkish culture it is expected in all groups which are whether educated or not starting of verbal intimacy is carried out by males. It is perceived as a male duty, even responsibility. Reason for this situation is gender role presented by Turkish society since childhood. Another reason for this difference is the concept of modesty which is about woman sexuality in Turkey. The modest woman in Turkey is the woman who doesn't start verbal intimacy no matter what happens. Females in Turkey who start verbal intimacy are called "light girls" [immodest] no matter which level of education they have. So females give the initiation to males, but they display necessary intimacy in behavioural aspect.

Self perceptions and self knowledge result are in favour of females. It may be because of the different socialization for males and females in Turkey. Kağıtçıbaşı emphasized that selves in Turkish society change from dependency to autonomy related self through industrialization and urbanization. In a collectivistic society, like Turkey, families prefer having a boy rather than a girl because of the economic value of the child [43]. Fundamental style in child rearing is to grow an obedient child. No matter what kind of level of education they have, Islamic and collectivistic values still effect on the life of Turkish people. Kağıtçıbaşı stated that even if there is a total socialization like individualistic cultures, related selves still exist in the society because of the emotional dependency. Because of the reasons above, females having any level of education are expected to be obedient which may cause females to take honesty, respect and trust into consideration [43]. This situation provide girls having more self awareness. Females may have a superiority on males in the markers mentioned for responding social expectation with self exploration. Moreover, trust is an important feature of an intimate relationship [4] that female emerging adults have more self knowledge and self perceptions may be the marker that they explored an important feature of intimate relationship in relation to males.

In Turkish culture, females are expected to mature early. With the aging of females the Turkish notion that "staying at home" [to become spinster nearly between 25-30 for well educated women]. This causes females to have great anxiety. Females trying to respond the social expectation emphasize self-awareness as a weapon and may use it. The aim of this process is using short time productively and eliminate the other rivals [45]. This is similar to explanation of evolutionary theory. In addition to that, in Turkish culture, females named as "motherlike" and introductivity, presenting herself more than the other females, trying to show cooks and cleans well, shortly trying to show that herself awareness is higher than the

other females' are preferred by families and mates. Moreover, the female features mentioned above are still valid for almost all of the society [43]. While, the stated features are seen as intervening in individual borders, they are perceived as "inviting". A female who doesn't have these features may become a spinster. It is important that this concept is used only for females. It is thought that this last sentence is expressive enough. Another point that should be emphasized is that female emerging adults in Turkey are expected to find a spouse as soon as possible by the society. The partner of the female, the family of the female, and even the society expect that female in emerging adulthood stage should end up with marriage. Thus, these explanations relating finding spouse rather than romantic intimacy were made.

Briefly, markers of starting romantic intimacy and related gender difference are investigated in this research. As a conclusion, this study connected to three principal areas of psychology which are social and personal relationships, developmental psychology and cultural psychology. The most important limitation of this research is that there were no non-college individuals in the participants. Following researchs could investigate developmental changes [adolescences, emerging adults, young adults, and adults] about starting romantic intimacy using broad sampling including non-college individuals.

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